



## "I FEEL, THEREFORE I AM" – TEXTUALIZING SRI AUROBINDONIAN CONSCIOUSNESS IN MANOJ DAS'S *THE ESCAPIST*

Dr. Samir Kumar Panigrahi

(Professor of English, Dept. of Science & Humanities, Black Diamond College of Engineering and Technology, Biju Patnaik University of Technology, Odisha.)

### ABSTRACT



The present paper studies Manoj Das's *The Escapist* by using Sri Aurobindo's dynamics of consciousness and patterns of synthesis as the frameworks for interpreting the spiritual evolution of self. The individuation of the protagonist from a fake God-man to a true ascetic is studied through the parameters of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. The worlds of waking, dream, gestural and intuitive experiences of Padmalochan are assessed by the exclusive use of either the senses or the mind. The focus is on the presentation/study of supra-sensory intuition, subliminal reactions and physical re-(reflection) as valid cognitio-physical experiences. The confrontation between Maya and conscience, body and mind, and appearance and reality are depicted back grounding Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. Through Padmalochan the novelist invites the readers to share the spiritual experience that unifies us with the cosmos. The protagonist's quest begins with material expectations and ends in searching spirituality in life, thus making a circle round the centre. So in resolving to synthesize the materialism with asceticism, Das holds the Aurobindonian edifice of the transformation, evolution and transcendence for a spiritual rebirth of the antihero.

**Keywords:** *Consciousness, Synthesis, Integral Yoga, Evolution of Self, Individuation.*



“All life is a Yoga of Nature seeking to manifest God within itself” (Aurobindo, *The Synthesis* p.47).

The term “Yoga” connotes and concentrates the potentialities of the self and the “evolution” of being. Evolution is a complex phenomenon evolving being with consciousness and Bliss revealing itself from the inconscient matter and eventually merge to the Absolute (Aurobindo, *Archives* p.197). Sri Aurobindonian dialectics structures round the concept *Sachchidananda* (Spiritual Absolute) – the conglomeration of *Sat* (being), *Chit* (consciousness) and *Ananda* (bliss). *Sachchidananda* can only be described in terms of its relations to the world: as substance (*sat*), it constitutes the world; as consciousness (*chit*), it contains the world; as an Infinite Bliss/quality/value (*ananda*) it expresses and experiences itself in the world. From a human perspective, the way that we are conscious determines what we observe. But the zone of consciousness is a very complex phenomenon, and it ends with an evolution. Evolution is a mechanism of two significant processes: “ascent” and “integration”. Ascent signifies the growing manifestation of the inherent “unmanifest consciousness-force” (*The Synthesis*, p.34). Integration as a process in evolution signifies the reconciliation and harmonization of the higher and the lower states of being. For individuals, a personal “synthesis” begins with the resolution of inner conflicts leading to the ascendance of spirit for wholeness and harmony. In the process, limitations are transcended and a new sense of identity emerges – new depths of power, love and creativity are contacted and expressed in everyday living. The growth process is seen as a series of awakenings. According to Sri Aurobindo “synthesis” is the state of union of the three degrees of nature: “the bodily life”, “the mental existence” and “the Spirit” and of three modes of human existence: “the ordinary material existence”, “the life of mental activity and progress” and “the unchanging spiritual beatitude” (*The Synthesis*, p.15). The degrees of nature can be perceived as “a bodily life which is the basis of our existence here in the material world, a mental life into which we emerge and by which we raise the bodily to higher uses and enlarge it into a greater completeness, and a divine existence which is at once

the goal of the other two and returns upon them to liberate them into their highest possibilities” (*The Synthesis*, p.14). With man’s evolutionary nexus these “three forms resolve their discords into a harmonious rhythm and so create in himself the whole godhead, the perfect Man” (*The Synthesis*, pp.15-16). Perfection includes perfection of body and mind, so that the highest results of *Rajayoga* and *Hathayoga* should be contained in the widest formula of the synthesis finally to be effected by mankind. The highest synthesis of perfection is possible in the attempt of divinizing the normal material life of man and the race and by the internalization the external vision perceives that “God dwells concealed in humanity” (*The Synthesis*, pp.15-44).

Integral yoga finds “evolution” as the principal movement of life on earth having the goal of divinising the self by vitalising the *Kundalini*:

“...to move inward and discover the Psychic Being, which then can bring about a transformation of the outer nature. This transformation of the outer being or ego by the Psychic is called Psychicisation; it is one of the three necessary stages, called the Triple Transformation, in the realisation of the Supramental consciousness” (*Divine Laws* 59).

