



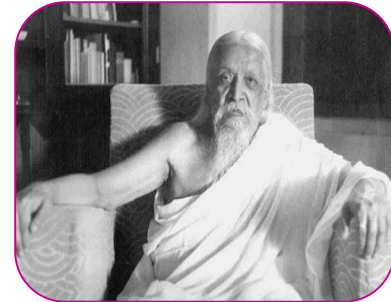
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## AUROBINDO: A PRECEPTOR OF SPIRITUAL MORALITY

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### ABSTRACT

*Sri Aurobindo would think ethics as a spiritual pursuit. In his famous book the Life Devine is basically highlighting on the rigorous exercise of spirituality. For him morality does not depend on consequence of action, basically he believes in deontological view. It depends on the growth of consciousness, on the extent of which man's conduct is a true instrument of self-expression. The highest reward of the ethical being is his inner evolution. It is for this alone and not for any other results that he acts. He opines that ethical conduct is a means of spiritual life. Supreme thing is spirit. He would think that our ultimate end is realization of God while the western ethicists think that good is the summum bonum of our life; and on the other hand traditional Indian philosophies emphasis on four purushartha (purpose of self)--- righteousness, wealth, pleasure and liberation. For Sri Aurobindo, whether something is good or bad depends on our realization of God. He took man world and God as the three forms of same reality, existent and consciousness. Morality has been submerged in spirituality and vice versa. So it can be easily guessed that Aurobindo's moral philosophy is distinct from any other. He basically practiced spirituality which would make a result of effective moral behavior.*



**KEY WORD:** Aurobindo's moral philosophy , spiritual pursuit , Life Devine.

### INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo is a worthy personality among those who apply spirituality based morality as the only way of life. He would think as human being our ultimate end is realization of God while the western ethicists think that good is the summum bonum of our life and traditional Indian philosophies emphasis on four purushartha (purpose of self)--- righteousness, wealth, pleasure and liberation. For Sri Aurobindo, whether something is good or bad depends on our realization of God. He acknowledges also that "God is, subjectively, seeking for our highest, truest, fullest, and largest self." He took man world and God as the three forms of same reality, existent and consciousness. Good and evil have occupied Aurobindo's moral philosophy. Accordingly, morality has been submerged in spirituality and vice versa. So it can be easily guessed that Aurobindo's moral philosophy is distinct from any other. He basically practiced spirituality which would make a result of effective moral behavior.

### DEDICATION:

Sri Aurobindo speaks of dedication to omnipotent God. He emphasized on transvalue because the divine transcends customary morality according to the law of nature. He thinks for spiritual development of people, there should begin a developing of our forces of conscious being to create a new range of activities, new values of all things. Transvalue of all values is the realization of real self, which requires the self-sacrifice as its necessary condition. Moral development needs the growth from lower stage. This growth is the constant development about the concept of soul. For developing this concept we need constant dedication. Sri Aurobindo calls this dedication, "Flowering of mankind's ethical growth. For him, like all integral growth, evolution is a gradual process. Here the notion of self increases in spiritual growth. So individual self or Jiva atma turns to include

welfare of family and after it the man realized the larger community beyond his family. Here we see the worth of self sacrifice where the progressive ethical being can realize that self should be enlarged to include the whole humanity which is considered as realization of self in the ethical theories. The dedication does not mean negation of lower selves but it is positive one. Dedication actually includes, integrates and fulfills all in and around the dedicator. Aurobindo preaches spontaneous growth, not repression. He believes moral growth is the sincerity and perpetual progress.

