



## SRIAUROBINDO'S SYNTHESIS OF HINDU – CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS

**Prof. (Dr.) K. R. Rajani**

Professor of Philosophy &  
Director, Dr. DDCWS  
Andhra University,  
Visakhapatnam – 530 003.  
Andhra Pradesh , India.

It is true that, Christianity has largely influenced the Neo-vedantist Sri Aurobindo. The reason might be, he studied for 14 years (07-21years) at St. Paul's School and King's College, Cambridge, England, lived and associated with Christians. It is recorded that he was even baptized while at London. Many of his new philosophical terms and ideas are taken from Christianity. The Holy Spirit, Son of Man, Kingdom of God, Trinity, Collective Salvation are some of the Christian concepts which serve as bedrock for Sri Aurobindo's philosophical concepts like the Descent of Spirit, Divine life upon earth, Brahmic Consciousness, Supermind, the Ideal of Human Unity and some of the other concepts.

The nature of Holy Spirit is explained in three ways in the Old Testament. i) The Holy Spirit as an agent in creation (Gen 1: 2; Ps. 33:6; Eze 37:1-10) ii) The Holy Spirit as a source of inspiration and power (evident in the stories of the Judges; / kings and /prophets) (Israel's leaders -from Moses to Joshua to the Judges, to David to Solomon) iii) The Holy Spirit as God's presence in the **covenantal** community, (Eze 11: 14-21; 36:22-32)

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit represents both the presence and activity of the God and the continuing presence of Jesus Christ in the Church. It is also described as a 'Counselor' who represents both divine presence and guidance for the disciples. In Pauline thought, the Spirit makes people one 'in Christ' and empowers them, not only for the mission of the Church, but also for the moral and ethical life appropriate to those who understand themselves to be the people of the new age.

Sri Aurobindo maintained that, the Holy Spirit which descended on Jesus Christ is the same spirit which is known as Brahmic or Higher Consciousness. In his words "... the Holy Spirit, Pure Self, Brahmic Consciousness is that which makes them one & that also in which they Communicate. For we hear of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus & it is the same descent, which brings down the powers of the higher consciousness into the simple humanity of the Apostles (Sri Aurobindo, Essays on Gita, Vol-13, SABCL, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1971, P-154). Sri Aurobindo viewed that the supramental Consciousness (Holy Spirit) descends on the body, mind, life of man and transforms him as divine being or superman. The Christian doctrine affirms that God has descended into the world to deliver the humanity from Sin. This is the significance of



Jesus Christ's birth and his suffering on cross. The descent of Holy Spirit will guide the people to live according to the will of God. In structuring his concepts the descent, supermind, and involution of spirit in matter Sri Aurobindo was influenced by the Christian concept of Holy Spirit. His understanding of Holy spirit is nearer to the Biblical scripture – "Do you not know that your body is a temple of Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were brought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20, the Holy Bible, New International Version, Zondervan Press, Michigan, USA, P-1009) Yes! 'The Holy Spirit is the mysterious power or presence of God in nature or with individuals and communities, inspiring and empowering them with qualities they would not otherwise possess' (Harper's Bible Dictionary (1996) & Paul J Achtemeier (Ed) theological publication in India, Bangalore, P-401).

The Kingdom of God is another concept that has greatly influenced Sri Aurobindo. The vision of 'divine life upon earth or the collective perfection & the ideal of human unity are the outcome of Christian influence on his thought. Bible maintains different approaches to the existence of Kingdom God. It is a central topic of apostolic approach. The main concern of apostles is to spread the good news of the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12). Bible says: 'Paul entered the synagogues and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God' (Acts. 19:8). St Paul writes extensively about it in many of his letters e.g., I cor: 6; 9; Gal 5: 21. To inherit the Kingdom of God in the future (I cor: 6: 9; Gal 5: 21). He also hints that it might somehow be present in the life of Christian communities (Rom. 14: 17; I cor 4: 20). It says those 'in Christ' are already new creatures (2 Cor 5: 17). Paul wrote to Romans saying 'For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit because any one who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men (14: 17, 18) and hence our question is what should be the approach to life? Paul advices that let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Romans 14:19). For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of Power (I cor 4: 20), power which contains love and gentle spirit.

The author of the Revelation looked for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on heaven & earth. Rev 11: 15 says: "The Kingdom of World has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and will reign forever and ever".

### **The Kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20)**

Once, having been asked by the Phrisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation nor will people say, here it is or there it is because the Kingdom of God is within you. In Mark 9:1 Jesus said, I tell you the truth some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with



power”.

All these ideas about the Kingdom of God have greatly influenced Sri Aurobindo’s concept of divine life upon earth. When someone asked M.P. Pandit, a direct disciple of Sri Aurobindo ‘early in your speech you mentioned that Sri Aurobindo incorporated some Christian thought, exactly what kind of Christian thought does it incorporate? M.P. Pandit answered that, “I believe there is reference in his thought of the Kingdom of God. Now the Kingdom of God Sri Aurobindo says, is not somewhere there in the heaven, it is within us; it has to be exteriorized. Within us there are states of felicity, states of purity, we have to dig in ourselves, link ourselves with that and bring them out and actualize them in life. This is a key concept to actualize the Kingdom of God” (M.P.Pandit, Sri Aurobindo on Education consciousness” World Union Vol. XVIII, No, 10, World Union International, Pondicherry, April, 1978, P 20).

Sri Aurobindo viewed that Kingdom of God does not exist anywhere in heaven but right here upon the earth. He termed it as the ‘Divine life upon earth’. He does mean that “Divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The spirit descends into matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more & more divine, (Supramental Manifestation, Vol-16, SABCL, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1471, P-5-6)

Almost the similar idea is expressed by the author of Revelation (Bible) saying: “The Kingdom of the world has become the Kingdom of our Lord” (11:15) when the people become more & more divine, without the worldly wickedness, such as ‘Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the Kingdom of God’ (I cor 6:9,10). The human must be washed from all these sins, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. In Sri Aurobindo’s words : ‘the law of sin & virtue ceases for us when the son of God shines upon the soul in truth and love with its unveiled splendour (the Hour of God, Vol-17, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1972, p-79). Thus he accepted that “Christ came to the world to purify” (the Hour of God, Vol – 17, P-99) and the ‘doctrine of son of man on the cross acquires a new significance and man himself becomes the Christ of the universe’. He continued to say “it was the knowledge of good and evil that brought grief and sin into the world; when that knowledge is surmounted, man will rise above grief and sin. Before he ate the forbidden fruit, he had the innocence of the animal. When he shall cease to eat it, he will have the innocence of God” (Essays on Gita, Vol. 13, P-154).

Sri Aurobindo also compares the doctrine of Trinity with Hindu Scriptures.



In Trinity “ the father is above in the inner Heaven, the son or the Supreme Prakriti becomes Jiva of the Gita, descends as divine Man upon earth, in the mortal body; the Holy Spirit, Pure Self, Brahmic consciousness is that which makes them one and that also in which they Communicate”. (Essays on Gita, Vol- 13, P-154)

Sri Aurobindo’s neo-Vedantic formula is that – spirit is (becomes) matter and matter is (becomes) spirit, which is similar with Einstein’s scientific theory  $E=mc^2$ . Thus Sri Aurobindo has synthesized the fundamental doctrines of two major religions and arrived to a harmonious platform to exist peacefully with other religious groups.

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