The “Triple Transformation” – “Psychic Transformation”, “Spiritual Transformation” and “Supramental Transformation” - refers to the two-fold movement of the self - the inward psychicisation by which the *Sadhak* gets in contact with the Psychic Being (inner divine principle), and the spiritual transformation or spiritualisation of the self. The process is the process of internalization and a methodology of opening of inner vitals, so that one becomes aware of the powers behind the surface mind. Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga is a way of activating “*Chakras*” (subtle centres) within the body and to reach the stage of opening “*Brahmarandhara*” (Superconscient realms). In the course of the Yoga the Yogi feels the subliminal reactions and responses in the body. The three *Gunas* (modes of Nature) of Prakriti that constitute the crême of consciousness – *Sattva* (Purity), *Rajas* (Kineticism) and *Tamas* (inertia) get purified and reach the height of Divine equivalents: *Sattva* becomes *Jyoti* (Spiritual Light),



Rajas becomes *tapas* (tranquility of Divine force) and *Tamas* becomes *sama* (Divine quiet, rest and peace) (<https://auomere.wordpress.com/transformation/>). The four powers/vitals/capacities – *Deha Shakti* (Physical), *Buddhi* (Mind), *Chitta* (Psychic) and *Prana* (Vital) get vitalised as part of the *Shakti Chatusthaya* (Power Quartet).

(<https://auomere.wordpress.com/techniques/four-austerities-and-four-liberation/#knowledge>)

The “Supramentalisation” of the entire being is the very soul of Sri Aurobindonian Integral Yoga. It is the ultimate stage in the integral yoga. It refers to the bringing down of the Supramental consciousness, and the resulting transformation of the entire being.

The present paper studies Manoj Das’s *The Escapist* by using Sri Aurobindo’s dynamics of consciousness, Integral Yoga and patterns of synthesis as the frameworks for interpreting the spiritual evolution of Padmalochan. Emphasis is placed on the depiction the psychic being and the realization of the cosmic consciousness in the protagonist’s soul.

### **THE ESCAPIST: THROUGH THE LENS OF SRI AUROBINDONIAN METAPHYSICS**

Manoj Das’s *The Escapist* (2001) is a metaphysical novel. The theme of the novel can be described as the spiritual autobiography of a hypersensitive individual. What is the absolute reality for man? The apparent reality or his quests for higher values that help him transcend his physical yearnings? Can a man evolve to an enlightened being? By what process does he evolve? At what level and in what manner is he integrated? What is the power that governs this evolution? What is the design or intention that determines its direction? These are some of the vital issues that Das deals in the novel. According to Das the overall theme of the novel revolves around the dictum, “Chance is the pseudonym of God which He uses when He does not wish to put down His signature” (Preface, *The Escapist*, p.viii). The protagonist realizes the presence of the pre-ordained plan of the Providence: “- - - the way of living I had come to embrace could not have been my doing. I could not have managed this with lies and manipulations. Things had happened in spite of me” (*The Escapist* p.64). Here the central character

the “I” (Padmalochan Pramanik alias Baba Padmananda) can be described as a bare consciousness stripped to the human minimum impressively recording both the subjective and objective data of experiences. He is the personification of an abstraction - the ideal spiritual hero. Padmalochan’s escape from the social world in search of the root of spiritualism is highly symbolic. While depicting the conflict-ridden existence of Padmalochan, Das deals with the predicament of the modern man caught in the contrived dialectical opposition between what is and what ought to be. Thus, in the novel the novelist symbolically presents the individual’s pursuit for freedom and truth that provides spiritual sustenance to the split self. The synthesis – (evolution of self and supramentalisation) - one comes across in Das belongs to that superior order, involving what may be called both “immanence” and “transcendence” (*The Synthesis* p.18) from mundane and not merely integration at the level of the conscious mind.

The plot of *The Escapist* revolves round three narratorial rhythms - ‘Non-contradiction’ (thesis), ‘Contradiction’ (antithesis) and ‘Resolution’ (synthesis). In ‘Non-contradiction’, there are strange and apparently contradictory events happened with no discernible logic solution. In part two, either-or, is based on ‘Contradiction’ where the protagonist faces a fundamental choice to continue to battle to save his new-formed identity (God-man) or to give it up. Here the focus is on the conflict between two forms of self: conscious self and intuitive self. Part three is the state of ‘Resolution’. In it Baba Padmananda understands the true nature of the events and all apparent contradictions are identified and resolved. He finally leaves for the Himalayas.

