Chapter III

SRI AUROBINDO (1872-1950)

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo is one of the renowned aesthetes of the world. He is associated with aesthetics as a poet and also as a spiritual thinker. In his literary contribution, he exhibits fine taste, deeper knowledge and feeling for beauty. He believes God to be the fountainhead of all beauty. Every object of beauty in this world, whether it be beauty of sound, beauty of colour, beauty of poise or beauty of rhythm, is but a shadow, however, faint of the beauty that is of God. He is of the opinion that beauty has a central place in Indian art and mind so much so that even Indian religion works its magic through aesthetic expression. Since time immemorial, beauty provided solace to the thirsty human soul. Beauty has the inherent power to change and sublimate the beast in man.

His aesthetic ideas occupy an important position in the history of Indian Aesthetic Thought because of his outlook, sanity of judgement and the sheer penetrating power into the realm of spiritual beauty. Sri Aurobindo's theory of aesthetics dovetails well with his philosophy and spiritual insight.

Sri Aurobindo is an idealist and he follows Vedantic idealism. His philosophy is idealistic as he conceived reality to be spiritual, again his philosophy is idealistic as he
conceives of an ideal for mankind to achieve.

On the metaphysical plane, Sri Aurobindo offers us a magnificent synthesis. He conceives Reality as supremely spiritual and also admits a place of matter in it. He is able to discover such a principle in the Vedantic concept of Brahma. He finds there that the principle of Brahma in spite of being spiritual can accommodate in its bosom the principle of matter also. ¹

Sri Aurobindo talks to us not only about what we have inherited, and what we now are but also what we are yet to become. He believes that humanity is proceeding through a progressive evolution towards a divine realisation on the earth. His whole exposition of the problem of man's nature and destiny is found on the pivot of evolutionary process.

Human existence, according to him, is full of possibilities and so he has an unavoidable tendency towards "climbing beyond what he is". "It is in his human nature, in all human nature, to exceed itself by conscious evolution, to climb beyond what he is." ²

Also, it is stated by Sri Aurobindo that the spiritual aspiration is innate in man as he is aware of imperfections and limitations in him. So he feels that there is something to be attained beyond what he now is, to overcome the imperfections and limitations in him. ³ Sri Aurobindo's sadhana convinces
him that man is capable of a higher attainment. Beyond the regions of mental consciousness, he has discerned the presence of the realm of the supramental. Yoga helps man in this attainment. The attainment of the supramental consciousness brings to humanity the idea of unity, wholeness, comprehensiveness, where lies the beauty and delight. Beauty and delight together constitute the prime source of the aesthetic thought of Sri Aurobindo.

In the present chapter, an attempt has been made to bring out the aesthetic significance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral evolution. In Sri Aurobindo's integral approach, all forms of experience find a place and aesthetic experience is cognised as 'necessary'. Sri Aurobindo accepts the Indian concept of "spiritual evolution" with a final spiritual perfection or transcendence as its goal. We have endeavoured also to assess the aesthetic thought of his books - Life Divine, the synthesis of yoga, Essays on the Gita, the Ideal of human unity and finally it has been tried to show how Sri Aurobindo exemplifies the attainment of the aesthetic delight through his book 'Savitri', through the characters of Aswapathy, Savitri and Satyavan.

**Foundations of Indian Culture and their aesthetic significance:**

In modern times, the religious and the philosophic thoughts are separated from the aesthetic. But in the ancient
religious and philosophical writings of India, like the Vedas and the Upanishads, such separation was not made and a perfect union of beauty and truth was found to be achieved; the world of truth represented spontaneously as a world of beauty.

That the ancient communities had the instinct for beauty and the urge for the aesthetic formulations become evident from the sight of those fine many-sided cultures which are their creations. Such creations still remain the fountainhead of all our evolving civilization. It must be admitted that these they created instinctively in the spirit and form of beauty. Even when the Indian mind became intellectually conscious afterwards and later on gave birth to classical literature and art, the spiritual-aesthetic strain was present there always. Indeed, “the expression of the spiritual through the aesthetic is the constant sense of Indian art, as it is also the inspiring motive of a great part of the religion and poetry.”

It is believed that ancient Indian culture was given its proper shape and vigour by the Vedas and the Upanishads. And it is a fact that the sublime poetry of the Vedas and the Upanishads revealed the gods as well as the subtle face and form of the highest Absolute Reality, the Ineffable unmanifest to the ancients. That poetry, again showed them the divine truth and power and joy present in the self of each human being. It also revealed to them the knowledge, the yoga to
attain self-realisation and God-realisation and finally the realisation where the self and God are one. By its immense spiritual riches and powers, this poetry succeeded in making itself the fountainhead of all that incessant urge to spirituality. 5

Sri Aurobindo observes that the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita are not at all philosophic thinking, but spiritual seeing, full of spiritual intuitions. The influence of the spiritual thinking of the Veda, the Upanishad and the Gita upon the ancients, therefore, was that spirituality became the essence of the ancient Indian people's life. Virtually, it continues to be so even till to-day with slight deviations now and then.

The spiritual as the essence of Indian life, informs and guides the non-spiritual spheres. We know of the essential determination of the ethical, the aesthetic and the other cultural dimensions of Indian life by the spiritual. The spirituality which is inherent in Indian culture is not static but dynamic. It is spirituality which has been the perennial source of what is living and growing in Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo himself is a follower of the spiritual-aesthetic strain and he develops this through his different works.

The point to be noted is that Indian spirituality is a high effort of the human spirit to rise beyond the life of
desire and vital satisfaction and arrive at an acme of spiritual calm, greatness, strength, illumination, divine realisation, settled peace and bliss which has beauty and aesthetic delight in it. Sri Aurobindo is plunging deep into the spiritualistic aesthetic tradition of India.

The peculiarity of the Indian thought is that it searches for the spirit in things everywhere. The Indian idea of the world, of Nature and of existence is not physical, but psychological and spiritual. All force is power, or means of a secret spirit; the force that sustains the world is a conscious will, and Nature is its machinery for executing power. The material universe is a form and movement of the spirit. Man himself is not a life and mind born of matter and eternally subject to physical Nature, but a spirit that uses life and body. It is the aspiration to break out in the end from this mind, bound to life and matter into a greater spiritual consciousness, that is the innermost sense of Indian culture.

Thus man in Indian thought is a spirit veiled in the works of energy, moving to self-discovery, capable of attaining the state of Godhood. He is in his uttermost reality identical with the ineffable Transcendence from which he came. He has the spiritual capacity to pass to a supreme and extra-ordinary pitch of manhood and that is the first aim which is proposed to him by Indian culture. He can become a free, perfect, semi-
divine man. Even he can do more, his spirit can become one 
with God, one self with the spirit of the universe or rise into 
a height and vastness that transcends the universe; his nature 
can become one dynamic power with universal Nature or one Light 
with a transcendental Gnosis.

To be shut up for ever in his ego is not his ultimate 
perfection; he can become a universal soul, one with the 
supreme unity, one with others, one with all beings. This is 
the high sense and power concealed in his humanity that he can 
aspire to this perfection and transcendence. And he can arrive 
at it through any or all of his natural powers, through his 
mind and reason and their illuminations, through his heart and 
it's unlimited power of love and sympathy, through his will and 
it's dynamic drive towards mastery and right action, through his 
ethical nature and its hunger for the universal Good, through 
his aesthetic sense and its seeking after delight and beauty, 
or through his inner soul and its power of absolute spiritual 
calm, wideness, joy and peace. Thus aesthetics plays a 
profound role in elevating human personality.

