

# Tagore and Sri Aurobindo's Artistic Expressions Evoke Symphony of Aesthetic Brilliance

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to show how these two great mystics captured the spirit of poetics, which has continued unbroken since Bharata, who is considered to be the first Sanskrit poetician in our lineage. Rather than proving that one is better than the other that would be cruel and shameful, in my opinion it highlights the differences between their positions on aesthetics. I can only proceed to examine and evaluate their poetics in this light. Excessive reading would take away from the inherent beauty of their writing. To begin with, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo were both born and raised in Bengal; the latter according to the western tradition, and the former according to the gurukula tradition. But Tagore soon discovered the depth of Indian tradition upon his arrival in India in 1893, and he never deviated from it until he achieved maha Samadhi. They were mystic poets with distinct viewpoints on life and India, but they were also extraordinarily talented writers and orators who wrote extensively on moral and spiritual themes, defined the human condition in the context of Indian tradition, and actively promoted national freedom. But, while being a mystic who used poetry to communicate his experiences to the outside world, Tagore never deviated from the reality of daily life. He succeeded in striking a balance between the spiritual and material domains. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo basically lived by himself after giving up his revolutionary life to devote himself fully to a yogic existence. But he had never lost sight of the fact that his mission was to transform the world into something holy, and he had helped humanity achieve this objective by providing guidance from his most profound spiritual experiences. At least one of them had no interest in creating a novel or eclectic philosophy of art. Both of them hated academic pretension and had little interest in theory. Still, both had written extensively and poetically about their thoughts and experiences. The influence of eighteenth-century Neo-Platonic, Hegelian, Kantian, Indian, and romantic art theories was seldom evident in their works. Both remained true to their initial, core modes of thought. While Tagore's letters and "The Future Poetry" mirrored Sri Aurobindo's views on poetry and the arts, his writings "What is Art?", "The Realization of Beauty," and "The Poet's Religion" provide the basis for his pronouncements on poetics.*

**Keywords:** Nature Poetry, Spirituality, Nationalism

## I. INTRODUCTION

Let me talk about Tagore's aesthetics first. Tagore's idea of art is simple and devoid of superfluous scholarly terminology. He makes a distinction between the physical and the personal in order to define art. The physical man's hunger and thirst keep him in constant communication with the outside world. According to him, the personal man "is found in the region where we are free from all necessity, - above the needs, both body and mind, - above the expedient and useful!" It is the pinnacle of man, this individual man.<sup>1</sup> To attain harmony, serenity, and pleasure, this guy is also crucial. Science is an abstract universe of power, according to Tagore. "But there is another world which is real to us," Tagore adds. "We can use it by the help of our intellect but cannot realize it by the help of our personality." We experience it, see it, and feel every emotion associated with it. We cannot measure it, nor can we study it, therefore its mystery is infinite. Here you are, is all we can say.<sup>3</sup> Art replaces it in this world. "Because art has developed on its own, much like life itself, and man has enjoyed it without being entirely certain of what it is."<sup>4</sup>

Before giving a definition of art, Tagore asks why it exists and investigates whether it stems from a desire for aesthetic pleasure, a societal goal, or an inner want to express oneself that is the impetus of being. The difference between

animals and humans is that animals are constrained by their manners. However, according to Tagore, "man earns a great deal more than he is absolutely compelled to spend."<sup>5</sup> Man has an immense excess of riches when it comes to emotions and energy. His philosophy, art, and science all flourish from this excess. "Man has a fund of emotional energy which is not entirely occupied with his self-preservation," writes Tagore. Since man's civilization is based on his surplus, this excess finds an outlet in the development of art.<sup>6</sup> The excess of emotions and sentiments also looks for an outlet. Retaining this surplus is detrimental to humanity as well. Alternatively, we may argue that there isn't room in our being to accommodate this excess. Man attempts to find a way to free it as a result. In keeping with the Romantics, Tagore states that "man reveals himself and not his objects" in art.<sup>7</sup> This statement contrasts with T.S. Eliot's view, which opposes emotional expression and advocates for "escape" from the feelings. According to T.S. Eliot, a "escape" is anything constructive that is aimed once again at the target. The poet's emotions are captured by the "object." As a result, it shouldn't be seen as "a total escape," since it is not feasible. T.S. Eliot wants the poet to focus his passion on the object rather of providing it directly, as the Romantics did. This is how his aesthetics gave rise to the term "objective correlative." Examining his aesthetics in more detail in the article "What is Art? We learn that Tagore delicately separates the two worlds: the one that exists now just as a fragment of his senses and consciousness. It evolves as we do, and it expands with our perceptions. Depending on the extent and quality of this absorption, as well as the overall total, it might be considered large or little. This world of appearances may be changed by our emotions into the more personal world of feelings. There is an other reality that stimulates our emotional responses. In our Sanskritic culture, this is called *rasa*. A poem is characterized by its context. A poem, according to Tagore, is a statement or words that elicit strong feelings in the reader. It presents us with concepts and aspects of our essence.<sup>8</sup> Facts are not poetry. However, Tagore believes that what captivates us the most is the portrayal of beauty. Its connection to us is essential reading.

