



The Influence of Bhagavad Gita on the Literary Works of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh

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Abstract— This article examines the influence of the Bhagavad Gita on Sri Aurobindo Ghosh's literary and philosophical works. The Gita's teachings on karma, bhakti, and jnana shaped Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Yoga, emphasizing spiritual growth through the integration of life's physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. His writings, especially Savitri and Essays on the Gita, reflect the Gita's themes of selfless action, divine will, and spiritual struggle. By reinterpreting the Gita's message as a call for spiritual activism, Aurobindo created a modern path for seekers, extending the text's relevance to contemporary spiritual and social transformation.



Keywords— Influence, Bhagavad Gita, Sri Aurobindo, Integral Yoga, spiritual transformation

INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, one of the most prominent spiritual leaders, philosophers, and poets of modern India, was deeply influenced by the Bhagavad Gita, a classic text of Hindu philosophy. The Gita, known for its exploration of karma (action), bhakti (devotion), and jnana (knowledge), plays a significant role in shaping the spiritual and literary landscape of India. Sri Aurobindo not only interpreted the Gita through his writings but also integrated its core principles into his philosophy of Integral Yoga and his literary works. This article aims to explore the influence of the Bhagavad Gita on Sri Aurobindo's major literary works, examining how he incorporated the Gita's teachings into his prose and poetry, thereby creating a unique synthesis of spirituality and literature.

Sri Aurobindo's Philosophical Background

Sri Aurobindo's evolution as a spiritual thinker was shaped by various influences, including Western education, Indian classical texts, and his own spiritual experiences. Initially drawn to nationalist activities, he shifted towards spirituality following profound mystical experiences during his imprisonment in 1908. The Bhagavad Gita became one of his primary sources of spiritual guidance. His understanding of the Gita extended beyond traditional

religious interpretations; he viewed it as a comprehensive guide to achieving self-realization and spiritual growth.

Sri Aurobindo saw the Gita not merely as a scripture to be studied but as a living philosophy to be applied in daily life. In his view, the Gita's teaching of performing selfless action without attachment to results served as a foundation for spiritual growth. He interpreted the Gita as a message of integrating the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of life through what he called Integral Yoga, aiming for the divinization of life itself.

The Role of the Bhagavad Gita in Sri Aurobindo's Thought

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita can be found extensively in his writings, most notably in "Essays on the Gita." He saw the Gita as a synthesis of various paths to liberation, harmonizing karma yoga (path of action), jnana yoga (path of knowledge), and bhakti yoga (path of devotion). According to him, the Gita presented a balanced approach to spirituality, where selfless action leads to self-realization, and devotion to the Divine leads to the highest knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo's notion of Integral Yoga reflects the influence of the Gita's teachings. Integral Yoga seeks the

transformation of all levels of being—physical, vital, mental, and spiritual—towards the realization of the Divine Consciousness. In the Gita, Sri Krishna advises Arjuna to rise above dualities and realize the Eternal Self. Sri Aurobindo interpreted this teaching as the foundation of a spiritual life that embraces the world rather than renouncing it.

Influence on Sri Aurobindo's Literary Works

The Bhagavad Gita's influence on Sri Aurobindo's literary works is evident across his poetry, prose, and philosophical writings. In his epic poem "Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol," the Gita's themes of spiritual struggle, divine intervention, and the realization of a higher purpose resonate deeply. The central character, Savitri, embodies the path of karma yoga as she performs her sacred duty to bring back her husband, Satyavan, from death. Her journey mirrors Arjuna's spiritual awakening in the Gita, where she overcomes despair and realizes her divine potential.

In his philosophical writings, particularly "Essays on the Gita," Sri Aurobindo reinterprets the scripture to suit his vision of spiritual evolution. He contrasts the idea of renunciation in the Gita with mere withdrawal from worldly life, advocating for a spiritual activism where individuals actively participate in life with the consciousness of the Divine. This is evident in his emphasis on karma yoga, which encourages selfless action dedicated to the Divine, and jnana yoga, which leads to the realization of the unity of the self with the Supreme.