It has already been stated that in Indian thought, the 
note of spirituality is dominant, initial, constant; it is the 
support of all the rest. The first age of India's greatness 
was a spiritual age when she sought passionately for the truth 
of existence through the intuitive mind and through an inner
experience and interpretation both of the psychic and the physical existence. The stamp put on her by that beginning she has never lost, but rather always enriched it with fresh spiritual experience and discovery at each step of the national life. Even in her hour of decline, it has been the one thing she has never lost. Most of the spiritual and aesthetic works of Sri Aurobindo are essentially based on the true appreciation of this Indian spirit in all its implications.

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Evolution, The aesthetic significance of his philosophy of evolution:

In the previous section we have found how in Indian life spirituality is dominant, constant and is the support of all the rest. In Sri Aurobindo's thought also we trace the equal emphasis on the spirituality.

In a broad sense Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can be called idealistic. His idealism may aptly be described as "integralism" (purnavada). It is integral because it both accepts and sublimates the opposition between matter and spirit. Sri Aurobindo is aware that materialism and spiritualism are the prevalent rival theories which have attempted to explain the world in their own ways. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy synthesizes or integrates the two. He says, "The affirmation of a divine life upon earth can have no base unless we
recognize not only eternal spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily monism, but accept matter of which it is made. 

The fact is that matter and spirit, according to Sri Aurobindo, are like the two aspects of the same thing. If matter is to ascend to the spirit, there must be a corresponding descent of the spiritual consciousness in matter. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, tries to work out an integral view in which both spirit and matter are given their dues.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of evolution deals with this integral view in which both spirit and matter have been given due emphasis. Creation means the descent of the Divine consciousness into matter or lower forms of realities. In calling creation a descent of God, Sri Aurobindo wants to emphasize its double significance. First, the created world, even in its lowest levels, exhibits the stamp of its Divine origin. Secondly, it is a descent for the sake of ascent, so that the lower order of existence has the potency of reaching the Divine status.

Evolution is the movement which is the reverse of the movement of Involution or creation. It is because of the descent of the spiritual consciousness into matter, life and mind that these can ascend to the higher regions of the spirit. Evolution, thus, is a sort of home-sickness of the spirit. Thus if Sachchidananda is transformed into matter, then the
latter must become transformed into Sachchidananda again at the end. Sri Aurobindo feels that the lower cannot evolve into the higher unless the higher is already in it because evolution cannot proceed out of nothing. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says, "... Spirit is a final evolutionary emergence because it is the original involuntary element and factor."^9

The creation begins with the universe without life and consciousness and at that moment there is only matter and matter around. The fire, sun, earth, water etc., constitute the cosmos. The next step in cosmic growth consists of the evolution of life. The next evolute in the series of evolution is that of the conscious principle, namely Mind. But evolution cannot stop with mind, for mind is not the last word. It moves further and comes to the next stage, namely Supermind.

To Sri Aurobindo, evolution does not mean merely addition of some new principles to already existent, but the old principles, by reason of the emergence of the new ones, change their character. Then again, evolution does not mean mere change. It is the emergence of ever new higher qualities, forms and values. We all have a native, inborn sense of beauty and delight. To Sri Aurobindo, this sense of beauty springs from the roots of our life, it is an instinct and an impulse, instinct of aesthetic satisfaction and impulse of aesthetic creation and enjoyment. So like the origin of many things
this instinct and impulse is imperfect and impure at the beginning. As in our evolutionary growth, we mature in our life of intellect, the deficiencies of our aesthetic instinct are corrected and enlightened, as our taste and knowledge get improved along with the emergence of new higher qualities. Sri Aurobindo says, "The reason comes in to distinguish, to enlighten, to correct, to point out the deficiencies and the crudities, to lay down laws of aesthetics and to purify our appreciation and our creation by improved taste and knowledge."¹⁰

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we find at the outset that the search for beauty is only a satisfaction in the beauty of form, the beauty which appeals to the physical senses and the vital impressions, impulsions, and desires. This is the aesthetic experience in this stage. In the middle stage of evolution, man entertains aesthetic satisfaction in the beauty of the ideas seized, the emotions aroused, the perception of perfect process and harmonious combination. But that is not enough. Behind them the soul of beauty in us desires the contact, the revelation, the uplifting delight of an absolute beauty in all things which it feels to be present. This absolute beauty we cannot have through the senses and instincts, for it is super-sensuous, nor can we have it through the reason and intelligence, for it is supra-rational, supra-intellectual. The soul itself seeks to arrive at it crossing all the veils. When it can get the touch of this universal, absolute beauty,
it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. Sri Aurobindo sums up this basic point as, "It is, in truth, seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the all-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art; for God is Beauty and Delight hidden in the variation of his masks and forms. To find highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create highest beauty, is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God."\(^{11}\)

The human evolution takes place from one grade to another grade of existence. The first vital transformation is called the psychic transformation in which the soul controls the physical body, life and mind. The second transformation of the soul-personality into the spiritual personality bestows on an individual greater power, blessedness, truth and spiritual consciousness. When the spiritual emerges in man, spiritual transformation of body, life and mind and identity with Sachchidananda increases. But even with spiritual consciousness and powers, man lives with some amount of ignorance. The ignorance is finally removed with the emergence of divine consciousness in man. With the gradual ascent in consciousness above the mind we finally realise the divine consciousness. This supramental transformation transmutes a spiritual being into a divine being with supramental consciousness, force, truth and bliss, which are the principles of sachchidananda.
So, these principles of sachchidananda - Pure Existence, consciousness - force and Bliss, represent the higher sphere and matter, life, psyche and mind belong to the lower sphere. How can an evolute belonging to the lower sphere transforms itself in such a way that it is able to enter the higher or the spiritual sphere?

Sri Aurobindo feels that this can be possible only if a principle mediates between the two. Here we are to conceive such a principle which would be able to differentiate, and yet not divide the unitary principle of reality. This principle is the principle of supermind. It is not sachchidananda itself, and yet it is akin to its nature because it is the consciousness of Sachchidananda itself. That is why Sri Aurobindo describes supermind in this way: "The supermind starts from unity, not division, it is primarily comprehensive, differentiation is only its secondary act."\(^\text{12}\)

This transition of mind to supermind is not abrupt or sudden. There must be some intermediary steps through which this transition will be brought about. The order of ascent from mind to supermind is through the following intermediary steps: Mind — Higher Mind — Illumined Mind — Intuition — Overmind — Supermind. These phases are not only the foundation of evolution but also constitute tier upon tier of Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic edifice.
With the emergence of Higher mind, mind becomes aware of its own capacities. But luminous seeing is not here. So, a mind of spiritual light, i.e., Illumined Mind is the next stage to ascend. Sri Aurobindo states, "As the Higher mind brings a greater consciousness into the being through the spiritual idea and its power of truth, so the Illumined Mind brings in a still greater consciousness through a Truth-sight and Truth-light and its seeing and seizing power."\textsuperscript{13}