Emotion is vital to art. The only way we can communicate our true selves is via emotion. The artist must convey sensation, which can only be experienced via taste, rather than just facts and explanations. It is possible to create this flavor by using appropriate language. Only in this manner can art be born. In the words of Tagore, "Our personality is in its flood tide when our heart is fully awakened in love; or in other great emotions." It then yearns to express itself only for the purpose of doing so. Then follows art. Consequently, one might argue that feeling is the source of all art. This is unmistakably evidence of romantic perspective. When considering an artwork, Tagore believes that mannerisms also play a major role in creating beauty, since simply stuff is incapable of possessing this quality. "But the truth is, analytical treatment will not help us in discovering what the vital point in art is," notes Tagore in his own words. Because unity is the foundation of art.<sup>10</sup> The significance of oneness is inexplicable. "Organic wholeness" is the concept of oneness among artists. This is highlighted in tragedy by Aristotle, who is regarded as the first poetician in the western tradition; he compares it to a living thing. Its components must function as a cohesive whole and possess the qualities of a living thing. S.T. Coleridge, one of the Romantics, developed the "theory of organic wholeness," which emphasizes the value of both a poem's components and its entirety equally. T.S. Eliot and Cleanth Brooks have defended it in contemporary criticism with their artistic sensibilities.

According to Tagore, no real work of art has any abstract concepts. They have to present themselves as personification. Tagore has also addressed the metaphysical function of art. This is the reason that "poetry tries to select words that have vital qualities – words that are not mere information, but have become naturalized in our hearts and have not been worn out of their shapes by too constant use in the market." For him, the role of art is paramount. All of us are the offspring of Infinity. We experience immortality whenever we grasp this. We attempt to include all aspects of life within its domain. By doing this, we want to create a beautiful and truthful world. We become artists when we act in this way. It sheds light on beauty, which according to Tagore is present everywhere: "This building of man's true world - the living world of truth and beauty, - is the function of Art." Truth and beauty are the harmonious principles of creation and existence. Ugliness is found "in the distorted expression of beauty in our life and in our art which comes from our imperfect realization of Truth."<sup>13</sup> Ugliness is the result of our misperception and interpretation of beauty. When creating art, the artist must always strive to bring this harmonizing ideal to life. According to Tagore, there are no social differences between the beautiful and the ugly on the plane of aesthetics. He states that "the more we comprehend the harmony in the physical world, the more our life shares the gladness of creation, and our expression of beauty in art becomes more truly catholic." "We do not see only that object when we experience anything aesthetically," he explains.

The whole world is given respect by a lovely song, including the land, the sea, and the sky. Prominent poets have made it their mission to extol the virtues of everything that exists.15 He states:

Does our aesthetic sense simply illuminate and draw us in proximity to those aspects of the universe that we have developed a habit of deliberately labeling as "beautiful," rejecting and disregarding everything else? If this is the case, then it should be seen as a formidable obstacle in the way of our personal growth. In the same way that our intellectual faculties strive to encompass all of reality, our artistic sensibilities seek to embrace all of reality with joy; that is the sole significance of their relationship. The same standard that allows us to find beauty in a flower also allows us to find beauty in the universe. Unity in variety is that guiding concept. The more thoroughly we examine the vast scope of the cosmos, the more we understand that the universe's symphony is composed of good and evil, joy and agony, and life and death in all of their endless fluctuations. When we listen to the whole symphony, nothing seems fake or unattractive.16

