



CHARACTERISTICS OF AUROBINDO'S HEROINES THROUGH HIS PLAYS

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It goes without saying that the heroine is the most important female character in a dramatic piece. Beckson and Ganz hold that as a technical term in criticism, the word, heroine, does not necessarily suggest that a character possesses either prowess or virtues: "She may be a cowardly rogue, but because she is the central character, she is the heroine."¹ It is not surprising that Sri Aurobindo's heroines." It is not surprising that Sri Aurobindo's heroines – central female characters – are neither fairies nor witches. On the contrary, they are real women with womanly virtues and weakness. It appears to be disparaging the potentialities of Sri Aurobindo's heroines to say that they are tinged with poetry and romance; and it is painful to say that a critic like Iyengar ignores their verve and vigour of Sri Aurobindo's heroines: "All five plays are steeped in poetry and romance, recalling the spirit and flavour of the distinctive dramatic type exemplified in different ways by Bhasa, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, though of course, all have Aurobindonian.

Undertones."¹ It means that Sri Aurobindo's heroines are uncommon women taking after the figures of romances. It is true that some touch of romance is noticed in every heroine; but it is unjust and incorrect to say that the heroine of Sri Aurobindo do not resemble the real women the women of flesh and blood, the woman of the real world. It may be pointed out that Sri Aurobindo's heroines provide the heroes with succour and motivation at every crucial stage; but it has to be accepted the heroines are responsible for putting the heroes in such circumstances where they are able to prove their real worth and importance. The heroines are, after all, women with womanliness in thought and action. However, to understand the nature of heroines a discussion of their common characteristics, their individual traits, and the variety of their roles.

1. Common Characteristics :

It is true that Sri Aurobindo's heroines belong to different countries and climes (Iraq, Syria, India, Spain, Britain and Norway) and some of his heroines are legendary figures but it

cannot be denied that they have a common thread: they are blessed with elemental feelings and emotions. Banerji's man is inclusive of woman when

He says : “ Man (woman too) is the most miserable creature on earth , and also the one most full of promise for the future. For he (she as well) contains in himself (herself) all the discordant elements out of which the world is formed matter , life and mind – and also the principle – the soul element – that has the power to reconcile them all and lead him towards an infinite progression.”¹ Sri Aurobindo defines woman to elucidate what womanhood stands for : “ Four great aspects of the woman , four of her leading powerstand personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play.”² The aspects are personality of calm wideness , wisdom , tranquil benignity , inexhaustible compassion , sovereign surpassing , and all ruling greatness ; splendid strength and irresistible passion , warrior mood , over-whelming will , impetuous swiftness and world – shaking force; vivid and sweet and wonderful deep secret of beauty harmony , fine rhythm , intricate , subtle opulence , compelling attraction , and captivating grace ; and close , profound capacity of intimate knowledge , careful flawless work , quiet and exact perfection in all things. In other words ,

They have physical , emotional , intellectual and spiritual energy and beauty. Therefore , what we find in Andromede is inevitably found in the heart of Vasavadutta , Rodogune , Aslaug and Anice- Aljalice. The heroines exercise their power of physique , heart, mind and spirit. This affirmation of energy is one of the common characteristic of Sri Aurobindo's heroines.

Andromede is physically muscular and healthy. In her anger she says to Praxille : “ I do not pity tigers , wolves and scorpions. I pity men who are weak and beasts that suffer.” Speaking about Phineus she gives expression to her muscularity :

Perhaps I would have loved him like my hound
or the lion in the park who lets me put his mane;
But since he would have me even without my will
to foul with his beast touch , my body abhors him .

Similarly Vasavadutta is bold and courageous. She declares that she will “ not be mastered by any equal creature.” Rodogune is in no way inferior in boldness and courage: “ I am a Parthian princess , of a race/ who choose one lord and cleave to him for ever/ Through death , through fire,

Through swords ,ih hell , in heaven. Aslaug does not hesitate in telling Hertha;

I am not of the earth

To bound my actions by the common rule,

I claim my kin with those whom Heaven's gaze

Moulded supreme, - Swegn's sister Olaf 's child ,

Aslaug of Norway.