But these two stages of the mind can get their fulfilment only with the emergence of intuition as it is the capacity to see Truth and to hear it in its organised form in an act of direct and immediate revelation. Yet it is also not the highest form of consciousness. This needs the help of spiritual light for higher powers to descend. This faculty into which Intuition has to ascend is called by Sri Aurobindo "The Overmind", which is capable of receiving the light from above. Sri Aurobindo describes this stage thus, "The Overmind is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation, it is the highest possible status-dynamis of the spirit in the spiritual-mind plane. It takes up all that is in three steps below it and raises their characteristic workings to their highest and largest power, adding to them a universal wideness of consciousness and force, a harmonious consent of knowledge, a more manifold delight of being."\textsuperscript{14}
But then, Overmind is not Supermind. In spite of being superconscient and cosmic, it lacks the integral character of supermind. Although its basis is a cosmic unity, its action is an action of division and interaction, an action taking its stand on the play of the multiplicity. Integral view is not reached here. That view would be possible only when the veil separating the two spheres is removed and there is a final leap into the status of the supermind. Here supramental transition takes place. Sri Aurobindo says, "A supramental change takes place when the involved supermind in Nature emerges to meet and join the supramental light and power ascending from super-nature."\(^\text{15}\) The individual is the instrument of transformation, but this individual transformation takes place finally on a cosmic level.

Thus supramental consciousness is the cosmic vision which is all-comprehensive and all-pervading. It is the integral knowledge of the essentially non-dual character of reality. Sri Aurobindo describes the nature of supramental consciousness as, - "In this comprehensive knowledge there is no independent existence, no individual separated ego, such as we see in ourselves, that whole of existence is to its self-awareness an equable extension, one in oneness, one in multiplicity, one in all conditions and everywhere."\(^\text{16}\) The purpose, meaning, the value of life of an individual rests in his identity and oneness with the Divine consciousness. The
purpose of evolution is the divinisation of the individual and the universe. This is achieved in this supramental transformation.

As a result of the supramental transformation, men would not remain 'mental men', but would become super-men or supramental men. They would not be men of ignorance but men of knowledge - the 'Gnostic beings'. This transformation then will seek to establish a race of Gnostic beings.

The Gnostic being always acts in awareness of the harmony of his individual self with the total self, of his individual will with the total will, of his individual action with the total action. This simply means that the being is completely divinised spirit. Sri Aurobindo describes the character of the Gnostic being thus, "a complete self-knowledge in all things and at all moments is the gift of the supramental gnosis with a complete self-mastery, not merely in the sense of control of Nature, but in the sense of a power of perfect self-expression in Nature." 17

Sri Aurobindo further states that as we climb beyond mind, higher and wider values replace the values of our limited mind, life and bodily consciousness. Aesthetics shares in this intensification of capacity. As it enters the stage of overmind stage, the ordinary aesthetics turns into a pure delight and becomes capable of a high, large or a deep abiding ecstasy as
overmind is capable of receiving the light from above. In the next stage, i.e., in the supramental transformation, there is a turn towards universality in place of the isolations, and as such here in this stage the being becomes completely divinised spirit. Here we have a first firm foundation of the experience of a universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight. The acme of the aesthetic experience is realised here in this stage. Such supramental being has no desires, no wants, nothing to strive for or achieve. Even delight is not his goal, it is his nature. The supramental being so performs his activities in the joyous spirit.

It is not that we cannot have this experience of a universal beauty and delight altogether on the mental and vital planes, but here it is but a "temporary experience" and also "limited" in its field and does not "touch the whole being". But when we rise to the overhead consciousness it becomes "more and more the law of the vision and the law of the nature". The Overmind looks straight at and into the soul of each thing and not only at its form or its significance to the mind or to the life; this brings not only the true truth of the thing but the delight of it. It also sees the one spirit in all, the face of the Divine everywhere and there can be no greater Ananda than that. Sri Aurobindo expresses it as, "In all this the Overmind aesthesis takes its share and gives its response; for these things come not merely as an idea in the mind or a truth-seeking
but as an experience of the whole being and a total response is not only possible but above a certain level imperative."

Whenever the Overmind of a spiritual man turns to the final stage of evolution, i.e., towards the supramental transition, he sees a universal beauty touching and uplifting all things, a universal love goes out from him to all beings; he feels the Bliss which has created the worlds and upholds them. Every form becomes beautiful to it in a deeper and larger sense than that commonly known to us.

In his epic 'Savitri', Sri Aurobindo has shown how Kino Awapathy, the representative man, reached through the transformation of his inner being the divine, and make of himself a fit receptacle for the descent of the world-mother, leading to the ultimate defeat of Death. Sri Aurobindo believes that man, having in him the potentiality of the divine will attain to Godhead and along with it the perfect aesthetic state through the slow but sure process of evolution. The following lines may be quoted as illustrations:

"We are sons of God and must be even as he;
His human portion, we must grow divine."  

The Aesthetic thought of "Life Divine" (vol. I and II):

Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution is based upon the idea that the source of evolution being Sachchidananda Himsel',
it cannot stop until the whole world is completely divinised. So the most important characteristic feature of Sri Aurobindo's concept of evolution is that the divine life is to be realised on earth. As we have already found that man must progress from mind to supermind and to achieve the life of what Sri Aurobindo calls Gnostic Being or the divine life. The achievement of the Divine life on earth, is the goal, which Sri Aurobindo wants men to achieve. This divinization lies in perfect integration of the world and the individual with each other and of both with God in such a manner that all of them together form the highest possible organism in which none of them is either lost or ignored. On the contrary here, as Sri Aurobindo states, "all is in each and each is in all and all is in God and God in all."\(^{20}\)

In this relationship, there is oneness of all and an embrace to each other establishes harmony thereby. This harmony signifies the idea of the beauty of the soul, because none other than the beautiful soul can abide by such harmony.

Sri Aurobindo does not find any difficulty in reconciling the unity of God and the multiplicity of the world entities for the attainment of the ultimate harmony. Sachchidananda is one, but His Oneness is not exclusive of the potentiality of the many. For, it is He Himself who assumes the form of the multiplicity which is the world. Sri Aurobindo compares the role of God in the world with that of a poet,
artist or musician who composes his poetry, art or music for the sake of actualising the conceptual harmony latent in his mind. So, too the world is the actualization of the harmony latent in the Eternal. Sri Aurobindo observes, "As a poet, artist or musician when he creates, does really nothing but develop some potentiality in his unmanifested self into a form of manifestation, ... so is it with the world and the Eternal."^21

So, Sachchidananda has within Him the entire world in potential form. The Absolute Sachchidananda is also Bliss. The Bliss is the cause of creation, evolution and manifestation. The Absolute has no purpose in creation. It is not imperfect and has nothing to realise out of creation. The creation is just for the sake of joy or delight. For the sake of His delight of Becoming, the potentiality in Him needs to be actualized. Gradual actualization of the potentiality is the process of the world, i.e., involution. Sri Aurobindo describes creation as the ecstatic dance of Shiva and as such the purpose of creation can be nothing else but the joy of the dancing. "World Existence", writes Sri Aurobindo, "is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of God numberlessly to the view, its sole object is the joy of the becoming."^22

Involution is thus the self-manifestation of the Divine. By affirming the positive character of the Absolute as well as its omnipresence in relative reality, Sri Aurobindo has
justified the aspiration of man which is to realise the divine on earth.