According to Tagore, music is the most direct way to communicate beauty since it is the purest form of art. Genuine poets want to convey the cosmos via melodies. They are thus better than artists. When the widowed portrait is painted, it stands alone, and the constant expressions of love of the

The creative hand is withheld.17 In contrast, the poet, singer, and seer possess everything within them. Like brothers and sisters, his concept and manifestation are linked. So poetry is closer to music than art, according to Aristotle. The creative oneness notion is also acknowledged by the artist. According to Tagore, the oneness that originates from the One is found inside. Therefore, "man's profound faith in the unity of his being with all existence, the ultimate truth of which is the truth of personality, is cherish[d] in poetry and the arts."18

Upon further contemplation of the purposes of art, Tagore has refrained from dismissing the world in the authentic Advaitic meaning. He acknowledges that there are three stages of reality: the physical, the psychical, and the transcendental. He contends that being detached and disinterested in the aesthetic experience does not imply being detached from the natural world and the world of humans; rather, it simply means being detached from the demands of action. He consequently said that the purpose of art is to let us recognize that the world is richer and more fully real than it is in everyday experience. Art is a categorization of self-consciousness as much as it is a deepening of world-consciousness. Through art, man may create an intimate relationship with all things natural.

According to Tagore, the purpose of art is to dispel the shadows that hide the truth of both the objective universe and the human psyche, bringing them closer together in an intimate union. He refers to literature in his Bengali writings as "Sahitya," which is derived from the term "sachit" and etymologically implies "togetherness" or "intimacy." Since emotions are the primary means of human union and harmony with the environment, they have a special position in Tagore's philosophy of art. He does, however, provide a warning: emotions on the biological level—or, as the Vedanta refers to them, on the plane of avidya-kama-karma should not be the focus of art. According to him, an artist is someone who, if only briefly, can free themselves, their reader, spectator, or listener from this bondage.

According to Tagore, science and art need independence from the influence of biological impulses and the tendency to apply moral categories. Like science, art ought to be objective. From a scientific or aesthetic perspective, the cosmos is neither ridiculous or repulsive. Pain and suffering in the world, whether brought about by human or natural forces, must be seen by artists not as repulsive or ridiculous, but rather as components of a magnificent show. In this approach, Tagore defines art in a comprehensive and metaphysically laden manner. "What is the definition of art? It is the creative spirit of man answering the call of the Real."19

The aesthetics of Sri Aurobindo are rooted in a deep spiritual heritage. His aesthetics originated from his first yogic experiences, which were strongly rooted in the Upanishads and the Indian aesthetic tradition, even if he was open to the influence of Homer, Dante, Goethe, French poets, Shakespeare, and the Romantics. The proverb that goes, "All life is yoga," also applies to writing and the arts. Since art is a component of life, every art sadhana is yoga. All art forms, in his opinion, are expressions of beauty created by the soul's delight. As to Sri Aurobindo, the field of aesthetics is primarily focused on beauty, but it also encompasses rasa, which is the mind's reaction, the body's sensibility, and the vital emotion it has towards anything. Poetry endeavors to find this rasa. Therefore, as with all art, aesthetics is fundamental to poetry. According to him, beauty is connotative rather than denotative, with a greater range of applications. "The source of aesthesis is the Universal Ananda, which manifests in three primary and unique forms: beauty, love, and delight."22 The production of beauty in poetry and other artistic works is beyond the purview of

reason. It's supranational, but it's not ordinary. The inner ear and inner sight both see this beauty. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are three phases in the quest and experience of this beauty: the shape that awakens the senses, the concepts, and lastly the joy of pure beauty in everything. Suprasensuous, suprarational, and supraintellectual is the third level. "The soul of beauty which is hidden from the ordinary eye and the ordinary mind and revealed in its fullness only to the unsealed vision of the poet and artist in man," is what he called the great art.<sup>23</sup>

