CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
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There is no denying the fact that the rich tradition of Indian English Literature came into being as an interesting by-product of an eventful interaction between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and disturbed India. Infact, this phenomenon is the result of a close encounter between two diverse traditions, as F.W. Bain puts it, "India a withered trunk ... suddenly shot out with foreign foliage." When Britishers came to reign in India, colonial education provided a kind of free thinking to Indians. Indian English is not only by-product of the Britisher's legacy but also it began by the regional linguistic co-operation too. From the purpose of present thesis the entire Indian English Literature can be divided into two parts: the literature written before independence and the literature written after independence. Pre-independence literature followed the norms of British writings. They followed the descriptive method not only in their fiction but also in their poetry. According to K.R.S. Iyengar:

The growth of Indian English literature is a "native eruption". It becomes a creative process which is no less than the creative process of other writers in the world. He also suggests the communicability of
the expressiveness with the specific exploration of
the linguistic competence of the Indian writers in an
Indian way.¹

Indian English Literature has got its multifarious
development; it has been named many times as Anglo-Indian, Indo-
English and finally Indian English Literature. George Sampson
reviews the literary works written in English as 'Anglo-Indian'.²
K.R.S. Iyengar, the pioneer critic of the Indian Writing in English,
prefers to call it 'Indo-Anglian'.³ While P.C. Kotoky calls it 'Indo-
English'.⁴ It has been growing gradually since the beginning of the
nineteenth century to the poetry of Dom Moraes, Nissim Ezekiel,
P. Lal and Pritish Nandy etc., but "our critical performance in the
interpretation and evaluation of Indo-Anglian Literature is still
largely an accomplished task."⁵

Since the topic of my Ph.D. thesis includes the genre
poetry, it would be the sincere effort to analyse and to present the
poetic growth. This thesis is to analyse not entirely the growth of
poetry but the growth of poetry is to be explored upto the writings
of Sri Aurobindo. However, the mode and the expressibility of
Indian English Poetry can easily be divided into three parts: (1)
Imitative (2) Assimilative and (3) Experimentative. The third one is
the post modern poetry which includes the works of the poets
after 1960. Therefore, it becomes feasible to concentrate on the
first two parts. First stage deals with the works of Henry Louis
Vivian Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Second stage includes the works of Toru Dutt, Ramesh Chunder Dutt, Man Mohan Ghose and Aurobindo Ghose and the third stage includes the works of Kamla Das, A.K. Ramanujam, Nissim Ezekiel, Mamta Kalia, Shiv K. Kumar, P. Lal, Jayanta Mahapatra and many others. But the purpose of the thesis is to reveal the poetic bulk composed by Sri Aurobindo. It seems now appropriate to come straight way to the poetic works of Sri Aurobindo. Since the second phase of poetic development shows the process of assimilative, it becomes natural to understand the process of assimilation itself before bringing into being the poetic attributes of Sri Aurobindo.

The process of assimilation denotes the digestion of imitative norms and to work out the Indian culture with proper stress on its culture, and this becomes the assimilative phase in the development of Indian English Poetry.

Sri Aurobindo strengthens on the threshold of assimilative and experimentative poetry because the Collected Poems of Sri Aurobindo reveals the physical aspects of life too. On the other hand in Savitri he reveals the spiritual aspects.

Sri Aurobindo's poetry stands a class apart in Indo-English Poetry. Sri Aurobindo as a poet stands with unique position, for he narrates that kind of thematic contents in his poetry which can eliminate the depressed one and can bring one
out of the depression towards the illumination of life and soul. K.R.S. Iyengar realises that a new kind of poetry like Sri Aurobindo "demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer."^6

Born in 1872, Sri Aurobindo was the third child of Dr. K.D. Ghose and Swarnalata Devi. From his childhood, he inherited an environment of nationalism with his grand maternal father Raj Narayan Bose who was widely known in Bengali as the leader of the Adi Brahma Samaj and as "the grandfather of Indian Nationalism". From his early childhood he has shown the seeds of intellectual calibre. Manoj Das has remarked beautifully the early formations of the personality of Sri Aurobindo.