Das employs three integrated literary techniques – “juxtaposition of philosophical opposites”, “symbolism” and “myth” – to magnify the plot-theme of *The Escapist*. The use of the literary technique of the ‘juxtaposition of opposites’ involves the sequential presentation and contrasting in divergent scenes of the novel. He aptly presents the nature of the character of positive traits and negative traits in terms of their motives. His use of and recasting of ancient Indian myths (here Ratnakar-Valmiki myth, myth of *Maya* and *Mohini*) add to the



epic scope of *The Escapist*. The use of various archetypal symbols (tiger, Himalayas, sky etc.) brings abstract subject matter and psychic imprints down to the observational level.

The novel is about the uneven chronicle of Padmalochan Pramanik, an orphan for whom life appears to be a pilgrimage. The opening line of the novel projects the mysterious ways of life as reflected in the hero's predicament:

The silly act of a moment caused by a bout of nervousness – or could it have been inspired by some mysterious power in a mood for fun? - and, the result is I step into my new avatar, undreamt of, incredible? (1).

When Padmalochan is asked by Jayanta Thakore to sit in a non-existent chair, he ridiculously assumes the posture of *Utkatasana*, which later discovered by Ranjita Devi, a woman forever in search of god man as an antidote to ennui, as a "Baba" with stupendous supernatural powers and "the holy man of her imagination" (9). Thereafter Padmalochan, an ordinary boy from the village Gobardhanpur without any desire and design of his own is metamorphosed into Baba Padmananda. Here the novelist moulds from raw human elements that elevate itself to God-man - the height of spirituality by an accidental meeting. Ranjita Devi, who symbolically emerges as an enlightener enkindles the flame of spirituality in Padmalochan:

For a moment she was a vision for me, at once a vast blue horizon all by herself and a goddess who stood there to impart benedictions, to teach, whoever could learn the lesson, that one's faith, when total, never failed one. It could be effective and rewarding even when the external object of one's faith was an illusion (55).

He reflects his feeling at Ranjita Devi's posturing at his feet: "I stood electrified, as if a process of metamorphosis had suddenly begun its deep within me. My hands trembled, but I spread my palm on her head in the way of blessing her" (p.9). This psychic snapshot provides more room to evoke the intricacies of Padmalochan's own inner depth.

In terms of narrative structure, Padmalochan's orphanhood makes the plot move forward and it does so by projecting two of pre-

conditions: loss and survival. The readers can see in the opening pages a reciprocal relationship between loss and gain. Padmalochan has lost both the purse and the bicycle: the two valuables which remained with him. While in search of something he enters the mansion of Thakore a new opportunity seems to wait for him. Ranjita Devi's acceptance of him to be a *Baba* provides the narrative impetus and left the readers for the mystery of whether or not the protagonist will turn out to be the hero of his own life. Padmalochan's reflective narration signals here by the references to "remembrance", "reflection", and "even now" where the readers can trace a harmony between the protagonist's inner responses and his living experiences. He remembers his past and connotes its impact on "now":

Since my foster-grandmother's death a month ago, I had refrained from shaving. My small goatee, along with the colour of my *pyjama* and *kurta* which happened to be somewhat ochre and the illusion I had spun about my capability to harness pure space for serving as my seat- must have convinced her that I was not only a holy man, but also a doer of miracles. Needless to say, I stood more helpless than amused (9).

Ultimately in helplessness he surrenders himself to the mercy of the Providence.

In the initial phase of evolution of Sri Aurobindo's "Integral Yoga", an individual feels the presence of "Higher Self". This feeling is a kind of motivation for Padmalochan to search for The Absolute. Until now, 'Mind' is established on the basis of 'Ignorance' seeking for knowledge and growing into knowledge (*The Synthesis* 2-97), but, as Sri Aurobindo pointed out:

Evolution can only be actualized by a triple transformation which consists firstly of a psychic change where our present nature is converted into a soul-instrumentation, then of a spiritual change where a higher Light, Knowledge, and Purity descends into the whole, right down into the darkness of our sub-conscience and thirdly, there must be the Supramental transmutation, which is the ascent into the Supermind and a descent of



the Supramental Consciousness into our entire being (*The Life*, p.523).

Padmalochan's evolution starts with searching for the truth and surrendering himself to the Providence. Standing before the mirror he feels like:

"Was it providentially ordained that I should be clad in the robe of the holy? Could it be a punishment? If so, for what? - - - Could it be a reward? If so, for what? Be that as it may, could I start growing holy from the outward into the inward? (42).