Sri Aurobindo thinks that we do not really know life unless we are aware and grow conscious of the consciousness-force of the Divine working in it, of which it is only the external aspect and manifestation. The destiny of man is to become a superman or a divine being. When an individual has life divine, he attains his consummation and perfection. Salvation means perfection of all the elements of an individual or the development of the powers of God in all its infinite aspects in an individual. So, as Sachchidananda is full of bliss, joy and delight or ananda, these must be in divine life too as the divine life is the descent of the Sachchidananda Himself through supermind.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, man can attain complete unity with the Divine or can attain the life divine on earth by the attainment of supramental consciousness which has already been discussed in the present chapter. This supramental consciousness makes a complete and radical transformation of man—his physical as well as his psychic and spiritual structure. He then becomes a gnostic being, a divine man. This completion of individuality of being on earth is possible only when there is the realization of the sense of harmony of his own self with the universal self. The Gnostic being acts in this sense of harmony of his own self with the universal self. "To become
complete in being, in consciousness of being, in force of being, in delight of being, and to live in this integrated completeness is the divine being.\textsuperscript{23}

This divine, gnostic being, who is in harmony with himself and with the rest of the universe, seeks the delight of self-manifestation of the spirit in himself and in all. He is the aesthetic man as he is in harmony with himself and the rest of the world. So, the individual's supramental consciousness, i.e., the life divine not only illumines but also transmutes the earth. Thus the "glories" of spiritual experience are the end to which aesthetic experience leads.

It is commonly accepted that a truly liberated or spiritual man is he who makes the joy and grief of others his own. Liberation or moksha means to Sri Aurobindo, a spiritual rebirth as a superman with greater consciousness. There is no ego, no imperfection, but omniscience and truth in such a being.* Sri Aurobindo points out that one who attains knowledge of Reality through intuition for oneself has not achieved much. He must love and have sympathy for other people. The Divine life, then primarily consists in a life, in which there will be a race of supramental Gnostic individuals. The Gnostic being in Divine life will act not only out of love

\*Like Plato, Fichte, Buddha and Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo outlines schemes of total cosmic salvation where nothing remains imperfect. (Aspects of Sri Aurobindo's Thought - by K. V. K. Singh, p. 50).
and sympathy or any other similar feeling but also out of a consciousness of an intimate oneness. He finds himself not in his own fulfilment but also in the fulfilment of others. Thus the divine man is the aesthetic man having harmony at the base. Sri Aurobindo writes, "The gnostic life will exist and act for the Divine in itself and in the world, for the Divine in all: the increasing possession of the individual being and the world by the Divine presence. Light, power, love, Delight, Beauty will be the sense of life to the gnostic being."  

The gnostic life is a beautiful harmony of all the three aspects of our psyche, namely, cognitive, conative and affective. Moreover, like the Karmayogin of the Gita, he works dispassionately without any search for any fruit or result. Such being is endowed with light, power, love, Delight, with the sense of beauty. So, he can love all, he feels delight in all, he finds beauty in all things.

Sri Aurobindo discovers that even at the extreme point of ignorance of other people, the gnostic being discovers a trace of truth where lies the beauty. The reason is that ignorance is not an independent principle of truth, rather it is knowledge in search of truth. Sri Aurobindo admits the inevitability of falsehood and error, and of pain and suffering born from these and yet he feels that the divine life discerns in them the initial manifestation of Ananda itself. Sri Aurobindo expresses it as, "The Non-existence is a concealed
Existence, the Inconscience a concealed consciousness, the insensibility a marked and dormant Ananda."25

This gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man; his whole way of being, thinking, living and acting would be governed by the power of a vast universal spirituality, all his action would originate from and obey the supreme self. The heart and nature of the gnostic life gets purified, the inner consciousness gets awakened. Such gnostic individuals being fused into oneness with the universal self and spirit and thereby with all as all belong to the universal self, entertain beauty which is nothing but aesthetic.

Divine life, thus, is the emergence of a perfect life on earth, a life not of separation or isolation, but one of unity and harmony, a life not regulated by the mental and natural forces, but a life regulated by super-consciousness. Sri Aurobindo describes this life in the following manner, "A life of gnostic beings carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status might fully be characterised as a Divine life, for it would be a life in the Divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light and power and joy manifested in material nature."26

In the epic 'Savitri', the king's journey through the vast and innumerable realms is symbolic of his aspiration -
aspiration for bringing down on earth the Divine flame for redeeming mankind from the bondage of ignorance.

**Aesthetic truth of the synthesis of Yoga**

We have noticed that evolution is preparing for a leap into the spiritual or the supramental level where a race of gnostic beings is established. Gnostic beings are the aesthetic beings as they enjoy beauty in unity. They attain divine life where no traces of differences are found between the states and phases of the individual's life, between the individual and other individuals and between the individual self and the universal self. There lies the real beauty to Sri Aurobindo. Therefore, Gnostic beings having the divine life, enjoy beauty everywhere and so they are aesthetic beings. This divine life is the ultimate destiny, the goal of evolution. But how to have this divine life on earth? Sri Aurobindo's assertive answer is that this can be brought to the earth by 'yoga'. 'Yoga' is needed to facilitate and expedite this leap. Naturally yoga is the vehicle which makes individuals know about the unity and thus enables them to have the divine life on earth and to have the aesthetic delight.

The word 'yoga' literally means 'union' and therefore, the basic aim of all kinds of yoga is the realisation of the Divine - the realisation of unity. Man's present existence in
the material world is a life of ignorance, but the presence and possibilities of the Divine are involved here. The realisation of this possibility has been the aim of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Yoga is a dynamic, all-embracing and ever-developing method.

Sri Aurobindo was not a follower of any existing yoga schools. He examines Hathayoga, Rajayoga and the three traditional yogas of Jnana, Bhakti and Karma. He thinks that the followers of these yogas have failed to take a 'total' view of man's life and destiny. His aim is to synthesise all the approaches of the previous disciplines into an integral approach. Sri Aurobindo's yoga is therefore known as 'Purna yoga' or 'Integral yoga'. This integral yoga synthesizes all other types of yoga and advances above them to arrive at a complete technique to realise reality in its integrity. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, declares, "Yoga means union with the Divine, a union either transcendental (above the universe) or cosmic (universal) or individual, as in our yoga, all three together." 27

Integration and transformation - these two form a distinctive feature of Sri Aurobindo's Integral yoga. Integration means the harmonious welding of the different parts of the being into an organic whole, so that they can move in perfect unison in the steps of the divine will. Transformation means a radical change and conversion of the natural parts into
their spiritual equivalents, so that the whole of human nature may be sublimated and transfigured into the divine supernatural. A synthesis of all the yogas implies an integration of all the parts of the human being including the physical, then again of individual with other individuals, of individuals with the Divine. This only makes a man complete. Sri Aurobindo stands for such a complete synthesis and the integral fulfilment of man. A perfect union with the supreme is a union in all his states, poses and modes of being. A perfect and complete man having perfect union with the Supreme is the aesthetic man.