The English master under whom Aurobindo read early discerned in that boy germs of greatness. He was the best beloved of his masters. He was always quick at mastering his lessons. We can almost see the boy with his deep, wistful eyes, earnest and thoughtful, looking as it were, into futurity, moving about in the midst of a band of alien boys, gazing at times upon the beautiful face of Nature; sweet and gentle of disposition, this pure-hearted boy was the glory of the school....^7

His father belonged to a rich and highly accomplished family of Calcutta. He had been among the first to go to England
for his education. He became so much anglicised that he believed that India must adopt Western ways of life and manners. So naturally Aurobindo, in the early formative years of his life, grew up in an atmosphere steeped in Western ideas and culture. At the age of five Sri Aurobindo was admitted along with his two brothers to an Irish Nun's School at Darjeeling. Two years later they were taken to England and placed in care of a Latin Scholar, Mr. Drewett. Sri Aurobindo's early life in England seems to have been the most formative in his cultural make-up and intellectual equipment. Sri Aurobindo was only seven in 1879 and was probably considered too young to go to school and was therefore taught at home by the Drewetts. As he was studying at home, he read books according to his own taste like the Bible, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats and other writers. Sri Aurobindo not only developed a philopohical temper but also began to compose poems for the Fox's Weekly Magazine at that tender age. "Drewett was an accomplished Latin Schlor; he did not teach him Greek, but grounded him so well in Latin that the head master of St. Paul's School took up Aurobindo himself to ground him in Greek and then pushed him rapidly into the higher classes of the school."  

From 1884 to 1889, Sri Aurobindo was a student of St. Paul's at London. The head master of the school, F.W. Walker gave specialized training in Greek language to Sri Aurobindo who progressed fast to higher classes and struck the teachers as a
prodigy. He won the Buttleworth prize for History and delivered a brilliant and powerful speech on the inconsistency of Swift's political opinion.

Aurobindo gave his attention to the classics at Manchester and St. Paul's, but even at St. Paul's in the last three years he simply went through his school course and spent most of his spare time in general reading specially English Poetry, literature and fiction, French literature and the history of ancient mediaval and modern Europe. He spent some time also over learning Indian, some German and a little Spanish. He spent much time, too, in writing poetry.  

In 1890, Sri Aurobindo passed the last examination of St. Paul with merit and joined King's College of Cambridge. It was in his early school life in England, that he got exposed to the grandeur of the classics and the classical language, the enchantment of English verse and the sheer thrill of composing his own poems and the joy of seeing them published. His brother Man Mahon was a notable influence in motivating him in the field of versification. Describing his unusual attainment, G.W. Prothero, his tutor at King's College writes:

....... very unusual industry and capacity. Besides his classical scholarship he possessed a knowledge
of English literature far beyond the average of undergraduates, and wrote a much better English style than most young Englishmen.\textsuperscript{10}

Here he qualified in written examination of I.C.S. and stood XI in merit achieving highest marks in ancient languages. He, however, got himself disqualified in horse-riding. He was given another chance to pass the test, but he deliberately avoided presenting himself in time for the test, as he by that time ceased to have interest in the I.C.S.