In Das's novels 'individuation' itself is a process of deepening- of activating the "Ajna Chakra" (thinking mind) that shapes conscious thinking, conceptualising and decision-making process and spiritualises the thought through the practice of Integral yoga.

Part two "contradiction" is more abstract than part one. The plot contrasts the two opposite codes of life (morality vs. materialistic) and two opposite codes of mind (conscious vs. sub-conscious) and the effects of each. It demonstrates the redounding sequence of events and consequences of the actions of Jayanta Thakore and Jasmine and introduces the ideas of the destroyer. At the same time it presents the conflict and disillusionment of Baba Padmananda. The hint is towards the relationship of Sri Aurobindonian "surface mind" and "subliminal mind" (*The Synthesis*, p.119). Baba Padmananda's surface mind which emerges out of materialistic desire is related to his evolutionary ego.

Destiny has gifted Baba Padmananda the holy robes, not to rob people but to educate them and pull them out from their mundane existence by paving a life of austerity. But with this pulling, he pushes himself to explore the Holy within. The spontaneous outpourings of thoughts to treat the maladies of his disciples well-convince him of the presence of Divinity inside his body, but he cannot overcome from his subjective guilt consciousness. His consciousness is suffused with the fear and knowledge of flux and his agonized self cries out:

Aren't you Omniscient? Wouldn't you come to tell me who I am – a cheat, a hypocrite or merely a hapless loafer? O Mother, I am facing an acute identity crisis. What is the degree of my sin and what is its consequence? (p.56).

He achieves a transcendence of his guilt and realizes the tangled implications of serious moral lapses. It is one of the decisive moments of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga when a psychic being questions his self and this quest leads him towards 'Sadhana' (the practice by which perfection is attained). His three months of self-chosen confinement in the "Vratalaya" – the 'Abode of Penance' of Ranjita Devi's dwelling is a voyage of gripping penance in shaping the recalcitrant emotions and of his human weaknesses. Here Das's obvious hints towards the *Rajayoga* and *Hathayoga*. These two forms try to wake *kundalini*. Baba Padmananda shares his yogic experiences:

"Gradually the last dream I had dreamt surfaced in my mind like a landscape emerging from a mist. The picture of Mother Durga had come alive. ... I believe she advised me not to give any terrible importance to the external circumstances and that the part I was playing in the drama, willy-nilly, could be pardoned by as long as I did not forsake the true goal of my life. Surprisingly, I seemed sure of the true goal of my life in that of sleep. It was by all means to realise the Divine, though I was not sure of it in my awakened state (58).

Further Baba Padmananda describes his experience while practising Integral Yoga:

"I closed my eyes and imagined that Mother Durga was not outside but inside me, ... I never reached even the brink of *Samadhi* or any other kind of trance but, after repeated efforts at diving deeper and deeper, I had an occasional feel of the serene ... a vast calm under the turbulent surface of my mind" (p.62).

As a matter of fact, Baba Padmananda affirms life by affirming the value of faith and by submitting himself to a spiritual process. He tries to achieve yogic poise by practising Integral Yoga. Das's clear mention of the names of books on Yoga and spirituality – *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, *Questions and Answers with Ramana Maharishi*, *Patanjali's Yaga*, *The Way of the Tantra* (p.47) – is an indication that knowledge of spirituality



that remains hidden with the spiritual classics is must for a Yogi to develop *Dhimanta Sakti*.

The godhead is the creation of human imagination, but so much purity is associated with it that once it is created, people will never allow it to crumble. It is worthwhile to suggest that Padmalochan drifts the role of a saint willy-nilly and once he finds himself cast into the role of a *Baba*, he makes an effort to perform the act with gusto, partly for the sake of self-preservation and partly because it suits his personality well. On the other hand, Jayant Thakore uses Baba Padmananda for spreading his business kingdom. In the way of arranging meeting of the political bigwigs and business tycoons for taking blessings from Baba Padmananda, Thakore plays the game what Natbar Sir did in years ago for achieving his political goal by making him to play the role of the spirit of the banyan tree goddess to forestall the execution of the construction of the road. Amidst the people who come near him with their different problems he feels, "of being bitten all over by a million-strong swarm of mosquitoes" (p.83). It takes no time to realize him that the unhappiness that the denizens of the modern wasteland suffers is due to their mistaken views of the world. The problems of the Professor, the Director of the film, the Actor, the Psychiatrist are due to their desire of the acquisition of indubitable knowledge about something or other - as essentially unattainable. He advises them for external discipline as this is the only road to happiness for these unfortunates whose self-absorption is too profound to be cured in any other way.