A total transformation of all the aspects of being - the mental, the vital and the physical is necessary to have divinity here on earth. Therefore, only that process can be Purna yoga which will aim at the complete transformation of every aspect of being. This is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Thus through integral yoga, Sri Aurobindo aims at life's complete transformation into the divine. The end or objective of integral yoga therefore, is "Divine perfection of the human being and the complete spiritualization of the universe." "To grow into the truth and power of the spirit, and by the direct action of that power to be made a fit channel of its self-expression - a living man in the Divine and a divine living of the spirit in humanity - will be the principle and the whole object of an integral yoga of self-perfection." 28
Integral yoga, thus, aims at the Divine transformation of the whole of embodied existence and also includes sarvamukti or the collective liberation of the mankind. In essence, Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga not only implies ascent but also makes for the descent of Divine consciousness on earth. It is only by the descent of this supramental consciousness that the all-round integral perfection of man becomes possible. This is possible as yoga is successful in "getting into a consciousness in which one is no longer limited by the small ego, personal mind, personal vital and body but is in union with the supreme self or with the universal." Nothing short of supramental realisation can satisfy the spiritual aspiration of the integral yoga. Thus yoga is the science of the eternal communion of the individual with the universal self. It deals with the method or means which will bring the illuminating supramental consciousness down into the consciousness of man and will prepare the ground for a life Divine on earth. Yoga is thus the root of the ecstatic delight of integral union.

So, Sri Aurobindo suggests that man must prepare himself with the help of yogic exercise for receiving the supramental consciousness. A constant, loving concentration, fortified by a thorough-going purification of nature based on an unshakable peace and calm, is necessary to proceed through yogic exercise. Of course, his integral yoga is not the yogic discipline of an individual yogin but is one which attempts the
collective or social salvation of all humanity, present and future, by a process of conscious evolution.

Sri Aurobindo's yoga is not an escape of the soul from matter, life and mind which are inferior modes of spirit's manifestation; rather it strives to attain the highest consciousness in order to see that material, vital and mental existence is transformed into a higher consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's yoga thus accepts everything as coming from the supreme person. Evil is considered as a negative aspect of good; darkness is want of light, having no positive content. Yoga thus teaches the individuals to find beauty everywhere in the world. "The aim of the Integral yoga is not a rejection, but a transformation of Nature for the manifestation of the Divine in the material world."³⁰

As it is found, yogic knowledge is the authentic knowledge of the divine. Sri Aurobindo wants a total transformation of the individual and humanity from the rational animal to the Divine being. Yoga is the effort to move the mind along the path of ascent towards the supermind.

By diving deep within himself through yoga, an individual is capable of reaching a state of consciousness in which the flux of his mental modifications is transformed into permanent awareness, multiplicity of his ideas is incorporated in one ultimate idea, and the discord of his inner life is
transformed into the supreme harmony of existence, consciousness and delight. Such an elevated being is known as the gnostic being. All the ways and powers of consciousness of other individuals would be felt as the ways and powers of his own personality by the gnostic being. He would act in an universal awareness and harmony of his individual self with the total will. Pain and suffering will cease to affect him. He will acquire a new tranquility and a power to view with absolute detachment all pleasures and pains. Transformation, as it is understood in the Integral yoga implies, as Sri Aurobindo says, "another power of knowledge, another kind of will, another luminous nature of emotion and aesthesis, another constitution of the physical consciousness." 31

Hence, in Sri Aurobindo's view, yoga is the spiritual vehicle with the help of which divinity can be brought to the earth and so gnostic beings with divinity would realize the aesthetic truth. Sri Aurobindo's originality in the spiritual field lies in his focussing in himself this deepest and highest aspiration of humanity, and discovering the secret of its perfect fulfilment. Thus in course of time, with the aid of the yoga, a race of gnostic beings endowed with aesthetic delight would emerge on earth.
Aesthetic experience of 'the Ideal of Human Unity':

We have arrived at the view that it is yoga which can bring the total transformation of man. A true yoga does not take man away from life, rather it forms the true foundation on which a divine life can be realised on earth. Divine life is not of a particular individual but of all. It means universal divine life. The idea of universal divine life bears the deep sense of spiritual oneness and it implies human unity. It is only when the supramental Truth-consciousness, the supermind, which is the very dynamic light and power of the Divine, emerges and takes full possession of the earthly life, that there will begin a new order of life and existence based on unity, harmony and universal love. All will achieve ananda in such a living and here Sri Aurobindo finds the aesthetic delight.

Supermind helps man to rise beyond the mental stage and develop the supramental or gnostic consciousness. Man's destiny is to rise from the mental consciousness to a Truth-consciousness, the supermind, to bring its light. It is possible for man to attain the Truth-consciousness through the process of evolution, i.e., through Higher mind — Intuition — Overmind. This brings a radical change in human life. Human being then becomes perfectly spiritual.

Such spiritual man discovers his true self, remains in constant union with the Divine and has the joy of it. With the
ascent of humanity the defects and imperfections will be removed and new powers and possibilities of knowledge, love, work and joy will be manifested on earth. So, it is the manifestation of the Truth-consciousness that Sri Aurobindo believes, would bring about the necessary individual and collective perfection. It is the perfection of the collective being through the perfection of the individual that ultimately leads to the establishment of the human unity. Sri Aurobindo considers the realization of the human unity to be spiritual and beautiful. Unity means the state of being one single entity, i.e., oneness. Thus it is the state of being combined with others to form a greater whole, the state of being a complete or harmonious combination of elements. So, it denotes complete accord among persons regarding attitudes, opinions, intentions etc. Beauty lies in such unified experience. So unity has got its aesthetic value.

Sri Aurobindo views the problem of human unity in the general background of Nature’s evolutionary progression. Nature is changing, progressing, evolving, ascending from height to more elevated height, widening from limit to broader limit of its own possibilities. Yet in all this changing there are certain eternal principles or truths of being which remain the same and for these eternal principles or truths, our progress and perfection are compelled to take place. Otherwise there would have been an infinite chaos.
Unity is not an arbitrary idea, it is the very basis of life. It is at the foundation of all things and evolutionary process is moved towards its conscious realisation. And one day humanity too would realise it. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, - "The unity of mankind is evidently a part of Nature’s eventual scheme and must come about. Only it must be under other conditions and with safeguards which will keep the race intact in the roots of its vitality, richly diverse in its oneness." 33

The individual, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a spiritual being and self-expression of the Absolute. The purpose of evolutionary nature is to effect the total spiritual transformation of the individual through his liberation from the domination of ignorance and inconscience. So the destiny of the individual is the realisation of his unity with the totality of Brahma in its dual nature of Being and Becoming and the spiritualisation of the terrestrial life. Spiritualism, Sri Aurobindo recommends, is to be understood not in terms of egoism but in terms of universalism. It is true that the goal of life is spiritual enlightenment, but not annihilation. It is self-realisation and not self-liquidation. It is the transformation of the ego, the I-sense and not its total destruction. The most valid spiritual ideal of life is to transform one’s whole being into an image of the Divine and not to get lost in the abyss.
of the Infinite. Freedom and harmony are the essential principles of variation and oneness. The feeling of oneness is to serve the purposes of both integration and individual freedom in a unique manner. Neither integration is to be favoured at the cost of individual freedom, nor individual freedom at the cost of integration.

So, it becomes explicit that man is not an isolated, deserted, forlorn being in the ocean of life. Man has to grow in consciousness till he reaches the complete consciousness not only in the individual but also in his collective, that is, social life.* The growth of consciousness is the master key to earthly evolution. It helps man to purify the lower formulation in all the parts of being and remoulds the being into the mode and pattern of the supramental Truth-consciousness. Then only, man will grow into a complete, integral, perfect being, and will be lucky enough to acquire the qualities of truth, knowledge, power and delight which are the qualities of the supreme Reality.34 Spiritualism thus imprints upon us the idea that we are not solitary individuals, but members of a greater unified whole. Real beauty is enjoyed in such an unified experience. Beauty and delight are the central concepts in Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic thought.