Nothing detained him in his room. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage.\textsuperscript{11}

He hated to become a collaborator and champion of the British rule in India. His peculiar aversion to the highly coveted service may be explained in his own words, "I appeared for the I.C.S. because my father wanted it and I was too young to understand. Later, I found out what sort of work it is and I had a disgust for an administrator's life and I had no interest in administrative work."\textsuperscript{12}

At Cambridge, besides participating in the activities of the Indian Majlis and cultivating his love for the freedom of the country, his chief engrossment was writing poetry. He was particularly adept in handling quantitative metres with ease. Shri
V.K. Gokak writes:

...... Sri Aurobindo, in his characteristic manner, created .... a new and complex body of rhythm that of quantitative metres. Sri Aurobindo's quantitative metres have not yet been assimilated, except by one or two admirers, for they are difficult to practise. But they open up new rhythms for any one that wishes to understand and practise them.¹³

Sri Aurobindo's years in Cambridge were undoubtedly the most impressionable years of his distinguished life. General upheavals and great revolutionary changes that were coming in the world, were making their strong and lasting impression on his highly receptive intellect. He began to take interest in the political scenario of India. Dr. K.D. Ghose used to send him the newspaper *The Bengali* with passages marked relating cases of maltreatment of Indians by Englishmen. Sri Aurobindo became a member of a secret revolutionary society. The Lotus and Dagger with an aim of fighting for the liberation of India. In the ideal of freedom, Sri Aurobindo was also particularly impressed by national movement in Ireland and the biography of Mazzini. Sri Aurobindo returned to India in 1893 and joined service in Baroda under the patronage of Maharaja of Baroda, Gaikvad Sayajirao. As soon as he set foot on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, he experienced an entirely unexpected and soothing sense of peace. In these moments, Sri
Aurobindo's soul seemed to transcend physical world and traversed supra-physical worlds and planes.

During his stay at Baroda, Sri Aurobindo and his brother Barin were also progressing in the field of spiritualism. In his letter to his wife, Sri Aurobindo wrote that he wanted to have direct experience of God by any means. At one time he visited the 'Shankaracharya Hill' in the Kashmir valley and experienced hollowness of physical existence in a telling manner. This experience left an indelible and powerful impression on his mind. His poetry became an impression of his numerous inner, spiritual and mystical experiences. His poems like- *The Godhead* and *Adwaita* are the songs of his transcendental and mystical experiences.

The Baroda period was actually the significant seed-time of Sri Aurobindo's life where he pursued his varied interests-teaching, poetry and politics simultaneously. He read widely and most of his early writings are dated to this period. In 1885, a collection of his poems was published under the title *Songs to Myrtilla* and other Poems. He devoted himself to acquaint with the culture and the ideals of his motherland. He employed special tutors and quickly mastered Bengali and Sanskrit. Two great Bengali poets namely Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee left a great impression on him. Understanding of Sanskrit helped him in attaining knowledge of Indian philosophy and culture. R.R. Diwakar observes:
His acquaintance with Sanskrit was not restricted to religious or philosophical texts. He was equally at home with Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, the Ramayan, the Mahabharata as with the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita, and the Manusmriti.\textsuperscript{14}

Sri Aurobindo wrote many English poems at Baroda and also began some which he finished later. His Bengali tutor speaks of Sri Aurobindo in his "Aurobindo-Prasanga": "Desireless, a man of few words, balanced in his diet, self-controlled, always given to study."\textsuperscript{15}

Sri Aurobindo was a voracious reader and his reading was not confined to any particular subject but it was diverse, varied and extended to different compartments of human knowledge. Sri Aurobindo's literary and spiritual growth was occurring simultaneously and both the influences got intermingled with each other. His devoted and arduous Yogic practices affected his consciousness and he started having access to sights and scenes by the invisible realms. At Chandod in one of the Kali temples on the banks of Narmada, Sri Aurobindo felt the living presence of the Divine Mother in the idol. This illuminating experience shattered his aversion to idol worship and became the subject matter of his poem 'The stone Goddess' included in his collected poems.
During his days in Bombay, Sri Aurobindo was practising more intense form of Yoga that resulted into the experience of the silent Brahman Consciousness. Such intense mystical experiences find echo in his sonnet "Nirvana".16