In spite of being a God-man with stupendous intellect and versatile spiritual thoughts, Baba Padmananda does not succeed to get over from his instinctive weakness. His love for Sushie, the daughter-in-law of Ranjita Devi reflects his uncontrollable instinctive passion. Sushie with her pagan beauty appears to him, "- - - a mode of music, a *ragini*, personified" (43). In fact, Baba Padmananda never views Sushie in the realistic plain but almost in a dream and Sushie becomes the *Mohini* of the novel. Sushie as a *Mohini* should not be taken to mean that she is playing the role of the mythological seductress consciously. *Mohini* is another aspect of the *Maya* that Baba is steeped in; she can be also

called a living embodiment of the illusion in Padmananda's life. The novelist presents the power of passion and sensual urges:

I'm irresistibly attracted to you. I've no illusion or any pretention regarding the nature of my attraction. There is passion in it, a terrific greed to get you as mine. And I admit that it is my weakness, a defeat to be discouraged. But I'm confident of my ability to change this into selfless and pure love (p.139).

The novelist presents the conflict of the power of Id and the strength of the yogic poise that a *sadhak* comes across the journey of supramentalisation. His proposal to escape to an asylum in the Himalayas is well-confronted by Sushie:

How far can one escape - and with whom? May be for few months or for a few years. What after that? When the enabling moment truly arrives each person has to follow his own escape-route" (p.141).

It is a profound penetration of Sushie into the essence of things. The irresistible urge of sensuality of Baba Padmananda is confronted by the controlled self-examination of Sushie:

I will not embarrass you saying that yours is almost the language of a romantic novel. But have you reflected on the practicability of your desire. Can anyone follow someone else to the world beyond life? Is that a highway measured by milestones? The fire flies of our ego and anger, passions and attractions are likely to make the darkness at the crossing even more dense. How can one locate another receding soul and keep company in that kind of darkness? (p.141).

Sushie here explores the spiritual darkness that engulfs the path of every seeker. Free from inner conflict, she is a realist with respect to her fundamental relationship to existence. She is a model of self-synthesis, unity and mind-body integration. She personifies the value of independence, individualism and self-actualisation. Sushie is the last mentor to teach him the lesson of the essential detachment in life. The illuminated Padmananda after awakening from his romantic dreams feels that "- - - everybody is a stranger to me" (141). He finds,



“the real Sushie was a phenomenon quite distant from the Sushie of my imagination” (142). What is important here is not the actual falling in love which matters, but a kind of temptation which besieged the life of Baba Padmananda distracting him from the venture of discovering the ways of God to man. This synthesis of the eternal truth with the temporal state of passion is a subtle sign which indicates the approach of the final mythical state that Baba Padmananda reached after conquering his passion at the end of the narrative.

The novelist deals critically the impacts of the subsumed subjective negative vitals that posit strong influences in the rhyme of living. The replicas of anger, emotional agitation, temptation and greed are depicted to present the forcibility of the satanic forces hidden within the very chamber of the psychic self. Baba Padmananda violently pushed Jasmine while she obstructs him picking out the spool from the tape recorder that secretly planted by Jayant Thakore in the hollow under the base to record all the conversations of him with others. The very next moment he feels: “- - - the very spirit of evil had caught me in its grip; had possessed me like a ghost” (p.144). In his secretive plight from the spot with the spool and the bundle of money he finds he is being pushed “by a bundle of darkness” (p.144). Baba Padmananda’s individuation consists of a complex of inexorable opposites. Through the orchestration of influences of Id followed by the call of conscience Das portrays the process of deepening. It is a narrative strategy that the novelist applies to show the vibrations of the conscious and unconscious self in a line so that confrontations message out panoply of significations.