*In this connection, the Buddhist ideal of universal compassion or karuna, the Hindu ideal of universal family or vasudaiva kutumbakam, and the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood are worth-noting.
So, man is viewed by Sri Aurobindo as neither a mind, nor a life, nor a body but a soul or spirit. By this he views man not as the individual self but as the universal self that pervades every individual. The proper sense of human unity can be accomplished by the realisation of this deep sense of spiritual oneness. The main function of the heart being love, it is through love that we can enter into a dynamic oneness with the Divine and with all beings. This capacity for love has to be developed to such an extent that nothing in the world would remain outside its embrace. Friend and foe, saint and sinner, the high and the low, the ugly and the beautiful—all have to be loved as oneself, as the many self-figurations of the identical.

A society which is essentially organic or rational and basically political and economic in its aims, is viewed by Sri Aurobindo as wholly spiritual—a soul-form of the Infinite embodied upon earth for a divine fulfilment. Its chief aim is the spiritual evolution of its constituent members by providing the necessary conditions of life and growth, and to provide mankind the light, the power, the beauty, the harmony and joy which are native to the spirit. If these can be realised for mankind, delight will be with mankind and that will be the aesthetic delight.

Mankind is the only self-conscious self-expression of the Absolute in his cosmic unfolding. It is within this general
nature and general destiny of mankind that each individual has
to pursue the common ideal according to his own basic nature,
svabhava, and to arrive at the necessary perfection by inner
development. He can truly help the world only through the
growth of his own real self. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,
"... the infinite identity, the multitudinous unity, the
omniscient, who having made man in his own image with the eco
as a centre of working, with the race, the collective Narayana,
the Visvamanava as the mould and circumscription, seeks to
express in them some image of the unity, omniscience,
 omnipotence which are the self-conception of the Divine."36

Thus the law for the individual is to perfect his
individuality by free development from within, and to promote
the same in respect of others. "The law of humanity is to
pursue its upward evolution towards the finding and expression
of the Divine in mankind, taking full advantage of the free
development and gains of all individuals and nations and
groupings of man, to work towards the day when mankind may be
really and ideally one divine family."37

Therefore, it is admitted that the ideal of human unity
will remain a utopia if individuals and nations are not guided
in their development by the supreme social trinity - liberty,
equality and fraternity. These three are in fact belong to the
nature of the soul; for freedom, equality, unity are the eternal
attributes of the spirit. They will have to be realised first in the soul of humanity before they would be truly manifested on the surface. As Sri Aurobindo states, "freedom of the soul means the freedom of its self-development, the self-development of the divine in man in all his being. Equality wants freedom equally for all and the recognition of the same soul, the same godhead in all human beings. Fraternity or brotherhood is an attempt at the equal freedom of self-development on a common aim, a common life, a unity of mind and feeling founded upon the recognition of this inner spiritual unity."  

Sri Aurobindo desires that man, the individual has to become and to live as a universal being; to have this attainment, his limited mental consciousness has to be widened to the superconscient unity in which each embraces all. He is to have the knowledge of this infinite embrace. This will enable the individual to replace his lusts and discords by universal love. Then his restricted vital being would become equal to the whole stock of the universe upon it and be capable of universal delight.

Aesthetic thought of 'Essays on the Gita':

We have found that oneness with God, oneness with all beings, the realisation of the eternal divine unity everywhere and the drawing onwards of men towards that oneness are the
laws of life. This oneness is the secret goal of our human nature. Now, it is to be discussed how the Gita plays its role here in endowing man with the realisation of oneness and thereby promotes aesthetic thought. As elsewhere Sri Aurobindo's approach is even here integral and total, for in fact, he discovers in the Gita a living spiritual message covering all sides of human nature. Sri Aurobindo writes, "The greatness of the central thought of the Gita in which all its threads are gathered up and united, consists in the synthetic value of a conception which recognises the whole nature of the soul of man in the universe and validates by a large and wise unification its many-sided need of the supreme and infinite truth, power, love, Being to which our humanity turns in its search for perfection and immortality and some highest joy and power and peace."40

So, the Gita propounds a magnificent synthesis and paves the way for a harmonious growth of the whole human personality into the fullness and perfection of the Divine. It makes a synthesis of the three faculties of will, knowledge and love. For Sri Aurobindo, the quintessence of the Gita lies not in its karma aspect but on the yoga. To Sri Aurobindo, bhakti, karma and jnana are only means to enhance the power of the yoga. Jnanayoga seeks the fulfilment of the intellectual being of man. It seeks union with the Supreme in His eternal and undifferentiated existence (sat) alone. Karmayoga envisages union in the
will, conscious-Force alone, and Bhaktiyoga in the Eternal delight. The intention behind this synthesis is to raise the whole consciousness of man to the Divine. There is an intense delight of love in the greatness and beauty and perfection of this divine being. That deeper ecstasy draws all other delight into it and transforms by a marvellous alchemy the mind's and the heart's feelings and all sense movements.

Activity, knowledge and love, cured of their trenchant, separative tendencies are blended and fused into a single movement of self-offering to the supreme. The impersonality of Brahma and the divine personality, the silence of the omnipresent, Immutable, and the ceaseless flux of the cosmic movement, the beatific state of liberation and the continued performance of all mundane actions, - these are some of the most outstanding reconciliations effected by the Gita.

As a result, a new truth, a knowledge of Oneness, a knowledge of universal Divinity will be attained. It necessitates a will that shall make this new knowledge, vision and consciousness a motive of action and the sole motive. And it must be the motive of all action of human life taken up in an equal spirit and done for the sake of God and the good of all creatures. There must be a widening too of the calmed and enlightened heart to embrace God in all beings and for this, love is to be there in the mind. God-love and adoration get extended to a love of the world. In all, the Divine is seen,
found and adored; in all, the Divine is felt in Oneness. The Gita advises us to develop in ourselves this God-engrossed love. "Admit this love, learn this worship, make it one spirit with works and knowledge. That is apex of the perfect perfection." Such perfect man becomes an aesthete.

Man then is no longer bound up in his narrow prison of personality, no longer sees himself as this little 'I' that thinks and acts and feels and struggles and labours for himself alone. He is merged in the vast and free impersonality of the pure spirit; he becomes the Brahma, he knows himself as one with the One self in all beings. The knowledge of the impersonal self brings Ananda; there is a joy of impersonality, a singleness of joy of the pure spirit. This Ananda in the Jiva, a portion here of the Divine, takes the form of an ecstasy founded in the Godhead who is his source. He is no longer shaken by desire, troubled by sin or limited by virtue. This spiritual state brings with it a still peace and freedom. He thus becomes a liberated man. Such spiritually emancipated man has been adored as a perfect aesthete according to Sri Aurobindo.