The Gita's concept of dharma (duty) also finds a prominent place in Sri Aurobindo's writings. He interprets dharma as a dynamic principle, urging individuals to realize their true nature and act according to their higher calling. This idea of dharma transcends mere social roles and responsibilities, encompassing the deeper spiritual duty to manifest the Divine on earth. His literary works often reflect this profound understanding, encouraging readers to engage with life as a battlefield for spiritual growth.

EXAMPLES FROM LITERARY WORKS

1. "Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol"

In "Savitri," the influence of the Bhagavad Gita is profound, as the poem captures the essence of spiritual struggle and transformation. The character of Savitri exemplifies the Gita's teachings on karma yoga and the power of divine will. Just as Arjuna was guided by Sri Krishna to fulfill his dharma without attachment to success or failure, Savitri undertakes her mission with steadfast determination, embodying the spirit of selfless action. Her inner dialogue reflects the Gita's emphasis on rising above the ego,

embracing the Divine Consciousness, and overcoming the limitations of human life.

An example from the poem illustrating this is: "A vast surrender was his only strength." Here, Sri Aurobindo echoes the Gita's message of surrendering to the Divine as the highest form of spiritual practice, where the individual will is united with the Divine will.

2. "Essays on the Gita"

In "Essays on the Gita," Sri Aurobindo provides a reinterpretation of the Gita's key concepts, presenting them as a guide for modern spiritual seekers. For example, in discussing the Gita's teaching on the nature of the self (Atman), he elaborates on the idea of the individual self being one with the Universal Self, a notion that aligns with the Upanishadic philosophy expressed in the Gita. He emphasizes that true self-knowledge involves realizing the oneness of all existence, a theme that permeates his other writings as well.

Sri Aurobindo writes: "The Gita is not a book of dry philosophical theory but a spiritual revelation that aims to arouse the soul to its spiritual possibilities." This view reflects the way he integrated the Gita's teachings into his literary work as a call to action and spiritual transformation.

The Gita's Impact on Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Life and Society

Sri Aurobindo's vision of social and political transformation was deeply influenced by the Gita's call to action. He saw the Gita not only as a personal spiritual guide but also as a blueprint for shaping society according to higher spiritual principles. In his writings, he advocates for "spiritual nationalism," where India's resurgence is linked to its spiritual heritage, especially the teachings of the Gita. He believed that the Gita's vision of a life dedicated to the pursuit of the Divine could serve as a foundation for building a spiritually awakened society.

Sri Aurobindo's concept of life as a battlefield, where one must constantly engage in inner and outer struggles, echoes the Gita's setting of the Kurukshetra war. In his view, life's challenges are opportunities for spiritual growth, and true progress comes not from escapism but from overcoming obstacles with a higher consciousness. This perspective aligns with Krishna's teaching in the Gita, where Arjuna is advised to rise above his doubts and fight for the sake of righteousness.

CONCLUSION

The Bhagavad Gita has significantly influenced Sri Aurobindo's literary legacy, providing a framework for his spiritual philosophy and a source of inspiration for his

poetic and prose works. Through his reinterpretation of the Gita, Sri Aurobindo emphasized the integration of various spiritual paths, advocating for a life where action, knowledge, and devotion are harmoniously blended. His writings, especially "Savitri" and "Essays on the Gita," reflect the Gita's timeless teachings on self-realization, divine will, and the pursuit of spiritual growth through life's challenges.

Sri Aurobindo's engagement with the Bhagavad Gita offers not only a literary homage but also a transformative spiritual message that resonates in contemporary times. By merging the Gita's teachings with his own vision of Integral Yoga, he created a new path for spiritual aspirants, one that embraces the world rather than renouncing it. This integration has left a lasting impact on spiritual literature, ensuring the relevance of the Gita's wisdom in modern-day spiritual quests.

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