USE OF MYTHOLOGY IN SRI AUROBINDO’S DRAMA

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Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) is the outstanding figure of modern Indian Renaissance. He was a great man, a perfect yogi and philosopher. He was an interpreter of the Veda, the teacher, the scholar and the critic of life and literature. He was a great nationalist, freedom fighter, master of prose art, and original dramatist and a great poet.

He could read and write in the classical languages - Greek, Latin and Sanskrit and was proficient in many other European of Indian languages. Sri Aurobindo's 'The Life Divine' is a mighty piece of revelation and prophecy.

His 'Savitri' is the magnum opus, the philosophical epic.

He has created the five blank verse plays -

Today Sri Aurobindo is known as a poet and philosopher than dramatist because most of his dramas was published after his death. In these plays Sri Aurobindo has closely followed Shakespeare and the Elizabethans but were original creation. Sri Aurobindo was a prophet and unique genius and his five plays were but a small result of his phenomenal literary output.

*His verse dramatic form has attracted many other writers.*

- All five plays underline the need for love, because love alone is the great solvent of all varieties of evil.
Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution discussed in 'The Life Divine' is reflected in his plays also.

His plays can fully be grasped only if it is studied in relation to his philosophical ideas in general.

The plays are dramatic poems in which the plots, character and atmosphere convey and symbolize a poetic vision of life. Sri Aurobindo has created dramatic romance, tragedy and the allegorical play - 'The Viziers of Bassora', 'Eric' and 'Vasavadutta' are dramatic romances. Rodogune is a tragedy and 'Perseus the Deliverer' is an allegorical play.

Each of the plays of Sri Aurobindo has a different source. The plot of 'The Viziers of Bassora' owes its origin to numerous legends. Most of which are collected in 'The Book of Thousand and One Nights' about 'Haroun al Rasheed' the fabulous king of ancient Bagdad. The Scandinavian mythology about Thor, Odin, Freya and their off springs and Eric from the source material of Eric Udayan-Vasavadutta and Perseus - Andromeda myths from the source of Vasavadutta and Perseus - the Deliverer respectively. Similarly many stories prevalent round the legendary figure of Cleopatra are the source-material of Rodogune.

Sri Aurobindo's method is to pick up only brief outline and relevant points out of these different sources and to build up altogether a new structure with their help. This structure bears the stamp of his personality.

'Perseus The Deliverer' is located in Syria. The centre of attraction is not the hero but Andromeda the heroine. The traditionalist Andromeda is a passive figure, a patient sufferer and Perseus is the miracle worker who saves her at the nick time from the jaws of the dreaded sea-monster.

In Sri Aurobindo's 'Perseus the Deliverer' Auromeda actively fights evil, braving the consequences.

'Vasavadutta' is a posthumous publication and appeared only in 1957 based on a version of the play dated 1916 the last of several versions. The story is traceable in its
main out lines to Somadeva's Kathasaritsagar'. There is also the dramatic version by Bhasa in his 'Svapna Vasavadutta'.

Sri Aurobindo like Bhasa has given to legend altogether new dimensions.

The hero of the play is Vuthsa Udayan - the young king of Cowsambie.

There are two motives in the play:

- A political motive in the play
  Characterization in 'Vasavadutta' is remarkable for its psychological depth and dramatic intensity.

  Mahasegu, king of Avanthie is Udayan's principal political rival. He has Udayan kidnapped and imprisoned, Vasavadutta being the jailor.

  It is her job now to bewitch him to slavery to her beauty and so to Mahasegu himself. But the jailor becomes herself a prisoner.

  He succeeds in getting an absolute and unconditional surrender from Vasavadutta. Mahesegu and Yougundhrayan failed in their attempt due to Vasavadutta's flaming love for Udayan.

- Vasavadutta 'Avunthie's golden princess' has dignity, pride, wisdom, noble hopes.
- Minor characters like Ungarika, Manjoolica, Gopalaw and Vicurna are lively and interesting.
- The play is not only a hymn of love but also a song of Nature.
- The story of Vathsa Udayan and Vasavadutta is transformed by Sri Aurobindo into a legend of Purush and Prakriti of Cupid and Psyche.