#### DEONTOLOGICAL STANDPOINT:

For Sri Aurobindo, morality depends on motive, not consequence. In the "Synthesis of Yoga" he said "Ethics must eventually perceive that the law of good which it seeks is the law of God and depends on the being and nature of the Master of the law." The field of ethics is confined to human character and action. It prohibits certain actions, desires and impulse. Ethical impulse rises as an instinct of obedience to the law. The ethics gets fulfillment when the being of man attains the level of divine nature; the nature gives values to actions performed by people. In this context he emphasizes on the necessity of spiritual transformation. The spirit is not our intellect or will but it is higher than reason, and concealed in the nature which is the secret seed of divinity. Sri Aurobindo is a deontologist, not consequentialist, but he preaches to keep our motive to God. The Kantian slogan "Duty for the sake of duty" is purely deontological while Sri Aurobindo's slogan is "Duty for the sake of God" cannot be considered as purely deontological. In the "The Essays on the Gita" he said, "To work impersonally, desirelessly and without attachment to the fruits of our work, for the sake of God and the world and the greater self and the fulfillment of the universal will, --this is the first step towards liberation and perfection." He is also different from in the point that, God is not a postulate of morality while Kant holds the opposite one. For Aurobindo, morality is not ultimate but transcendental. Freedom of morality is the foundation of ethics. It is not determinism but self-determinism. Will or force determines the results of action of individuals. Will determines the thought and personal choice. All wills and all knowledge determination help to calculate the work of individual. Hence the individual can claim himself as right or wrong. Accordingly human being is the instrument and divine self is the actual master of his performance.

#### ETHICS TURNS INTO SPIRITUALITY:

As ethics is realization of God, according to Sri Aurobindo, so it assimilates spirituality by its very nature. F.H. Bradley said "it is to be a moral duty not to be moral but to religious." Like Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo envisaged the self- realization of God realization as the ultimate end. He would like to transcend the morality through spiritual and religious level. For him morality is confined to ignorance. In the "The True Meaning of Spirituality" Aurobindo said, "It must therefore be emphasised that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution, the beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the innerreality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature." So easily it can be understood ethics transcends into spirituality.

#### MODE OF NON VIOLENCE:

In the earlier life Sri Aurobindo (as Aurobindo Ghosh) was a revolutionist and freedom fighter of India, accordingly he would believe in violence like terroristic activities, but in later life (as saint Sri Aurobindo) preaches of non violence, although he differs from Gandhian view of non violence. For Sri Aurobindo non violence is only a temporary means in life, not end. It can be dropped out when it does not match with the vows. He said violence is

also necessary as well as non violence. He said, "Purification can come by the transformation of the impulse of violence. In that respect the old system in India was much better: the man who had the fighting spirit became the Kshatriya and then the fighting spirit was raised above the ordinary vital influence. The attempt was to spiritualize it. It succeeded in doing what passive resistance cannot and will not achieve. The Kshatriya was the man who would not allow any oppression, who would fight it out and he was the man who would not oppress anybody. That was the ideal. Gandhi's position is that he does not care to remove violence from others; he wants to observe non-violence himself."

#### MEANS JUSTIFY ENDS:

Sri Aurobindo thinks there must be a relation between end and means, means justify the end. Means is important as important the end. Ends can only be found by seeking the eternal source of strength in the individuals. So if the ends are great then means should be the same. That is why his political morality became more realistic and practical. Ethics is to be based on scientific facts. Aurobindo's view regarding the relation between the ends and means has been like that one, because only ideal motto cannot fulfill the actual need of individuals, rather it became contradictory in practical. So Sri Aurobindo firmly holds the spirituality as the metaphysical truth of reality, and this the secret idealism of the moral philosophy.

**Necessity of spiritual transformation:** Aurobindo thinks, spirit is higher than reason. We need the true religion of humanity being different from orthodox religions. For Sri Aurobindo, the aim of religion basis on humanity must be love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood. He thinks dharma is the source of spiritual values and it advocates of eternal and unchanging thing. Dharma helps us to grow in to divine light. Spirituality through dharma has ethical, practical and philosophical significance. Ethical dharma means the law of righteousness, moral rule of conduct. Sri Aurobindo describes the evolutionary position of the concept of Dharma: "The idea of Dharma is on the contrary predominantly moral in its essence. Dharma on its heights holds up the moral law in its own right and for its own sake to human acceptance and observance. The larger idea of Dharma is indeed a conception of the true law of all energies and includes a conscience, a rectitude in all things, a right law of thought and knowledge, of aesthesia, of all other human activities and not only of our ethical action. But yet in the notion of Dharma the ethical element has tended always to predominate and even to monopolise the concept of Right which man creates,—because ethics is concerned with action of life and his dealing with his vital being and with his fellow men and that is always his first preoccupation and his most tangible difficulty, and because here first and most pressingly the desires, interests, instincts of the vital being find themselves cast into a sharp and very successful conflict with the ideal of Right and the demand of the higher law. Right ethical action comes therefore to seem to man at his stage the one thing binding upon him among the many standards raised by the mind, the moral claim the one categorical imperative, the moral law the whole of his Dharma."