In those formative years, Sri Aurobindo's life was a balanced yet astonishing blend of diverse multifaceted aspects. He was a revolutionary, a thinker, a spiritual seeker and a poet. Till 1910, he was engrossed on several fronts. But a curious episode completely transformed the course of his life. One day when he was in the Karmayogin Office, a Divine Voice commanded him in three words, "Go to Chandernagare". Within ten minutes he was on a journey that led him to the place which was to become his permanent address for many long years to come. He himself calls Pondicherry his place of retreat, his cave of Tapasya. Sri Aurobindo's first four years in Pondicherry were, for him, a period of silent Yoga making his life lone, limitless, nude, and immense. He came to realize that all human activity was a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life. In 1914, Mira Alfassa Richard, a French lady of spiritual hankerings met Sri Aurobindo in his ashram and their meeting resulted in the publication of the well-known journal "Arya", a monthly philosophical review. Sri Aurobindo declared the aim of the journal as -

....... to feel out for the thought of the future, to help
in shaping its foundations and to link it to the best
and most vital thought of the past ..... to restate the ancient and eternal spiritual truth of the self so that it shall re-embrace, permeate and dominate the mental and physical life .....\(^{17}\)


This was one of the most fruitful period of Sri Aurobindo's life. As his Yoga practice became more and more profound and absorbing, a touch of mysticism imbued his literary output. His early poems display raw mysticism which was replaced by an absorbing inborn, spiritual revelation in his later poems, *Meditations of Mandavya* (1913) marks the end of the early phase of his mysticism, where he declares:

I know, O God, the day shall down at last
When man shall rise from playing with the mud
And taking in his hands the sun and stars
Remould appearance, law and process old,
Then, pain and discord vanished from the world,
Shall the dead wilderness accept the rose,
And the hushed desert, babble of its rills;
Man once more seem the image true of God.\textsuperscript{18}

Talking about mystical transformation, Makrand R.
Vajpayee holds that "The mystical experience is ongoing
phenomenon, varying and changing rather than a final all
transforming experience."

Such a gradual re-orientation of psyche was witnessed
in Sri Aurobindo during the Pondicherry period. A set of sixty
sonnets and about forty poems of new metres characterise the
subtle yet peculiar change in Sri Aurobindo, the mystic and poet.
The most famous among these are \textit{The Bird of Fire, Thought the
Paraclete, Rose of God, The Inner Fields} etc. In his poem \textit{Rose of
God}, Sri Aurobindo outpours ecstasies of the soul at the
possibility of God's descent to earth. He quotes:

\begin{verbatim}
Rose of God, vermilion stain on the sapphires of heaven
Rose of Bliss, fire sweet, seven tinged with the ecstasies
seven
Leap up in our heart of humanhood O Miracle, O Flame
Passion flower of the nameless, but of the mystical
name.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{verbatim}

Here the "Rose" is the supreme symbol of the essence
of God, heavenly glow, eternal bliss and these fuse together to
symbolize as the integral perception of God. The tone of the poem
is essentially mystical.

Poetic inspiration is the illuminated impulse that fills the mind of the poet with the substance above ordinary sense perception. Sri Aurobindo's poetic inspiration was an amalgamation of Western literature, Indian mythology, Yoga, Mysticism and a profound feeling of Patriotism. But he was gifted with a rare ability to transform the original source into something distinct. He absorbs diverse influences and make them disappear in his own created originality. Accepting the influence of varied impressions. Sri Aurobindo says:

We are all those who went before us with something new added that is ourselves, and it is his something added that transfigures and is the real originality.  

