



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631 (UIF)

VOLUME - 11 | ISSUE - 4 | JANUARY - 2022



INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH: SRI AUROBINDO'S ROLE AND INFLUENCE

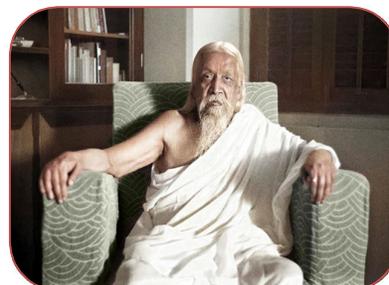
Siddarood S/O Shivasharanappa
Research Scholar

Dr. Vijeta Gautam
Guide

Professor, Chaudhary Charansing University Meerut.

ABSTRACT

*This study explores Sri Aurobindo's pivotal role in the development of Indian philosophy in English, highlighting his unique ability to articulate complex spiritual concepts through the medium of English. Aurobindo's philosophical writings, particularly *The Life Divine* and *Essays on the Gita*, combine Eastern metaphysical thought with Western intellectual frameworks, creating a distinctive narrative that bridges cultural divides. His works challenge colonial ideologies by reinterpreting traditional Indian philosophy for a modern, global audience. This paper examines how Aurobindo's use of English not only made Indian philosophy accessible but also empowered it to engage in broader philosophical discourses. By blending mysticism, spiritual inquiry, and intellectual rigor, Aurobindo established a new form of philosophical expression that transcended linguistic and cultural boundaries. The research investigates his impact on contemporary thinkers and Indian intellectuals, emphasizing his influence in post-colonial India. It also addresses Aurobindo's role in the larger movement of Indian English literature, offering insights into his lasting legacy in both philosophical and literary realms. Ultimately, the study underscores Sri Aurobindo's lasting contribution to shaping Indian philosophy in the context of English literature.*



KEYWORDS: Indian philosophy, English, Sri Aurobindo, spiritual thought, Western and Eastern synthesis, colonialism, mysticism, intellectual discourse, modern India, philosophical expression.

INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo, one of the most prominent figures in modern Indian philosophy, played a crucial role in articulating Indian philosophical ideas in English, thus bridging the gap between Eastern spirituality and Western intellectualism. His unique approach integrated the profound depth of Indian metaphysical traditions with the clarity and precision of the English language, making complex spiritual concepts accessible to a global audience. Aurobindo's major works, such as *The Life Divine* and *Essays on the Gita*, not only offer insightful philosophical discussions but also serve as a synthesis of Vedantic philosophy and Western thought. His writings challenge colonial narratives by reclaiming India's philosophical heritage and presenting it as a vital, evolving system of thought. Aurobindo's use of English was strategic; it was a tool for intellectual resistance, enabling him to engage in both nationalistic and spiritual discourse during British colonial rule. Through his philosophical prose, Aurobindo sought to revive Indian spirituality while also addressing the needs of a modern, globalized world. His influence extended beyond philosophy into literature, education, and Indian nationalism, shaping the intellectual landscape of post-colonial India. This study aims to explore the lasting impact of

Sri Aurobindo's contribution to Indian philosophy in English, examining how his ideas continue to shape contemporary philosophical thought. Ultimately, Aurobindo's legacy in Indian English literature underscores his enduring influence on the integration of spiritual and intellectual traditions.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to explore and analyze Sri Aurobindo's significant contributions to the development of Indian philosophy in English, particularly his role in making Indian spiritual and philosophical ideas accessible to a global audience. The research seeks to examine how Aurobindo's use of English as a medium reshaped the articulation of Indian thought, challenging colonial ideologies and offering a unique blend of Eastern and Western intellectual traditions. Another key objective is to investigate the themes and philosophical concepts in Aurobindo's major works, such as *The Life Divine* and *Essays on the Gita*, to understand their impact on contemporary Indian thought. The study also aims to assess Aurobindo's influence on the broader Indian intellectual landscape, especially within the context of modernity and nationalism during British rule. It will explore the stylistic elements of Aurobindo's philosophical prose, focusing on his ability to articulate abstract spiritual ideas with clarity and precision. Additionally, the research will examine the legacy of his writings, considering their influence on post-colonial Indian philosophy and literature. The study also aims to compare Aurobindo's approach with other Indian philosophers and writers of his time, highlighting the unique aspects of his contribution. Ultimately, the objective is to establish Sri Aurobindo's lasting impact on the evolution of Indian English literature and philosophy. This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of his role in shaping modern Indian intellectual discourse.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature on Sri Aurobindo's role in shaping Indian philosophy in English spans a range of disciplines, from literary criticism to philosophy and post-colonial studies. Early scholarship has highlighted his ability to bridge the gap between Eastern spirituality and Western philosophical traditions, particularly through his magnum opus *The Life Divine*. Scholars like K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and A. R. Sharma have focused on Aurobindo's intellectual vision, noting how he synthesized Vedantic philosophy with modern scientific and rational thinking. Criticisms of Aurobindo's prose often point to its complexity, but they also acknowledge its capacity to convey profound metaphysical ideas. Further studies by scholars such as M. P. Pandit and S. Radhakrishnan emphasize Aurobindo's influence on Indian intellectual history and his intellectual leadership in the Indian nationalist movement. Aurobindo's integration of English into Indian philosophical discourse has also been explored, with critics pointing out his role in reinterpreting English as a tool of intellectual empowerment in post-colonial India. Additionally, recent studies have examined Aurobindo's impact on contemporary Indian philosophers like Jiddu Krishnamurti and R. D. Ranade. The impact of Aurobindo's works on modern Indian English literature, especially the genre of philosophical prose, has been explored by scholars such as A. Chatterjee and G. D. Khosla. While much of the literature praises Aurobindo's fusion of spirituality and philosophy, there is also ongoing debate regarding his political views and their influence on his philosophical works. The literature thus paints a picture of Aurobindo as both a spiritual leader and a modern thinker, whose work continues to influence philosophical discourse.