Part three of the plot is the state of ‘synthesis’. The climax of the narrative renders a deep insight into the educative process of the protagonist when he finds in pain another form of bliss. Baba Padmananda succeeds to fly from the spot but later has been traced by the hired thugs of Jayant Thakore. He is bitten black and blue. The physical torments seem to be the divinely ordained penance for the redemption of his corporal sins. He gets liberty from bodily consciousness and confinement. The tormentor appears to him “like a benevolent physician *Vaidyara*” (p.146). Their tormenting blows

hammer out his consciousness and his worldly attachments, desires and temptations start dying one after another. In a state of complete surrender he finds the presence of God is in all and all are in God. He feels one with the cosmos: “O my sky, you are yourself a form of my sense of gratitude – You’ve a form of myself - - - At last you brought me the realization You are I and I am You” (150). This is, indeed, a moment of transcendence, redemption, renunciation, transformation and metamorphosis, and a moment in which an individual acquires the power to go beyond his self through spiritual triumph. Das’s obvious hint is the essence of the four Vedas: *aham brahmasmi* (I am God); *tat twam asi* (You are I); *sarba khalumidam brahma* (Everything is God); *prajnanam brahma* (Wisdom is God). Thus a synthesis is made between the physical and metaphysical, the real and imaginary, the Self and the Other. The attribution of living soul to natural object grants the perceiver with mystical percipience. This result in the creation of a ‘paraxial’ realm, an intermediary zones that lying between the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’ world (*The Synthesis*, pp. 57-72). What Baba Padmananda perceives is not the manifestation of an optional transcending world, but is in fact an alteration: this world transformed and recreated through an individualised vision that supersedes realistic modes of perception and cognition.

The process of self-realization is quite difficult to convey in ordinary words, Das turns to archetypal symbols to communicate the same. According to W.H. Auden: “A symbol is felt to be much more before any possible meaning is consciously recognized, i.e. an object or event which is felt to be more important than reason can immediately explain” (21). This is true with Manoj Das. The true success of Das’s symbolic presentation of ideas is that it stimulates the unconscious or sub-conscious apprehension of ideas. It takes the readers to different heights and depths of meanings. Sachidananda Mohanty is of the view: “Leading symbols and metaphors underlying the narrative yield several layers of meanings that reinforce the core vision of *The Escapist* (Mohanty X). The major archetypal symbols and images used are namely the image of the Himalaya, tiger and sky. The novelist



mostly takes Nature archetypes to delineate his vision comprehensively. The protagonist empathizes with and relies on the natural world for re-assurance and psychic comfort on the one hand, and on the other hand, for the indication of the presence of mystic reality. These images become in a way telepathic communicators of the protagonist's quiescent realization of the psychic potentialities. The Himalaya here symbolizes moral and spiritual superiority. The "tiger" is the symbolic replica of conscience. It signifies the fear of guilt within man. The deepest layer of his mind is seen to be ploughed by a sudden emerging of a repressed fear that is sharpened and intensified by the tiger, a terror that is communicated by the perception of the sinister shadow which is hidden in his own soul. The "sky" becomes an emblem of the mystic realm - the Other World. Watching the sky, he sinks into a state of despondent contemplation.

The autobiography that the protagonist left for the Doctor is the climax of his long search for getting the essence of human life. At last discarding the social world, he sets forth his total entry into the natural. By assigning the task to the Doctor to convey his message : "That this is possible", where 'this' refers to "life that began as a farce, matured into a truth" (156) the protagonist shows himself a moralist who turning from an attitude pessimism affirms the precious moral principle – man can be divinized. A resurrection can be possible and this resurrection can lead a man to live a higher and truer life. The self-actualisation of Baba Padmananda becomes possible only after intense spiritual conflicts and moral awareness.

The novel is substantially based on projecting "spiritual darkness" (thesis), "spiritual bliss" (antithesis) and "peace and prayer" (synthesis). Das brings in for the purpose of contrasts the outcomes of materialism and idealism. Materialism which believes only in physical reality accepts sense experience as the sole means of valid knowledge. But intuition and sub-conscious experience are the highest means for knowing the reality in its totality. Das synthesises the sensuous with subliminal consciousness to project the spectrum of the evolution of self.

#### WORKS CITED

- [1]. Auden, W. H. (1950). *The Enchanted Flood: The Romantic Iconography of the Sea*. New York: Random.
- [2]. Aurobindo, Sri. (1951). *Divine Laws of Life*. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
- [3]. -. (1944). *The Life Divine*, Vol.II. Calcutta: Arya Publishing House.
- [4]. -. (1988). *The Synthesis of Yoga*. New Delhi: Birla Publishing House.
- [5]. Das, Manoj. (2001). *The Escapist*, Chennai: Macmillan.
- [6]. Mohanty, Sachidananda. (2001). *The Escapist*, Introduction, Chennai: Macmillan.
- [7]. *Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research*, Dec 06-2. (1982). [www.aurobindo.ru/./index.e.html](http://www.aurobindo.ru/./index.e.html).