Sri Aurobindo has acknowledged the influence of the poets that inspired him in writing poetry. In a letter, he writes:

I dare say some influence of most of the great English poets and of others also, not English, can be traced in my poetry- I can myself see that of Milton, sometimes of Wordsworth and Arnold; but it was of the automatic kind- they came in unnoticed, I am not aware of much influence of Shelley and Coleridge, but since I read Shelly a
great deal and took an intense pleasure in some of Coleridge's poetry, they may have been there without my knowledge. The one work of Keats that influenced me was Hyperion- I dare say my blank verse got something of his stamp through that.21

There was always present the vigour or strength of spirit in his poems from the very beginning, and this characteristic quality of his poems became highly sharp and ardent in his subsequent writings. It is because of deep knowledge of European literature, French, German and Italian no less than Greek and Latin. His poems carry the pulse of his heart and they have the felicity in action pleasantly. There is no doubt that he had been inspired by some eminent personalities in his juvenilia. As Milton brought forward the essential writings of his life- *Paradise Lost* written in his old age and *Comus* written in his twenty seventh year so also Sri Aurobindo wrote at the same age as Milton wrote *Comus* - namely, *Love and Death*. It is the highly accomplished poem of his early period in blank verse. It must be admitted that he has the actual influence of Milton. Undoubtedly, Milton is very much impressive than any other distinguished poets. In his *Paradise Lost*, he had gathered up Aeschylus and Sophocles Virgil, Lucretius and Dante. Fully absorbed with various literature and with the great tradition of poetry too, Sri Aurobindo shows the influence of diverse ages in *Love and Death* in which one hardly
realizes a sign of slavish derivativeness. There is originality which runs excessively throughout the poem.

*Love and Death*, as its very name implies, is a testament of the passionate heart and is a master piece of its own kind. It comprises of an indirect presage of Sri Aurobindo's later spiritual and scriptural power of expression. Here are some lines of majestic pathos.

Long months he travelled between grief and grief,
Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,
measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.\(^{22}\)

Here is an exact replica of Milton's "grand style severe" in Sri Aurobindo's poem.

Sri Aurobindo dedicated his *Love and Death* to his elder brother Manmohan Ghose who was very intimate with Stephen Philips and was himself a promising poet. Manmohan Ghose became a great inspiration for him in England. He stimulated Sri Aurobindo to read the classical poetry. Expressing his greatfulness to the influence of his elder brother, he writes:

Unknown to yourself, you taught and encouraged me from my childhood to be a poet. From your son my farthing rush-light was kindled, and it was in your path that I long strove to guide my uncertain and faltering footsteps.\(^{23}\)
Even during the days when Sri Aurobindo was completely dedicated to the cause of freedom struggle, it was Manmohan Ghose who often reminded him of his natural inclination that was poetry. Radha Kumud Mookerji, an intimate friend, observes:

I still recollect how in those days his worthy brother Prof. Manmohan Ghose, himself a poet of Oxford repute, used to rush in utter anxiety to his brother Aurobindo to remind him that he was a born poet and should not plunge into politics.\(^{24}\)

In some of his letters, Sri Aurobindo himself accepts the deep influence of Stephen Philips, Meredith, Tennyson, Swinburne and Arnold.

Since his childhood, Sri Aurobindo felt an inborn urge for rediscovering and reviving trends of vital thoughts of Indian philosophy and as he progressed in years as well as in experience, it became the predominant aspect of his life. In Pondicherry, his absorption in Yoga brought about an immense change in his temper and hankerings. Now his Yogic life was his most dominant engagement in his life and the goal of Yoga was the transformation or spiritualization of the ordinary material earthly life. Poetry written by Sri Aurobindo during this period reflects a deep sense of spiritualization that refuses to be deterred by earthly limits namely death, separation etc.
His quest to disseminate the divine message of spiritual and prophetic progression through the path of self-purification and Yoga, led him to the selection of the legend of Satyavan and Savitri in his grand epic *Savitri*. Savitiri's legend presents a glaring instance of victory of human faith over the most ultimate inevitability of human life that is Death. It is intended to portray man's efforts for breaking the shackles of this limited material world. Purani mentions that Sri Aurobindo uses *Savitri* "as a means of Ascension". Quoting Sri Aurobindo, he says: "I began with it (*Savitri*) on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level I re-wrote from that level ..... Infact Savitri has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own Yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative."