Aurobindo refers to poetry as the "Mantra of the Real," despite the fact that he finds it difficult and incomprehensible to define. <sup>24</sup> It is obviously incompatible with the Romantic idea, as well as with the definitions held by Arnold and T.S. Eliot. Tagore's definition of art, which states that it is "the response of man's creative soul to the call of the Real," is comparable to Sri Aurobindo's. In other words, Aurobindo is saying that poetry has to go beyond Earth and into higher spiritual realms that are home to Divine Truth, Divine Beauty, and Divine Delight. "Overmind" is the source of the mantra, not the regular mind, higher mind, or illuminated mind. No matter how strong and intelligent it may be, imagination cannot be the source. Above normal mental processes, this Overmind is the wellspring of Inspiration. The author explains the concept of "poetic inspiration" as follows: "We define inspiration as the force behind poetic creation and expression that originates from our superconscious source above ordinary mentality, giving the impression that written words are not the product of the mind but rather something more sovereign that is breathed or poured from above." <sup>25</sup> This suggests that the lyrical inspiration was divine in Sri Aurobindo's opinion. As a result, the poet experiences an overwhelming impulse to compose poetry from above. Similar to Shelley, he believes that poetry is a divine, enigmatic act of creation that is beyond the realm of conscious human understanding. Great poetry is therefore produced. The poet is fundamentally a spiritual person in this way. Of course, one can only appreciate this type of poetry with the spirit. In other words, it requires that the reader be spiritually awakened as well. Then by alone, they can really appreciate it.

This begs the issue of whether poetry writing is a heavenly rather than human endeavor. Actually, Sri Aurobindo believed that human and heavenly forces work together to create beauty. The human mind is the seat of creativity, even when inspiration comes from above. His definition of poetry is thus "the rhythmic voice of life."<sup>26</sup> However, he issues a warning, stating that "it is one of the inner and not one of the surfaces voice."<sup>27</sup> This inner is lovely and spiritual. Poetry must not be limited to the sensual, imaginative, and physical outer world. The poet is endowed with the ability to understand that it must pulse with the inner, and only then can it become the "rhythmic voice of life," uniting both the limited and the infinite. Such poetry will bestow upon us "the exalting power of a great breath of life, the spiritual and vital joy" (28).

Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life, and the Spirit are the five eternal forces of such poetry, according to Sri Aurobindo. He said that "these are indeed the five greater ideal lamps or rather the five suns of poetry."<sup>29</sup> Truth, Beauty, and Delight are the three most significant of these forces. The poet must navigate two realms when it comes to Truth: the spiritual and the psychological, the limited and the boundless. According to Sri Aurobindo's integral vision, truth and beauty are not separate concepts because, as he states, "Truth is not merely dry statement of facts or ideas to or by the intellect; it can be a splendid discovery, a rapturous revelation, and a thing of beauty that is a joy forever."<sup>30</sup> Truth and beauty "come together and coincide" in the Overmind. In addition to expressing the beautiful, a poet may also be a truth-seeker and lover.<sup>31</sup> His lyrical truth is not the same as the truth that is rationally or scientifically developed. Poetry offers us a glimpse of the boundless, creative, and everlasting reality. According to Sri Aurobindo, poetry is a unique form of self-expression of infinite Truth that may expose a different aspect of experience and give an entirely other face to things. Therefore, poetry's truth is not limited to philosophy, science, or religion.

Life and art are inextricably linked. Tagore concurs with this viewpoint. It is integral and inclusive as well. Sri Aurobindo does not disagree that life experience is necessary for the formation of literature. However, he asserts that "there is no obligation to copy faithfully from life."<sup>33</sup> Art, after all, enhances life by giving it something that it does not really have—a quality that is lacking in life. Here, Sri Aurobindo rejects the idea that art exists just for its own purpose and expresses opposition to the harsh realism that portrays reality in all its brutality and sordidness, saying instead, "Art cannot give what Nature gives, it gives something more." Simple everyday facts cannot serve as inspiration for art. Since art is essential, "cutting out palpitating pieces from life and presenting them raw and smoking or well-cooked for the aesthetic digestion" is not a true part of art's function.<sup>35</sup> An artist's greatest contribution is to reveal the deeper reality of objects so that, upon viewing them, life may reveal something more profound than just its outward mask. Sri