The soul of the liberated man is free. His will and power are not now separately, egoistically his own, but a force of the supramental Divine which acts in this becoming of his self. This is the highest secret and mystery, uttama-rahasyam, of the action of the liberated man. It is the result
of a growing of the human soul into a divine light and of the union of its nature with a highest universal nature. Sri Aurobindo assessed it as: "The last or highest emergence is the liberated man who has realised the self or spirit within him, entered into the cosmic consciousness, passed into union with the Eternal and so far as he still accepts life and action, acts by the light and energy of the power within him working through his human instruments of Nature." 42

In 'Essays on the Gita', it has been observed that the liberated man has the complete and total knowledge, and does all works without any of the restrictions made by the mind. The force and freedom and infinite power of the divine become his guide of action and provide him delight. This delight clarifies his knowledge and unites it with the eternal delight of the spirit. This perfects his personality and makes his natural being and action one with eternal beauty, eternal harmony, eternal love and Ananda. So such man acquires serene aesthetic experience.

The liberated man is full of power, capable of all noble action, attuned to spiritual delight, open to profound love and deep compassion and to every manner of intensest Ananda.

Now he has no griefs to be healed, for he is in possession of the All-blissful. He has no desires to hunger
after, for he possesses the highest and the All and is close to the All-power that brings all fulfilment. What comes to him, he takes without repulsion and without attachment, what goes from him he allows to depart into the whirl of things without repining or grief or sense of loss. His soul is in its nature, as the Upanishad puts it, avramam, without wound or scar. All things bear the same imperishable Ananda to him. This is his divine birth in the Supreme Nature, integral in being, completed in will, absolute in love, perfected in knowledge. Everything is beautiful to him and he finds aesthetic delight in this all-comprehensive beauty. 

The Gita has laid down from the beginning that the very first pre-condition of the Divine birth, the higher existence is the slaying of rajasika desire and the exclusion of sin. The sattvika will in our nature has to govern us and not the rajasika and the tamasika will. The law of Nature in us instigates us to strive, to evolve from her lower and disorderly state to her higher and orderly action, to act in knowledge and enlightened will with the result of inner happiness, poise and peace. This becomes possible only when we first develop within ourselves the rule of the highest guna, sattva and the predominance of sattva guna helps man to become liberated.

Arjuna is egoistic like other men, but his egoism is comparatively purer or sattvika and it has regards for the
moral law and society and the claim of others. Arjuna is not found to be motivated by his own interests, desires and passions. So, he is capable of having divine birth and gradually he becomes a liberated man with the predominance of the highest guna, sattva in him. So such man like Arjuna whenever he thinks, feels or wills, consider everything from the point of view of Oneness and this is the source of Ananda where aesthetic experience finds its fruition.

Sri Aurobindo says, "There is a luminous spiritual and in its native action a direct supramental force of knowledge, Jyotih, not our modified and derivative mental light, Prakaya. That is the light and bliss of widest self-existence, spontaneous self-knowledge. That light is full of a luminous spiritual will and there is no gulf or disparateness between its knowledge and its action. That delight is not our paler mental happiness, Sukham, but a profound concentrated intense self-existent bliss extended to all that our being does, envisages, creates, a fixed divine rapture, Ananda. The liberated soul participates more and more profoundly in this light and bliss and grows the more perfectly into it, the more integrally it unites itself with the Divine."\(^{44}\)
The Aesthetic significance of 'Savitri' and its contribution to Modern Aesthetics:

Sri Aurobindo says in the poem 'Rose', bliss, light, life, love and power are the five essences that fuse to make up the perfection of God. These together bloom eternally as the 'Rose of God' in 'Heaven', but the intention of Sri Aurobindo is to bring them down to earth and thereby make earth the home of the wonderful and beautiful life. The supreme culmination of this distinctive poetic achievement is reached only in 'Savitri'. Dr. Iyengar is right in saying, "Sri Aurobindo's Savitri is steeped in Vedic symbolism, it is upanishadic, Valmikian and Kalidasian in the crystalline quality of its blank verse inspiration, and it is a philosophical poem and a cosmic epic recalling alone among the great poems of the world, Dante's Divine Commedia".  

At heart, Sri Aurobindo has always been a poet of love. In 'Savitri' he sings of love which is an incarnate divine power and which leads man to perfection.

Of all the aesthetic activities, poetic art is the most important in the sense that it indicates the movement of human consciousness on the plane of its highest creativity. Sri Aurobindo discovers in poetry sweetness, intensity, delight, beauty and heavenly manna of divine enjoyment. The One imperishable ananda is revealed through his poetry. 'Savitri'
is an interpretation of his deeper spiritual striving. In 'Savitri', he uses the Vedic and the Upanishadic lore as symbol in modern context and undertakes to present partially world of human-experience and partially a supramental world, peopled by supramental forces, Godheads, Divine Mother, God of Death, a world in which Love and Death may be personified without palpable absurdity. It is, in fact, a poem of the 'Life Divine'.

It is in 'savitri' that the poetic vision and revelation of Sri Aurobindo's genius blazes forth. Each line of his epic is an adventure into the unknown, a rare and unforgettable experience of beauty. Through this epic, he unveils to us greater worlds of truth, harmony, peace and beauty. In his celestial poetry, all is revealed as true and beautiful.

For Sri Aurobindo, the world of subtle existence at its height reflects the Divine manifestation of the Infinite. There love, beauty and sweetness are the laws of life. Love, beauty and sweetness give rise to oneness. This oneness or unity leads the seeker towards the goal of perfection. When sense of beauty awakens the sense of oneness and we are able to see beauty around us, we are able to realise the aesthetic sense in all its glory and splendour. We develop the sense to see the harmony between the whole and the part, between the soul and the cosmic phenomenon.
A fourth dimension of aesthetic sense
Where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all,
To the cosmic wideness re-aligns our souls.46

Experientially, beauty like truth in its ultimate sense
is the descent of the spirit. For Sri Aurobindo, art is the
revelation of the spirit through the twin media of truth and
beauty. He therefore, calls beauty an epiphany which rocks the
body with violent ecstasy and touches every nerve in the brain,
the heart and the limbs. This beauty - this mighty descent of
the spirit - is experienced by Aswapathy - the father of
Savitri in the epic:

A Might, A Flame,
A Beauty half-visible with deathless eyes,
A violent Ecstasy, a sweetness dire,
Enveloped him with its stupendous limbs
And penetrated nerve and heart and brain
That thrilled and fainted with the epiphany.47

Being a shakta Vedantin, Sri Aurobindo likes to personify
beauty as a priestess. In 'Savitri', he writes:

As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and rules from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple door to things beyond. 48

Beauty is hailed as "a priestess of immaculate ecstasy" with a body like 'a parable of dawn'. For Sri Aurobindo, this priestess is a dazzle with ineffable transcendence. She is enlightened with the glory of the unseen. The look, the smile, the step of this goddess, this priestess of beauty awakens the celestial sense in the mortal and pours forth on man's life intense delight. She is the source of power and inspiration behind all beautiful manifestation.

It is obvious from the personification of beauty that the beauty involved in aesthetic experience is not merely the physical or sensuous charm. It is an ineffable numinous, which impacts on all planes and thrills us. This true beauty is neither expressible in words nor knowable objectively, it can only be realised. It is for this reason that the poet considers beauty as

A spirit that is a flame of God abides
A fiery portion of the wonderful,
Artist of His own beauty and delight,
Immortal in our mortal poverty. 49

As the poet gradually climbs the ladder of higher consciousness beyond the reach of ordinary human beings, he finds himself engulfed with a great and strong light of divine
descent. This light is beautiful. As an aesthetician and as
a poet he wants heavenly beauty to be on the earth. The
metaphor of God as the supreme artist or embodiment of beauty
appears in the epic at various places as -

Beauty is his footprint showing us where he has passed
Love is his heartbeat's rhythm in mortal breasts,
Happiness the smile on his adorable face.  