Yoga, literature, political activities and scholarly pursuits all diverse aspects of his own one life were not disjointed units rather these were coherently connected blocks fitted dexterously into his remarkable person. Describing his condition as a poet, as a result of the development of his spiritual capacities, he mentions at one place:

The poems came as a stream beginning at the first line and ending at the last .... *Savitri* is a work by itself unlike all the others .......... This last line (The
high boughs prayed in a revealing sky) (*Savitri* I Canto I) is an expression of an experience which I often had whether in the mountains or on the plains of Gujrat or looking from my window in Pondicherry not only in the down but at other times ....... To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract has a concreteness, substantiality which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event ..... A movement, a flow of consciousness is not to me an image but a fact ...... all that is spiritual or phsyhological in *Savitri* is of that character.\textsuperscript{27}

Love conquering Death, a mystical tenet from the Upanishads form the Central theme of *Savitri*. For Sri Aurobindo, mysticism is a temper or a mood achieved through constant Yogic practice. Sri Aurobindo was a firm believer in the immortality of the soul, its rebirth after death and the doctrine of Karma. Savitri's battle is against the Karmic laws, she struggles not for herself but for the whole humanity to transform this earth into a 'Divine Land', a Paradise of bliss, spirituality and immortality.

*Savitri*, a blank-verse epic of 24,000 lines is the culmination of Sri Aurobindo's poetic career. Through Savitri, Sri Aurobindo presents the picture of a spirituality matured woman
who leads mankind from darkness of ignorance to divine illumination. It is a cosmic epic that can stand on equal terms, both in quality as well as artistic craftsmanship, with other great epics of the world. Raymond Frank, an American Professor, who himself was inclined towards mysticism, glorifies Savitri in these words:

It is the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realmes of supramental spiritual existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparalleled massiveness, magnificence and metaphorical brilliance - Savitri is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the absolute.²⁸

The canvas of Savitri is as wide and extended as the entire universe and it touches the fringes of that untrodden world of light, consciousness, bliss and truth that still remain recognised by humanity. Savitri is the most authentic inner epic of the mind comprising mysticism, occultism, philosophy, spirituality and the process of evolution of man and matter.

Undoubtedly, Sri Aurobindo was a man of encyclopaedic knowledge on variety of subjects and it is the chief
reason of astounding variety of poetic themes in his literary works. He was a versatile genius, his life was immensely crowded with varied activities particularly academic, political, literary and spiritual. D.L. Murray, a great admirer of Sri Aurobindo commented after having read *The Life Divine:*

> In fact, he is a new type of thinker one who combined in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge.²⁹

Different ways of truth which Sri Aurobindo felt, experienced and realised find an unequivocal echo in his literary output. *The Life Divine,* one of the most luminous prose works, presents age-old wisdom in a melodic tone. R.R. Diwakar observes:

> The name *Life Divine* which he chose for his philosophy can not be improved upon. In two small pregnant, the world of meaning that his connotes, is revealed.³⁰

For Sri Aurobindo, Divine life was not an illusive dream to be lived after death, rather it is a journey of evolution to be carried forward on this earth. Growth of human life into fullness of the divine and reshaping earthly existence of man is the fundamental principle of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. In this respect he was an outstanding thinker who was propagating
something unexperienced, unexplored, unrealized but containing the essence of true nature of spiritual upliftment. S.K. Maitra writes:

If I am asked, who is the most creative thinker of the present day in the East? I will unhesitatingly answer, 'Sri Aurobindo' .... He is a seer with the same prophetic vision and the same explosive vision and the same explosive power of truth as the great sages of our land in the past, such as Manu or Yajnavalkya or Vyasa.31

Sri Aurobindo's poetic output is enormous. He wrote lyrics, sonnets, narrative poems, epics, poetic plays besides a number of translations and adaptations. For the convenience of study, his literary career may be divided into three phases. The early phase of his poetry covers the poems written during the Baroda period. Even in his poetry of juvenile age which bears the influence of Keats, Milton, Wordsworth and a host of other English poets, there is a freshness and a finish which suggests that from the beginning the artist went hand in hand with the visionary.