Anice- Al jalice says to Aameena (the mother of Nuraddene) without any sign of fear : “ We are only trained / to meek and quick obedience; and that is virtue/ In freemen is in us a deep offence./ do you command your passions , not on us/ Impose that service; ‘ tis not in our part.” These qualities of courage and boldness are common in all the heroines of the plays.

In the fragmentary dramatic pieces , the same quality of physical muscularity and health together with courage and boldness as is found in the heroines of the complete plays , is seen leaning towards frankness and fearlessness. ComolCumary in “ Prince of Edur” , Ismenia in “ The Maid of the Mill, “ Guendolen in “ The House of Brut “ , Urmila in “ The Prince of Mathura” , Ashtorath in “ The Birth of Sin, “ Urvasio in “ The Hero and the Nymph” , and Alacial in “ The witch of Ilni” are brave , bold , frank , and fearless.

For instance , the princess ComolCumary says to Bappa:

I swear I pity you,

You rush upon you know not what. Come now ,

Here is my sister ,Coomood , who can cook

Divinely. Take her. Let me walk on to Dongurh.

You will regret it , youth.

The same tone of defiance is heard in Alacial's words : “ I owe you not a doit. You shall not have/ so much of tender as will serve to buy/ one grain of sand , one withered blade of grass./ My riches , sir, are in a good coffer locked/ and will evade a hungrier search than yours. It may be stressed that the inferior physical strength of Sri Aurobindo's heroines is made good by their self respect and genuine pride. They are bent down only when the heroes accept their defeat at their hands. The heroines win , and the heroes lose; but men are men , and women are women.

Sri Aurobindo's heroines are blessed with warm and genuine emotions. Their flowering youth and bewitching beauty encourage them to respond to the call of love given by the heroes . for instance , Andromeda says to Iolaus , her brother:

Oh , do not laugh at me. I want my sun-god
Whose face is like the grand Olympian Zeus'
And wings are his feet. Where did you leave him
After you took him from our rough sea- beaches.

And at the sight of Vasavadutta , VuthsaUdayan says , “ Not only I consent , / But welcome with a proud aspiring mind,/ Since to be Vasavadutta’s servitor/ is honour , happiness and fortune’s grace./ My greatness this shall raise , not cast it down , king Mahasegn. And Vasavadutta , despite her anger , says about VuthsaUdayan :

Let him Serve

Obediently and I will load his lovely head
With costliest favours. He’s my own , my own,
And shall not dare to play with me. I think he

Dares;

I do not know , I think he would presume.
He’s gentle , brilliant , bold and beautiful.

It is interesting to note that Vasavadutta’s blooming youth inspires her to love VuthsaUdayan , but her mind is conscious of her house’s foe. Her heart aspires to possess Vuthsa , and her mind dwells on taking a revenge on him.

Rodogune finds it difficult to control her warm feelings from their spontaneous overflow. She says that she has never yearned for any man , but now her heart is filled with love for a princely youngman , Antiochus : when the young man embraces her , she tells him: “ My heart/ stops in me. I can bear no more of bliss./ O leave me now that I may live for thee. She has no hesitation in

Declaring :

I have no country , I have only thee.
I shall be where thou art ; it is all I know
And all I wish for.

Aslaug has come to Eric to murder him. She is disguised as a dancing girl. But her hatred gives place to love , and she gives favourable responses to Eric’s advances. She has come to the conclusion: “ O he is far too great , too beautiful/ for a dagger’s penetration. It would turn, / The point would turn; it would deny itself/ to such a murder. And at last her heart goes beyond control:

Now for us, O beloved,
The world begins again , who since the stars were
formed,
Playing the game of games by Odin's will
Have met and parted , parted , met again
For ever.

Anice – Al jalice's warm feelings for Nureddene , ComolCumary's tender feelings for Bappa and Ismenia's heart filled with love for Antonio are the instances of Sri Aurobindo's Heroines revealing their unflinching and genuine beauty.