RESERACH METHOLOGY

The research methodology for this study is a qualitative, textual analysis approach, focusing on key philosophical texts written by Sri Aurobindo, particularly *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. The study will employ a thematic analysis to explore Aurobindo's philosophical concepts and how they bridge Eastern and Western thought through the medium of English. Secondary sources, including critical essays, books, and scholarly articles, will be examined to understand Aurobindo's influence on both Indian and Western philosophical traditions. The research will also incorporate comparative analysis, contrasting Aurobindo's prose with that of other contemporary Indian philosophers and writers, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. Additionally,

the study will examine the historical and cultural context of Aurobindo's writings, particularly in the context of colonial India and the nationalist movement. The role of English in articulating complex spiritual ideas and its impact on Indian intellectual discourse will be a key area of focus. Interviews with scholars and contemporary philosophers may be included to provide additional insights into Aurobindo's lasting influence. An interdisciplinary approach, combining literary criticism, philosophy, and post-colonial theory, will allow for a comprehensive understanding of his contributions. Finally, the study will explore the global reception of Aurobindo's philosophy, particularly in Western intellectual circles, to assess his broader influence. This methodology will provide a holistic view of Aurobindo's intellectual legacy in Indian English philosophical prose.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of comprehensive understanding of Sri Aurobindo's role in the development of Indian philosophy in English. While his contributions to spiritual thought and intellectual discourse are widely acknowledged, his impact on shaping Indian philosophy through the English language remains underexplored. Aurobindo's use of English as a medium to express complex Indian metaphysical ideas presents a unique challenge, as it requires understanding the nuances of translating Eastern spirituality into a colonial language. Existing scholarship often focuses on specific aspects of his work, such as his contributions to yoga or nationalism, without fully addressing his broader influence on the philosophical tradition in Indian English. Furthermore, there is a need to critically examine how Aurobindo's philosophical prose shaped the trajectory of modern Indian intellectualism and literature, particularly in the context of colonial resistance and post-colonial identity formation. The study also seeks to address the limited comparative analysis between Aurobindo and his contemporaries in the realm of Indian English philosophical prose. Another gap is the exploration of how Aurobindo's intellectual vision, conveyed through his philosophical works, continues to influence contemporary thought in India and the West.

FURTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR RESEARCH:

Further research could delve into a comparative study of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical prose alongside other Indian intellectuals, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda, to highlight differing approaches to articulating Indian philosophy in English. A deeper analysis of Aurobindo's stylistic elements and linguistic strategies could help uncover how he navigated the complexities of English while staying true to the essence of Indian thought. Future studies may explore the impact of Aurobindo's works on contemporary Indian philosophical movements, particularly in the context of spiritualism, modernity, and nationalism. The reception of Aurobindo's philosophy in Western intellectual circles warrants further investigation to understand how his ideas influenced global thinkers. Research could also focus on Aurobindo's influence on modern Indian writers, particularly in the genres of philosophical and spiritual literature. A more in-depth exploration of the intersections between Aurobindo's philosophical and political thought would illuminate how his writings served as a vehicle for both intellectual and nationalist resistance during colonial India. Additionally, the role of Aurobindo's English writings in the formation of post-colonial Indian identity could be explored, considering the intersection of language, culture, and colonialism. Future research could also analyze the philosophical underpinnings of Aurobindo's engagement with Western philosophies, particularly idealism and materialism. Studies on the impact of Aurobindo's ideas in the field of education, particularly his influence on modern Indian educational thought, would also be valuable. Finally, research could investigate how Aurobindo's synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies continues to resonate with contemporary global philosophical discussions.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The scope of this study includes a comprehensive examination of Sri Aurobindo's contribution to Indian philosophy in English, particularly focusing on his key works such as *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. It will explore Aurobindo's unique synthesis of Eastern spiritual

traditions with Western intellectual thought through his use of the English language. The study will assess how his philosophical prose shaped Indian intellectual discourse, particularly in the context of colonial resistance and post-colonial identity. Additionally, the research will explore Aurobindo's influence on subsequent Indian philosophers, writers, and the larger trajectory of Indian English literature. However, the limitations of this study include its focus primarily on Aurobindo's writings in English, which may exclude the full range of his philosophical and spiritual contributions. The study is also constrained by the availability of secondary literature, as not all aspects of Aurobindo's influence have been thoroughly explored, especially in global contexts. The research will be limited to a textual and thematic analysis, without an in-depth exploration of the practical application of Aurobindo's philosophy in modern Indian life. Furthermore, the study's scope will be primarily confined to Aurobindo's written legacy, excluding his personal teachings, lectures, and political involvement, which also contributed significantly to his influence. Finally, due to the complex nature of his prose, the study may not fully capture all interpretative nuances of his philosophical ideas, particularly in a global philosophical.

