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Topic: The Tiger and The Deer – Sri Aurobindo.

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The Tiger and The Deer – Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo, popularly known as the sage of Pondicherry was variously a yogi, a patriotic Revolutionary, a social thinker, a philosopher, a seer, a mystic, a prophet, an interpreter of truth, a leading intellectual of his time and a distinguished man of letters. His poetry bears the imprint of a master's hand. His mighty imagination, his command over language, his handling of traditional English metrical forms with magnificent assurance and his unerring ear for the rhythm of English Poetry make him an outstanding poet. There is in his poetry - both in the longer compositions and the shorter poems - a strain of philosophical contemplation which gives it a distinctive place in the whole range of Indo Anglian poetry.

“The Tiger and The Deer” is one of the most readily understandable poems of Aurobindo. Its theme is the comparison of pitiless beauty with gentle beauty and the impact of the one on the other. The tiger is a grand animal with its shining eyes, broad chest and the spring in its leaf. The deer drinking the cool water of a pond is representative of the harmless loveliness that offends none. But for some mysterious reason, Nature has decreed that the deer shall be the food of the tiger. Following its ruthless instinct, the tiger falls upon the innocent deer, tears it to shreds, makes a meal of it and walks off. It looks a betrayal of natural justice. But Aurobindo, after describing the dramatic slaughter, goes on to assure us on the strength of his poetic vision that this inexplicable injustice shall not last long. Once the forests of the East were lorded over by Mammoths. Today no trace is left of them. Similarly, the might of the tiger will suddenly vanish one day and the meek deer shall inherit the Earth. This is part of “The Life Divine.”

Obviously, here is dramatic expression but terrible injustice. The deer has in no way offended the tiger. But it dies a pitiless death. The Tiger kills instinctively. Seeing this gory drama, one starts wondering if there is any sense of justice and fireplay in Nature. Are we to accept the adage that Nature is red in tooth and claw? According to the materialists, there is no sense or sensibility in nature. It is a question of the survival of the fittest. The mighty overpower the weak. There is nothing to be done

about it. But Aurobindo does not subscribe to this helpless and heartless theory of evolution. He believes that life is inspired and controlled by the Divine. And with the Divine, we cannot associate injustice and imbalance. For some inscrutable reason, the cruel tiger dominates over the weaker animals today. But this shall not ever be so.

Thus, this is a poetic vision certified by its own intensity. It has a prophetic conviction that all Nature is moving towards greater and greater divinisation. Today, the deer is the victim but in nature's good time, the tiger will be the victim. The mighty one will disappear and the humble one will inherit the Earth. This is reminiscent of Christ's dictum in the Sermon on the Mount that the meek shall inherit the world. In fact, the poem is artistic in language and rhythmic in style.