Their heart is a glow with warmth of love , and their body amits the light of their beauty.

Sri Aurobindo's heroines are intellectually sharp and far- sighted. And romada knows that her sun-god will come to rescue those who have been kept in captivity without their sin and guilt. She says to Diomedes about Tyrnaus and Smerdas who have been arrested by Polydaon for the capital punishment:

Alas , the happy men , the poor drowned men
Who had young children somewhere whom they loved,
How could you watch them die.' Had I been a god,
I would not let this cruel thing have happened.

Polydaon puts And romeda , her brother , and her parents in jail; but she is quite sure of her sun-god's timely arrival and his certain held and safety. At last she is enamoured of Perseus' beauty and falls in love with him. Cepheus, And romeda's father says: " What now is left but to prepare the nuptials/ of sweet young sunny eyed And romeda/ with

Mighty Perseus. Vasavadutta gives an example of her brilliance and understanding: she entraps VuthsaUdayan and enslaves him. When she comes to know that VuthsaUdayan has already fallen in love with her , she tells her father:

Let him desire , but I will nothing yield,
I am thy daughter; greatest Kings should sue
And take my grace as an unhoped- for joy.

On having seen the desire of her father to wed VuthsaUdayan she asks the young king of Cowsambie: Do with me what thou will , for I am thine. Vasavadutta , with her intelligence , fulfils the wishes of her father , and turns out to be the faithful partner of VuthsaUdayan.

Rodogune goes through pleasures and pains; and she has no way out of her ill- luck but death consequent on the murder of Antiochus. She has no hesitation in embracing death , because any faithful and brilliant woman would have done the same thing. The magnitude of her pain can be judged from the following lines:

O my Antiochus , on thy hard bed
In the rude camp with horses neighing round
Though well mightiest slumber nor the undistant

Trumpet

Startling unseal thy war – accustomed ears
From the sweet lethargy of eraned repose.
How canst thou sleep ? it clamours in my brain
More than could any sound , with terror laden
And voices.

Aslaug is equally intelligent. It is she who has given political defeat to Eric , the king of Yara. Aslaug and Hertha disguise as dancing girls: Aslaug wants to murder Eric for his callous , cruel and tyranneous actions against

Aslaug’s father. She cools down her spirit of revenge when she has come to know how Eric has become mild and repentant: “ Look not upon this hand/ I clap in mine , although the fairest hand / that God has made. Observe instead/ This ring an recognise it.” Anice- Al jalice by her faithfulness to Nureddene shows that she is an intelligent girl though she is a slave – purchased by Nureddene’s father from the slave market. She , finally takes the place of Nureddena’s wife.

Even on spiritual footing , Sri Aurobindo’s heroines are conscious of the existence of God , fate and Destiny. Critics are of the view that Sri Aurobindo through his heroines revealed “ his vision of cosmic evaluation from a state of crude and evil religion based on fear and division and violent cruelty presided over an Ultimate and even Antidivine occult power to the condition of a pure and refined worship of a divine light , a compassionate , calm and benignant force with its law of love and union in relationship with and mastery over the forces of Nature. And romedasays , “ Then shall a calm and mighty will prevail/ And broader minds and kindlier manners reign/ And men grow human , mild and merciful.

Vasavadutta says , “ I have that strength in me , the strength to love of gods; Rodogune says, “ I know the gods prepare some death;/ I am a living misfortune; Aslaug opines that “ For in thy every act and word I see/ The gods compel thee; and Anice – Al jalice says: “ Fia , fisherman , what a loosing blessing is this, to kill the thing for which thou blesses him. If allah give him a beard, he will be no longer youth and for the generosity, it will be Allah’s. It may be added that Sri Aurobindo’s heroines are human beings , but they are staunch believers in God and his Universe. They never go against the limits prescribed by religion: what is allowed in the Scriptures is consciously followed by them. God , soul , heaven, hell , birth , death , and other spiritual subjects are kept before them as far as their thought and action are concerned.