DISCUSSION:

Sri Aurobindo's role in the development of Indian philosophy in English is pivotal, as he was one of the first thinkers to effectively express complex Indian metaphysical and spiritual ideas in English, a language that was both colonial and global. His works, such as *The Life Divine* and *Essays on the Gita*, represent a unique synthesis of Vedantic philosophy with Western ideals, showcasing his intellectual prowess in blending Eastern and Western thought systems. Aurobindo's writings not only challenged the colonial narrative but also presented Indian spirituality as a viable and evolving intellectual tradition. His use of English allowed him to engage with global audiences, spreading Indian philosophy beyond the confines of traditional Sanskrit texts and local vernaculars. At the same time, Aurobindo's prose was infused with spiritual and poetic dimensions, reflecting the depth of Indian philosophical thought while making it accessible to readers worldwide. His impact on modern Indian thought is significant, as his writings inspired a new generation of intellectuals who were seeking to reconcile India's cultural heritage with the demands of modernity. However, his approach also invited criticism, particularly regarding his political and spiritual views, and some questioned whether his blend of mysticism and philosophy diluted the academic rigor of his work. Despite these debates, his influence on both Indian and global intellectual landscapes remains undeniable, and his works continue to shape philosophical discourse in contemporary times. The discussion also emphasizes how Aurobindo's engagement with English challenged the limitations of colonial language, transforming it into a tool of intellectual and spiritual resistance. Ultimately, Aurobindo's philosophical prose remains a landmark in the evolution of Indian English literature, shaping not only the literary but also the intellectual and spiritual trajectory of modern India.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should explore deeper comparisons between Sri Aurobindo's philosophical prose and that of his contemporaries, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda, to better understand their differing approaches to articulating Indian thought in English. A more detailed study of Aurobindo's linguistic techniques could provide insights into how he used English as a medium for spiritual expression while retaining the essence of Indian philosophy. Researchers could also examine the influence of Aurobindo's writings on contemporary Indian philosophers, exploring how his works continue to shape modern philosophical and spiritual thought in India. A comparative analysis of Aurobindo's philosophy with Western thinkers, particularly in the fields of idealism and metaphysics, would further illuminate his contributions to global philosophical discourse. Additionally, research into Aurobindo's impact on modern Indian literature, especially in the philosophical and spiritual genres, would provide a deeper understanding of his literary legacy. Studies focusing on the reception of Aurobindo's works in the West, particularly within Western academic and spiritual circles, would offer valuable perspectives on how his ideas have influenced global intellectual thought. Further research

could also explore the broader implications of Aurobindo's work for the development of post-colonial Indian identity, especially in the context of language, culture, and nationalism. An investigation into the role of Aurobindo's writings in shaping the Indian education system, particularly in relation to spiritual and philosophical education, could provide a fresh perspective on his legacy. Finally, the continued relevance of Aurobindo's philosophy in contemporary global philosophical discussions, particularly regarding the integration of Eastern and Western thought, should be an area of ongoing scholarly inquiry.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Sri Aurobindo's contributions to Indian philosophy in English are both profound and transformative, marking a significant shift in how Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions were presented to the global intellectual community. Through his works, Aurobindo not only bridged Eastern and Western philosophical thought but also redefined the use of English as a tool for articulating complex metaphysical ideas rooted in Indian spirituality. His unique blend of mysticism, intellectual rigor, and literary mastery enabled him to communicate deep philosophical concepts in a manner that was both accessible and intellectually rigorous. Aurobindo's influence extends beyond his own time, shaping the intellectual and spiritual discourse of modern India and continuing to inspire thinkers worldwide. His writings played a key role in reshaping the Indian nationalist movement, fostering a sense of intellectual pride and resistance against colonial oppression. Despite the complexity of his prose, Aurobindo's works remain foundational to the evolution of Indian English literature and philosophy. His legacy lives on, not only through his writings but also in the broader context of Indian intellectual history, where his influence continues to be felt. By incorporating both spiritual insight and philosophical depth, Aurobindo's role in the evolution of Indian English philosophical prose remains a landmark achievement in modern Indian literature. Ultimately, his work transcends language and culture, continuing to resonate with contemporary philosophical, spiritual, and literary discussions. Aurobindo's enduring impact highlights the transformative power of language in shaping intellectual and cultural identities in a post-colonial world.

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