_Songs to Myrtilla_, the first published volume of verse of Sri Aurobindo was written during the 18th and 20th years of his life. It derives its inspiration from Greek, Latin and Romantic poetry. Not only in its subject matter but in its style also it bears marks of classical muse and reveals Aurobindo as a classical
scholar in the formation *A Rose of women, To the Kukoo, The Lost Deliverer* are fine and fluent compositions with an ever present note of melancholy. *Songs to Myrtilla*, a poetic dialogue between Glaucus and Aethon extols the glories and delights of earth and beauties of nature and world. Glaucus says:

> Sweet is the night, sweet and cool  
> As to parched lips a running pool  
> Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep  
> And only moonlight rivulets creep  
> Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,  
> To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.  

The poems like *The Island Grave*, *The Lover's Complaint* and *Love in Sorrow* mark by a piognancy of grief are moving outbursts of powerful feelings of human heart.

Three poems - *Charles Stewart Parnell, Lines on Greland* and *His Jacket* were inspired by his sympathy for the misfortunes of Ireland. A few of Sri Aurobindo's early poems were posthumously published in a collection called *More Poems* (1957) which reveal the poet's deep interest in the classics.

*Urvasie*, the earliest of the poet's narrative poems, was written in 1893. The theme of eternal love between the nymph of Heaven Urvasie and a mortal hero Pururavus, their intensity for each other and their permanent natural union has received a superb
treatment from Sri Aurobindo, manifesting epic majesty in the display of almost all possible human emotions, be it a condition of tragic lull or a vibrant moment of passion. With Urvasie, Sri Aurobindo started his adventure in love in the narrative realm and seems to be preening his wings for a mightier flight. To quote Jesse Roarkee, "It is a lush and impetuous romantic work like nothing else in English poetry, a rich and beautiful blank-verse of astonishing expressiveness. It may be immature in some respects, but it is still both a finely inspired work and a more than respectable example of the poetic art.\(^{33}\)

_Love and Death_, a master piece of blank-verse, _Baji Prabhou_, a patriotic composition and _Ilion_, an expressive lyric are other notable compositions of this period.

Sri Aurobindo's progress in spiritual advancement and his attainments in Yogic sphere find a clear reflection in the poetic creations of the middle phase. There are a number of short poems such as _Reminisence, Revelation, God, Season, A Tree, Miracles, A child's Imagination, The Seat at Night_ are poetic and condensed expressions of philosophical truths. In fact, it was during this phase that Sri Aurobindo developed a whole theory of Overhead poetry and in the poems of this period he tried to conquer "the human difficulties of the task" and create a body of mantric poetry that came as a proper culmination of his long, sustained and inspiring career as a poet in the English language. In
this phase Sri Aurobindo rendered his mystical experiences into magnificent poetic creations. *Invitation* a poem composed in Alipur jail suggests that reality comprises winter and rough weather no less than sunshine and vernal showers:

> With wind and the weather beating round me
> Upto the hill and the moorland I go
> Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
> Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?
> I am the lord of tempest and mountain,
> I am the Spirit of freedom and pride
> Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
> Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.\(^{34}\)

The Nine poems ending with *Ahana* marks a milestone on the path of poetic development of Sri Aurobindo. In *Ahana*, the long poem in rhymed hexametre, the poet marks an attempt to explore the unexplorable realms of life, philosophy, conscious, unconscious and subconscious. The poem has element of mystery, debate and criticism that mark the poetry of his middle period. Sri Aurobindo gives impression to direct Yogic and mystical experience in rhythm and music something that was unachieved in English poetry till that day. His poetic work *Descent* lucidly conveys the nature of yogic inspiration:

> Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
> Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,
Blaze in my, spirit.\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{A Bird of Fire, Thought the Paraclete and The Rose of God} are the poetic examples which display Sri Aurobindo's peak of excellence in presenting an amalgamation of mystic experiences and Yogic achievements. These poems aim to achieve in English verse something analogous to the Vedic mantra. The poems translate into practical achievement Aurobindo's theory of Overhead poetry.