Aurobindo states that "the poet's greatest work is to open to us new realms of vision, new realms of being, our own and the world's and he does it even when he is dealing with actual things."<sup>36</sup> As a result, he believes that poets should have an emphasis on life and the truth and reality of the eternal self and spirit in both man and things. The essential essence and source of poetry and art are beauty and delight. Art, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not just the discovery or expression of beauty; rather, it "is a self expression of consciousness under the conditions of aesthetic vision and perfect execution, or, to put it another way, there are not only aesthetic values, but life-values, mind-values, soul-values that enter into Art."<sup>38</sup> He believes that art should be created for the sake of the soul rather than for the sake of art itself. He discusses three purposes for art in his article "The National Value of Art." The first is essentially artistic and lowest, the second is intellectual or educational, and the third is spiritual and highest. The employment of aesthetics just purges the emotions. Similar to this, the real, the good, and the beautiful do not clash in Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics. According to Sri Aurobindo, "the good must be beautiful and delightful, or to that extent it ceases to be good. The good must not be subordinated to the aesthetic sense." The goal of life is not to pursue virtue for its own sake, but rather to experience ananda and enjoyment. Progress is not about turning away from beauty and joy, but rather about moving up from the lower to the higher, from the less complete to the more complete forms of beauty and joy."<sup>39</sup>

According to Sri Aurobindo, imagination "ultimately becomes inspiration when it ascends higher" when it comes to the function it plays in the production of art. It approaches Truth more closely the purer it becomes. For example, poets often use their inspired imagination to create their works.<sup>40</sup> He disputes the idea that imagination just operates on a basic level. He makes a distinction between four types of imagination<sup>41</sup>: the subjective, which strongly visualizes mental and emotional impressions; the objective, which strongly visualizes the external aspects of life and objects; the poetic fancy, which engages in the play of mental fictions; and the aesthetic, which only appreciates the beauty of words and images for their own sake. He states, "All of them have a role in poetry, but they are only the poet's tools; they are simply the beginnings of the poetic style. Even the most subtly rendered images or words, the richest or most delicately rendered flights of fantasy, or the most exquisite word or picture coloring are all examples of the basic poetic imagination at work. It recognizes the spiritual reality of things and is creative, not of the actual or the felicitous, but of the most and most real."<sup>42</sup>

When it comes to the use of imagery in poetry, Sri Aurobindo repeatedly emphasizes that "the real substance of poetry is what the poet sees and feels, not what he opines."<sup>43</sup> The poetic mind uses inspired words to capture the world in meaningful images, and it uses the light and deeper vision of the Soul to show us what the senses and intelligence normally see in a limited and halting fashion. Images are not just the means of achieving beauty; to him, images are the "transcriptions of truths," allegorical or symbolical, accurate or free and imaginative. He notes, "Poetry, like the kindred arts of painting, sculpture, architecture, appeals to the spirit of man through significant images, and it makes no essential difference that in this case the image is mental and verbal and not material." The idea of a picture originates in the supraphysical realm, but "the mind's faculty of imagination is what gives it form and body ordinarily."<sup>45</sup>

## II. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ultimate truth and beauty of the Infinite in all of its forms are the central themes of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore's poetic philosophy. Sri Aurobindo's poetry emerges from the profound depths of his spiritual experiences. His concept of poetry is defined by profound yoga experiences. It is difficult to agree with him that poetry in the future would all be essentially spiritual and the product of a super conscientious intellect, but it does provide some interesting points of view. As a poet, Tagore is fundamentally romantic. He asserts that human creativity is intrinsic and that human art and literature are infinitely creative, just as human potential are infinite. He claims that there is a close connection between nature and humans. He agrees with romantics about the importance of feelings, creative imagination, and the value of the writer's individuality.<sup>46</sup> In his own words, Tagore admits that the writer communicates his basic humanity rather than his distinctiveness. Despite the differences in their perspectives on poetics, they have a lot in common, as seen by their poems, which show how their personalities have blended eastern and western concepts. It is without a doubt true that their poetry has improved the tradition of Indian poetry, which started with Bharata and continued through Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. However, one cannot be completely and blindly carried away by a limited viewpoint. Since only those poets who have gained spiritual consciousness and vision may

really convey the utmost, it is important to underline here that there is continuity between these two tremendous mystic poets.

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