

From Family to Nation to Human Unity

LA GRACE

SRI AUROBINDO

Prophet of Indian Nationalism

Once he was inwardly assured of India's freedom turned his focus on Internationalism –Human Unity

Initiated this quest during turmoil of World War 1 (1915-1918) and three decades before India's freedom

Individual versus Collectivity

Involvement in politics gave him the idea of constructing a harmony between individualism and collectivism.

Science of polity cannot deal with this issue as egoism in individual and collective life go on changing denouements.

Conflict was one of the inner reasons of collapse of USSR

Evolutionary Context

At first

Material Life ---more with persistence than progress, more with self-repetition than self-enlargement. End result is UNIFORMITY in material life.

Manifests in gregarious nature of human groups – Association becomes necessary for survival.

Uniformity brought safety, security, self-preservation—the dominant idea of all collectivism.

Evolutionary Context

Next

Life-Principle appeared unsettling Uniformity. Brought in vitality and quest for progressive perfection.

Human groups became complex with clash between freedom of individual and uniformity of group norms leading to the mighty clash between Individualism and Collectivism.

Evolutionary Context

Sri Aurobindo explains that the human being is a transitional being in the trajectory of evolution and consciousness per se would facilitate the emergence of higher models of human beings who would form higher-order gnostic societies where freedom would be intuitive, spontaneous and truthful and in consonance with the inner law of love, light, right thinking and right action and therefore would not be in conflict with discipline. In such a milieu, individualism and collectivism could get spontaneously harmonized.

Philosophical Anarchism

But this “*high dream of philosophic Anarchism*” would not materialize until the human being consciously participates in the evolution of consciousness. And *pari passu* with the individual’s progress, the collectivity has also to progressively shift its denouement to support the continual unfolding of human potentials along the evolutionary trajectory of consciousness.

Journey of Collectivity

The collectivity has traversed many formations ranging from the tribe and clan and commune to become a living group-unit in the garb of the nation.

The nation-idea has consolidated in the psyche of the race and would persist till it is surpassed by the whole of humanity.

With time, the nation as a psychological unit had to be buttressed by administrative laws, territorial integrities and political sovereignty to develop into a State.

Nation to State

However this shift from the psychological status of the nation-idea to the administrative domain of the State-idea brought new equations.

The State transgresses its limits to dictate the intellectual and moral development of the whole community.

Sri Aurobindo quipped, *“The attempt of the State to grow into an intellectual and moral being is one of the most interesting phenomena of modern civilization.”*

Forms of Global Unity

It is in the background of an evolutionary trajectory towards the freely conscious individual, the passion of the nation-idea and the administrative rigidities of the State-idea that Sri Aurobindo proceeds to visualize a global unity which could take two forms:

- **A federation of free nations, or**
- **Distribution of the earth into a few great trans-national hegemonies.**

He also hinted that a **practical combination of the two ideas could also be “*the foundation of a new enduring order of things*”.**

Multiple Unity

A premature enforcement of symmetrical homogeneity by effacing heterogeneous elements could prove counter-productive. There could even be resurgence of the empire-idea from the subconscious of the race.

Perhaps a loose confederation characterizing a federal heterogeneous conglomerate would be preferable where the right of self-determination could support *particularism* instead of *separatism*. A multiple unity where the sub-units of a heterogeneous aggregate would retain their uniqueness while surpassing their limitations could be the transcript of the future.

Future of the Nation

The persistence of national egoisms can always precipitate armed conflicts and the Time-Spirit could move towards eventual dissolution of the nation. Sri Aurobindo hinted at two possible outcomes, either the gradual dominance of the idea of the “*sans-patrie*”, the citizen of the world that runs counter to the nation-idea or the persistence of the nation with “*vigorous particularism*” within a larger unity.

Future of the Nation

Finally the nation may persist “*but with a reduced and subjected vitality, or even without any real vitality or any living spirit of particularism or separatism, as a convenience, an administrative rather than a psychological fact like a French department or an English county*”. Sri Aurobindo simultaneously cautions that the reduced vitality of the nation can retain sufficient mechanical distinctness to re-assert itself if the assimilation is mechanical .

Loose Federation

Sri Aurobindo speculated that international unification could be in the form of a “centralized world-State” or “looser world-union” that could be “close federation or “simple confederacy”. The looser federal set-up would be more desirable than the World-State as it would give ample scope to the principle of variation needed for freer play of life and progress. Whether there would be one such single federation of free nationalities or two or three such federations in mutual harmony was best left to the unborn future.

A Saving Power

Yet a looser confederacy can succumb to centrifugal forces and break up unless there was a saving power. This saving power would be a true religion of humanity arising not from creedal dogmas but from the matrix of an unitary consciousness that reflected spiritual universalism. ***“A religion of humanity means the growing realization that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, but more than any other the spiritual life insists on freedom and variation in its self-expression and means of development”.***

Religion of Humanity

In practical terms this would mean a reappraisal of What Sri Aurobindo considered as “*three godheads of the soul*” –**Freedom (liberty), Equality and brotherhood (fraternity)**. An emphasis on liberty makes the ego harp on competitive individualism. An assertion of equality ignores the variations in nature. Fraternity fails to consolidate as it is based on mechanical comradeship and egoistic interests. **Liberty and Equality can be upgraded and harmonized only when Fraternity is based on soul-kinship.** That would lead towards a new psychological basis of world unity.

The Future

On June 7, 1967, The Mother recorded a vision of Sri Aurobindo explaining to her “***A federation of all nations and countries without exception, all continents. A single federation: the Federation of all human nations of the earth***”.

The Future

She elaborated further, ***“And a group –a governing group consisting of one representative from each country, the most able men from the standpoint of political and economic organization. And nothing of the proportional question that would give large countries many representatives and small ones only one – one representative for each country. Because every country represents one aspect of the problem. And they would sit in rotation.”***