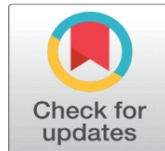
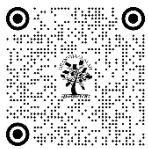


THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM IN SRI AUROBINDO: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE ON POLITICAL IDEALS

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ABSTRACT

Indian patriotism has its origins in the ancient concept of Bharat Mata (Mother India), where the nation is seen as sacred. The freedom struggle against British rule (1857-1947) was the most significant expression of Indian patriotism, bringing together leaders, revolutionaries, and common people in a collective effort for independence. This research paper aims to delve into the nuanced and spiritual dimensions of nationalism as articulated by Sri Aurobindo, a visionary philosopher, yogi, and political activist during the early 20th century in India. While nationalism is often associated with political and socio-economic ideologies, Aurobindo's conception adds a unique spiritual layer to the discourse, emphasizing the integral development of both the individual and the nation. This paper explores the key aspects of Sri Aurobindo's nationalism, examining his views on political freedom, cultural identity, and the transformative role of spirituality in the pursuit of a higher collective consciousness.

Keywords: Nationalism, Spirituality, Evolutionary Perspective, Philosophy, Politics, Collective Consciousness

1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo, also known as Sri Aurobindo, was a prominent spiritual leader, philosopher, and poet of the twentieth century. His life and teachings have inspired millions around the world to seek a deeper understanding of existence and the purpose of life. Born in colonial India, his journey towards spiritual enlightenment was shaped by his birth and parentage, as well as his profound experiences and philosophical insights. This section delves into his belief that a nation's vitality and endurance are contingent on a strong spiritual foundation. Aurobindo proposes that a spiritually awakened populace is better equipped to face challenges Sri Aurobindo emerged as a significant figure in the Indian nationalist movement, contributing not only to the political discourse but also infusing it with a profound spiritual perspective. This paper seeks to unravel the elements that constitute Sri Aurobindo's concept of nationalism and how it differs from conventional notions prevalent during this time.

2. INTEGRAL NATIONALISM

Aurobindo's vision of nationalism goes beyond the external aspects of political independence. He emphasizes "integral nationalism," a concept that integrates the material and spiritual dimensions of life. This section explores how Aurobindo envisions a nation that recognizes the unity of all aspects of human existence, including the physical, vital, mental, and spiritual realms. Sri Aurobindo's nationalism was inclusive, incorporating diverse cultures, languages, and traditions under one spiritual umbrella. Unlike aggressive nationalism that leads to exclusion and conflict, his vision promotes harmony and universal brotherhood.

This approach can heal divisions in multicultural societies and counter religious and ethnic tensions. It shifts nationalism from a territorial competition to a collaborative and uplifting force in the world.

3. SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

Aurobindo's nationalism is deeply rooted in spirituality and contribute positively to the collective progress of the nation.

Sri Aurobindo's vision of nationalism goes beyond politics and economics; he believes that the freedom of India is linked to a higher spiritual purpose, and the liberation of the nation is essential for the spiritual awakening of the world.

"When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatan Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the *dharma* and by the *dharma* that India exists."

(‘Uttarpara Speech’, Page no. 11)

He claims that the true meaning of Indian nationalism is found in Sanatan Dharma, the eternal truth of India's spiritual heritage. By connecting spirituality with nationalism, he asserts that India's freedom struggle is not just a political movement but a spiritual mission rooted in ancient values and divine guidance.

This perspective encourages nations to look beyond material success and focus on moral and ethical governance. It fosters a collective consciousness where citizens see nation-building as a sacred duty rather than mere political allegiance.

4. CULTURAL IDENTITY

India's rich heritage, including languages, arts, traditions, and festivals, plays a major role in shaping patriotic sentiments. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore and poets like Subramania Bharati expressed their love for the country through literature and music. The preservation of cultural identity is a crucial aspect of Aurobindo's nationalism. This section explores how he advocates for the harmonious coexistence of various cultural elements within the national framework. Aurobindo believes that a nation's strength lies in its ability to synthesize diverse cultural influences, fostering a richer and more vibrant society.

5. EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Aurobindo's philosophy incorporates an evolutionary perspective, suggesting that nations, like individuals, undergo stages of growth and development. This section examines how Aurobindo envisions a nation evolving towards a higher consciousness, transcending mere political boundaries and contributing to the collective evolution of humanity. A recurring theme in Karmayogin is the spiritual evolution of humanity. Sri Aurobindo believes that humanity is in a process of evolving towards a higher consciousness and that India has a pivotal role in this evolution. He sees India's spiritual traditions, particularly Sanatan Dharma, as the foundation for this global transformation.

Sri Aurobindo's view of India's independence is tied to this global spiritual mission. He argues that the liberation of India is necessary for the world to evolve spiritually, as India will be a guiding force in spreading spiritual consciousness and leading humanity towards a higher state of being.

"India is rising, not for herself, but for the world."

This quote captures the sense of India's broader spiritual responsibility, where the nation's awakening is not an isolated event but part of the spiritual awakening of the whole world.

6. POLITICAL FREEDOM AND SELF- DETERMINATION

Sri Aurobindo also emphasizes the role of the individual in the process of national and social transformation. According to him, the transformation of society begins with the inner transformation of individuals. Each person has a role to play in manifesting the divine will on Earth, and through self-purification and spiritual discipline, individuals can contribute to the collective evolution.

He suggests that the spiritual awakening of individuals will naturally lead to the awakening of the nation and eventually the world.

He highlights the importance of individual spiritual growth as a catalyst for national and global transformation.

Karmayogin by Sri Aurobindo presents a profound integration of spirituality and action, where the freedom struggle and other worldly actions are seen as part of a higher spiritual journey. The book emphasizes Karma Yoga, or selfless action, as the key to both individual spiritual growth and national liberation. It promotes the idea that India's independence is essential for fulfilling its global spiritual mission, while also calling for self-discipline, surrender to the Divine, and an integral approach to life. The themes in Karmayogin reflect Sri Aurobindo's belief in the unity of the spiritual and material worlds, offering a path where spiritual realization and political activism are deeply intertwined.

While acknowledging the importance of political freedom, Aurobindo places it within a broader context. This section explores how he views political independence as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, advocating for self-determination as a tool for the pursuit of spiritual and cultural fulfilment.

7. RELEVANCE IN TODAY'S WORLD

- 1) Countering Hyper-Nationalism and Extremism: In many parts of the world, nationalism has become aggressive and exclusionary, leading to intolerance, xenophobia, and conflict. Sri Aurobindo's nationalism, grounded in selflessness, service, and universalism, offers an alternative path that fosters unity rather than division. His ideals can help nations balance patriotism with global cooperation, preventing conflicts rooted in narrow national interests. Encouraging a spiritual foundation for nationalism can counter violent extremism by promoting compassion and higher ideals.
- 2) Inspiring Ethical Leadership: Sri Aurobindo emphasized Dharma (righteous duty) as the core of nationalism. In today's world, where corruption and power struggles dominate politics, his vision calls for leaders who serve with integrity, wisdom, and selflessness. His teachings inspire leaders to govern with a sense of responsibility toward humanity rather than short-term political gains. It promotes a nation-first approach that is aligned with ethical governance and public welfare.
- 3) Sustainable Development and Nationalism: Aurobindo's philosophy integrates national progress with spiritual and environmental consciousness. In today's era of climate change and ecological crisis, his ideals emphasize a holistic approach to development— where technology and economy serve the higher purpose of human well-being and the need for self-sufficiency and sustainability, echoing his call for spiritual and material self-reliance.
- 4) Personal Transformation as National Strength: Aurobindo believed that the inner transformation of individuals leads to the upliftment of the nation. In the modern era, this means encouraging education that nurtures wisdom, not just technical skills and Promoting values-driven nationalism, where personal integrity contributes to collective national progress.

8. CONCLUSION

Sri Aurobindo's concept of nationalism remains profoundly relevant in today's globalized yet fractured world. His spiritual perspective on national identity offers a transformative model—one that unites people through shared purpose rather than division, fosters ethical leadership, and integrates material progress with higher consciousness. As the world struggles with extremism, cultural clashes, and political unrest, Aurobindo's vision offers a path toward a harmonious and enlightened future, where nationalism is a force for collective good rather than conflict.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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