Thus all the attributes of his aesthetic vision: beauty,
love and happiness are divine in all their manifestations.

According to Sri Aurobindo, when we enter the world of
subtle material existence, like Aswapathy does, all shapers
become beautiful because the limitations and the resistances of
the physical matter, are considerably loosened there. Sri
Aurobindo observes that one enters the ascending path to beauty
at the vital level after passing through the physical
limitations. In the epic poem 'Savitri' Aswapathy moves up
from the material, towards a felicitous daylight at the vital
stage, where beauty is a part of the mould itself.

In that paradise of perfect heart and sense
No lower note could break the endless charm
of her sweetness ardent and immaculate.

Evidently, he believes that when human mind is able to
transcend physical limitations and reach beyond it, nothing can
obstruct its vision of the beautiful, which is faultless and pure.
According to Sri Aurobindo's description, the world of subtle matters which lies beyond this material world is adorned with fantasy, symmetry and grace. There all movements are spontaneous, pure and simple which are the primary source of all beauty and delight. Beauty and delight are inseparable and divine beauty envelops all. Love is the essence of divine beauty, all are tied to each other with love resulting in Ananda. As an epic 'Savitri' has demonstrated the triumph of love over death in all its various implications and has shown the glorious future of man. In 'Savitri' the poet has divinised the human.

Obviously, beauty and delight are central to poet's aesthetic vision as without these the rest of the elements fade into insignificance. From the equation between delight and beauty, it follows that delight is not to be reduced to the surface enjoyment of the sensations and emotions. It is true that heavenly delight is beyond the ken of normal consciousness, yet Sri Aurobindo firmly assures us that one day delight and beauty will impact on life in a radical and transformative consummation.

One day he shall lift his beauty's dreadful veil,
Impose delight on the world's beating heart
And bear his secret body and light and bliss.
He thus restates the concept of delight as enunciated in the Upanishad, Mahasukha (the Great Happiness) of Buddhist and the highest spiritual exaltations of the medieval Vaishnava and Sakta lyrics. What is affirmed ontologically in the Upanishads is expressed and amplified in essential terms by Sri Aurobindo:

Inspite of death and evil circumstance
A will to live persists, a joy to be
There is a joy in all that meets the sense.
A joy in all experience of the soul,
A joy in evil and a joy in good,
A joy in virtue and a joy in sin
Indifferent to the threat of karmic law.
Joy dares to grow upon forbidden soil,
Its sap runs through the plant and flower of pain.

This optimistic note refers to the idea that true joy is beatitude, the bliss of pure conscious existence and energy. Sri Aurobindo thinks as if a hidden bliss is there of the root of all things, a mute delight is felt in our countless works. He regards the objects of the universe as curved-cups of the world-delight and he feels as if our souls are born to have God’s joy to entertain delights of objects and works. So beauty and delight are everywhere, only we are to realize them and if we can realize them, we will have the ecstasy of aesthetic experience.

The idea expressed here is the direct reflection of the idea contained in the Taittiriya Upanishad wherein the seer
maintains that from Delight all these beings are born, by Delight they live, to Delight they return. After all it is the individual human life that experiences the subtlest joy of bliss (anandam).

In the epic, Aswapathy, the father of Savitri, has been significantly called by Sri Aurobindo 'the Lord of Life'. When the Divine Mother commands Aswapathy to continue his labour for the perfection of man's life, he invokes her help and guidance as he feels that without Divine benediction nothing great is possible. Answering his earnest prayers, a boon is granted to him by her. Savitri's mortal birth is thus an answer to 'a world's desire'. She shows how man's life here can be raised to a Life-Divine. Thus we find that Savitri holds that magic key to unravel the mysteries of beauties of life to human beings. There burns throughout the epic an intense fire that leaps up to transform life into super-life, nature into super-nature and this influences the people and they catch something of its flame or its life-giving warmth. It is ultimately the song of life-divine in which humanity will find its fulfilment.55

Throughout this epic of the soul, the golden thread of love, beauty and delight is vibrant and forceful. Thus we find that Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics has its concrete application in 'Savitri'.
From the foregoing discussion of the basic principles of Sri Aurobindo's aesthetics, as depicted in the epic, it is obvious that he carries out in his poetic practice what he has outlined in his theory.

**Conclusion**

So far, we have found that in Sri Aurobindo's thought, aesthetics has been given a spiritualistic dimension. Hence all spiritual values have also been considered as aesthetic values and a spiritually emancipated man has been adored as a perfect aesthete.

Sri Aurobindo observes that we may have the aesthetic vision only from the beauty of the soul. This beauty of soul is realised in the oneness or unity of all. The experience of 'Oneness of all' takes place at the level of supramental consciousness - Sacchidananda. Sri Aurobindo thus understands by beauty the descent of the divine beauty into human consciousness. Through evolution the supramental state is to be attained by us. While we ascend to the state of supramental consciousness, we attain aesthetic vision.

Sri Aurobindo's view of evolution is that at the present stage matter, life, psyche and mind have been evolving and the next step would be the emergence of the level of the supermind leading to bliss or life Divine. Man is limited by egoistic
urges. His mind is incapable of knowing truth directly, his joy is often mixed with sorrow. However, he has his urge for pure joy, his appreciation of selfless love and his desire for transcendence. He can develop these characteristics and can make the emergence of the supramental consciousness possible.

The first necessity of each individual is to discover the spirit, the divine reality within him and express that in all his being and living. But Sri Aurobindo does not rest content with mere individual divinity, as it is insufficient to bring oneness and eventually the beauty of soul will not be arrived at.

Only the sense of universal oneness, deep within each individual, can be the basis of aesthetic thought, as this universal oneness inspires men to love each other and to feel joy or delight in it and this is the beauty of soul where egoistic desires are surrendered to universal will. The individual attains to universal or cosmic dimension by identification with the universe. The universe is the manifestation of Sacchidananda. The transformation is made possible first through an ascent of consciousness towards the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo emphasises very strongly the necessity of this transformation, without which the spiritual achievement would again be restricted to separated individuals and as such spiritually-oriented aesthetics as is supported by Sri Aurobindo would not be there with humanity. He therefore
remains faithful to his original ideal of spiritualisation through integration. His greatness lies in presenting to us this integral approach to aesthetics.

For Sri Aurobindo, the aesthete is not revealing the spirit in words only, but also the spirit active from the inconscient life in matter through planes of the physical vital, mental on to the cosmic. Now, it is obvious that Sri Aurobindo is a very deep and comprehensive aesthetician. He even values form but he believes that form is needed to express the spirit. Thus higher levels of existence are not merely an escape of the soul to higher regions but the transformation of gross matter and our bodies and faculties into nobler instruments of life divine.

Sri Aurobindo is thus more than a mere innovator. He stands for something abiding and eternal, something positive and creative in the aesthetic realm and has thus something to say to all ages.

Sri Aurobindo's aesthetic thought allows no positive existence to evil, ignorance or darkness. They are negative and temporary.
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