  'Rodogune' was posthumously published in 1958, but it evidently belongs to Sri Aurobindo's early Baroda period. The play is located in the Syria of the poet's unfettered imagination. The source of this play seems to lie in the many stories related to the legendary figure of the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra. Shakespeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra' and Dryden's 'All For Love' have been written on her love-life. But Sri Aurobindo's play is about her life as the Queen-mother.
'Rodogune' is the only tragic play of Sri Aurobindo and perhaps his last. Cleopatra, Queen of Syria has two sons - Antiochus and Timocles. When Cleopatra's second husband, the king of Syria dies, she gets chance to return her two sons to Syria from Egypt living under the guardianship of Ptolemy. Cleopatra declares her younger son Timocles to be the successor and rejected her elder son Antiochus. Disgusted with his mother's behavior Antiochus raises the banner of revolt to claim the throne of Syria. He is joined by Rodogune the captive Parthian Princess serving Cleopatra for they are in love with each other. Timocles too is enamored of her. He submits to his crafty chancellor Phaullus wiles and his unscrupulous sister Cleone's seduction. There was a civil war between the brothers for a while at last Antiochus returns to Syria with Rodogune and renounces his claim to the throne thought not to Rodogune's love.

Timocles gladly grants him his demand. But Phaullus sees the defeat of his purpose to usurp the throne of Syria. Phaullus however works upon Timocles infatuation for Rodogune and gets the king to agree to the secret killing of Antiochus.

'The Viziers of Bassora' is one of the earliest works written in Baroda. In the turmoil of the dramatist's political activities the manuscript was lost. Posthumously the first edition of the drama was published in 1959.

Sri Aurobindo has picked up only hints and characters from the various stories of 'The Book of The Thousand and One Nights' by Sir Richard Burton and has created his own almost an original story. The play set in Baroda and Baghdad. There is a conflict between good and evil. 'The Viziers of Bassora' is a pure romance Mohmad bin Suleyman of Zayni is the cousin of Haroun al Rasheed, the Caliph of Bagdad. He has two viziers - Alfazzal Ibu Sawy and Almuene bin Khakan. The former is a noble and kind vizier and later is a wicked and cruel vizier.

Fareed Almuene's son sights Anice-al-Jalice a slave girl in the slave market and decides to buy her. He and his father tried to lift her from the market forcibly. At that moment, Alfazzal enters the market and buy's her for the king's harem with suitable price. At his house he keeps her hiding away from the prying eyes of Nureddene.

The play 'ERIC' has its origin in the Scandinavian mythologies about the sons and daughters of 'Odin', 'Thor' and 'Freya'.
'Eric' the legendary king of Sweden and Aslaug's Knight - a romaine.

In Sri Aurobindo's 'Eric' play, Eric is the elected king of Narway. He has wisdom and power but lack of peace of mind.

He needed third force to be complete human being.

Aslaug, the sister of Eric's enemy Swegan and 'Hertha' (swegan's wife) come to Eric's Palace dressed as dancing girls. Aslaug starts singing 'Love is the loop of Gods'. For Eric, the song is the divine message. Eric sees Aslaug and falls in love with her. Aslaug too is drawn towards him, though her aim was to destroy Eric. She fails in killing Eric.

Eric the conqueror turns into lover. At the end, Eric succeeds in transcending not only himself but enlightening Swegan's mental horizon and filling up Aslaug's and Hertha's lives with blissfulness.

The play 'Eric' shows the various stages of Love. Love as a physical passion, love as a union of souls and love as a cosmic force which establishes man's kinship with the universe. Thus East and West Mythology is the main source of Sri Aurobindo’s each drama.

**References:**

1. Sri Aurobindo’s “Dramatic Art in His Plays”.
2. Sri Aurobindo’s Plays