The range of lyrical compositions of Sri Aurobindo is indeed wise. He could write even such satiric and sardonic lyrics as \textit{A Dream of Surreal Science} and \textit{Despair on the Stair Case}. Inspite of these occasional experiments, at no period of his life was he blind to the spiritual reality behind the material facade. The world-view of Sri Aurobindo's poetry was surely to be reared on the sure foundations of his mystical and Yogic experiences.

During his days of retirement in his last phase, Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of mystical-meditative lyrics published as \textit{Poems Past and Present} and \textit{Last Poems} a collection of remarkable sonnets. Never before in the history of sonnets has any other poet put sonnets to such a wide use as Sri Aurobindo. In his crafty hands, sonnets became a vehicle of antological discourse inspired by some greater voice and mightier vision. Sonnets of Sri
Aurobindo has been criticised for lacking in vitality but this is more than made up for by inner character and consistency. However, most of his time of the last phase was taken up by Savitri which has been discussed in detail earlier.

Although Sri Aurobindo's genius was not dramatic, he has to his credit some fine poetic plays of the higher order. Handling blank verse with ease and expertise Sri Aurobindo wrote *Perseus the Deliverer, Vasavadutta, Rodogune, The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric*. Perseus is a drama based on mythical story of ancient Greece; Vasavadutta is a tale from ancient India; Rodogune is a Syrian romance; the Viziers takes us back to the spacious days of the great Havoun-al-Rashid, while Eric is a romance of Scandinavia, a tale of love and war.

Translations of poetic creations from Sanskrit and Bengali by Sri Aurobindo are a class apart. *The Hero and the Nymph* is Sri Aurobindo's blank verse translation of Kalidasa's *Vikramarvasie* and there is no better translation of this play in English. *The Century of Life, Vidula and Songs of the Sea* are some other notable translations. These translations display a variety of rhythm and sureness of touch, all the attributes of standarization in translations.

Among the prose works of Sri Aurobindo only *The Life Divine, The Future Poetry* and his letters to his many friends, disciples and other correspondents is worth mentioning.
The Future Poetry is the poetics of Sri Aurobindo and shows at every step his acuteness of a literary critic. It reveals his profound knowledge of poetry and poetic art. In The Future Poetry, Sri Aurobindo has worked out a well-reasoned theory of 'Overhead' sources of inspiration, through which alone a sublime and lofty poem can be composed. He presents poetry as a Divine utterance, only through 'Overhead' inspiration can poetry become mantirc.

The fundamental creative impulse of Sri Aurobindo's work is genuinely progressive. It presents before us the advanced stage of our psychological evolution. It gives us a glimpse of future in which man's power will not only plunge inward to his true psyche but also enhance our powers of consciousness. A dynamic divinity will envelope the whole mankind and will make them acquainted with the richest possible fulfilment of earth existence. Poetry will be strengthened by Yoga and vagueness and misconceptions about spirit and its multifarious dimensions will be erased. A new region of reality will be laid bare which will be unlike the achievements of the past ages. The poetic words and expressions of The Future Poetry will be found equal to Homer, Shakespeare and Valmiki and it will also be packed with superhuman awareness which is man's profoundest archetype of his body, his vital force and his mind. Mystical verses are possible only from the inner level but the 'Inspiration' in the works of Sri Aurobindo is 'Overhead'.
REFERENCES


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09. Ibid. p.10.


19. Ibid.


26. Ibid. p.236.

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35. Ibid. p.563.