#### TRADITIONAL INDIAN VIEW:

In India Philosophy has no separate branch as ethics like western philosophy. Indian Philosophers would like explain philosophy as a combination of its all branches. Here ethics means the practice of morality. Here we practice the prohibition "Thou shall not kill" which makes someone control his desires, greediness, selfish motive, ego problem not to kill. The Kshatriya, the warrior class has the right of killing for protecting the weak class. Besides practice of morality, there are more ways to arrive at perfection, such as knowledge, aesthetics, strength etc. In the same way Sri Aurobindo introduced three new concepts in Indian tradition. For him i) the human being is not born ethical, ii) moral values are man-made and transcendental and iii) there is a transvalue of all values. For him ethics cannot resolve the problems of the society and universe but helps to minimize the gap. In the case of transvalue there are some ranges of experiences. Such as non-ethical relating to the material and animal nature; infra-ethical which relates to the barbaric and titanic vital nature; anti-ethical relating to the matrix of ego based conflicts; ethical relating to rational mind; and super-ethical relating to super rational perception.

For Sri Aurobindo, ethics is necessary to control the civil mind. People should have to make norms, ideology, a sound social order but ethics should begin to rule religion. Sri Aurobindo envisaged an evolutionary growth of consciousness beyond the mental cognitive field. He thinks ethics is to provide a different perspective to solve the social dilemmas. He said, 'ethics is a stage in evolution. That which is common to all stages is the surge of Sachchidananda towards self-expression. This urge is at first non-ethical, then infra-ethical in the animal,

then in the intelligent animal even anti-ethical for it permits us to approve hurt done to others which we disapprove when done to ourselves. In this respect man even now is only half-ethical. And just as all below us is infra-ethical, so there may be that above us whither we shall eventually arrive, which is supra-ethical, has no need of ethics. The ethical impulse and attitude, so all-important to humanity, is a means by which it struggles out of the lower harmony and universality based upon in conscience and broken up by Life into individual discords towards a higher harmony and universality based upon inconscience oneness with all existences. Arriving at that goal, this means will no longer be necessary or even possible, since the qualities and oppositions on which it depends will naturally dissolve and disappear in the final reconciliation.’ Sri Aurobindo mentions in his “The Life Divine” that man is not born ethical and rational; rationality is to be developed in a stage of human mind, as the sensory develops. Man needs to cultivate the supra-rational faculties of knowledge. Intuition is a supra-rational faculty. Intuition illumines the non rational aspects of existence. The supra-ethical view of things is different from ethical view.

### CONCLUSION:

Generally, in ethics there are basically three theories--- virtue ethical theory, teleological or consequentialist theory and deontological theory. Ethics has its basic characteristics while it deals with justice, respect to others, honesty, humane, tolerance, non violation etc. but Sri Aurobindo focuses only realization of God, and this very realization is the only parameter of a good action. So every ethical ideal must depend on its philosophical foundation, fundamental idea of ultimate truth. Sri Aurobindo’s moral view is also surviving for its own fundamental features. For him morality does not depend on consequence of action, basically he believes in deontological view. It depends on the growth of consciousness, on the extent of which man's conduct is a true instrument of self-expression. The highest reward of the ethical being is his inner evolution. It is for this alone and not for any other results that he acts. He opines that ethical conduct is a means of spiritual life. Supreme thing is spirit.

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