

New Race

**A Journal of
Integral & Future Studies**



Global Consciousness
SPECIAL

**Institute of Human Study
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The Mother's Blessings for the Journal

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New Race
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New Race~~New Consciousness

"Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end."

Sri Aurobindo, "A God's Labour"



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About Us

Our goal is to promote exploration and research into the ideas and philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, connecting them to the current and future prospects for humanity. We advocate for the examination of related ideas and viewpoints from various cultures to provide a comprehensive outlook on the future.

Our Readers

Our cherished audience embodies a spirit forever youthful, minds aglow with curiosity and courage, yearning for enlightenment to illuminate the path towards a better tomorrow for all humankind.

In the August 2024 issue of New Race, we explored the concept of Human Unity. The common theme and thread throughout the papers and articles in that publication was the significance of “consciousness”, particularly “global consciousness”. Therefore, aptly, the theme for this issue of New Race is Global Consciousness.

But what exactly is consciousness? In his characteristic analytical, logical, yet “soulful” way, Sri Aurobindo becomes our guide to comprehend its authentic meaning once and for all.

The sayings and writings on Auroville by the Mother—ever the practical yet aspirational beacon—remind us of the original vision for a “space” that allows for humankind’s aspiring ascent beyond the limitations of the vagaries of human life that we all take for granted.

Globalisation—a term once loved and now hated—its “spirit”, necessity, and pitfalls are explained succinctly by Late Prof. Kireet Joshi.

Education must precede any change in consciousness. The paper by the SAILER team in Auroville gives a practical example of what that means at a local level.

Martha Orton’s paper gives flight to understanding consciousness and its ever-evolving nature in the context of human evolution.

Dominique Schmidt provides the crucial and missing link in our understanding that global consciousness will ultimately be futile unless the difficult but necessary “leap” is made at an individual, local level.

Finally, Indresh adds a practical and personal perspective to Sri Aurobindo’s “framework” for inner and outer transformational work, which is the essentiality of Integral Yoga.

We hope that through this issue of New Race, you will find enjoyment, reflect deeply, and take action towards the emergence of human unity and global consciousness.

Indresh 4



What Is Consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo

Editor's Note: To advance towards human unity through the development of "global consciousness," it is essential to clearly understand what consciousness means. No one is better suited to help us grasp the answer to this pivotal question than the master critic, analyst, purveyor, and experienter of spiritual knowledge and wisdom, Sri Aurobindo himself. Please note that we have exercised editorial discretion in reformatting the original text for improved online readability for today's audiences, who are more attuned to reading digital rather than printed text.

Consciousness—but what is consciousness? A word only conveniently ticketing a class of natural phenomena or a fundamental reality of existence?

Apparently a phenomenon which has only a small range intervening in an immense mass of things inconscient and without significance, consciousness alone gives a value to the universe. It seems to have taken no part in the creation of the universe; it was not there in the beginning or even during the greater part of the history of the earth; it may not be there at its end.

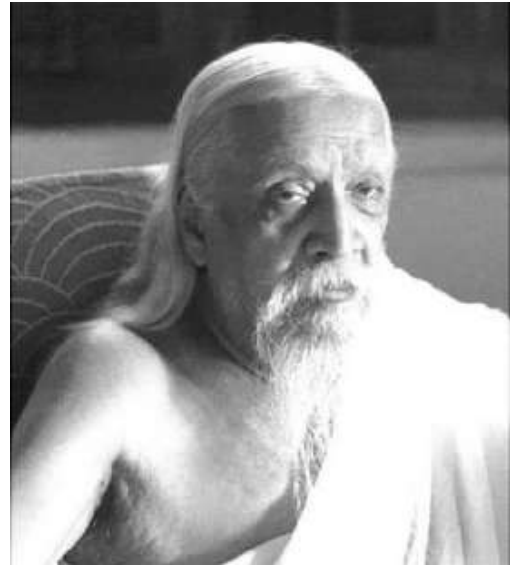


In the middle it plays a great role in the life of animal and man, but its action is crude and ill-developed in the animal, imperfect in the human creature. Its evolution wears the character of an episode in the long history of an unconscious world, a chapter that began some time ago, but one knows not why it intervened at all or how it will end or whether its appearance has any meaning, whether its developing importance has an accidental and meaningless or a purposeful and revelatory character.

It may be a freak of creative Chance or it may be or may carry in itself the whole meaning of the world-drama. In an unconscious universe, in a Nature or the working of an Energy which is fundamentally material, the emergence [of] Consciousness has at first the air of a surprising, a contradictory, an impossible event. For in such a world, in the working of such a Nature or Energy, how could it ever come into existence? Either there is no real consciousness, only an action of Matter or unconscious Energy which takes this inexplicable and deceptive form, or Nature or Energy is not fundamentally unconscious.

Consciousness was always a possibility which at a certain stage chanced or was bound to take place, or it was a latent power that has

“...the emergence [of] Consciousness has at first the air of a surprising, a contradictory, an impossible event.”



become manifest. Or even it may be all Nature is really conscious and it is we who foist inconscience upon her because we are limited to a certain range and character of consciousness and cannot communicate with her other ranges or even detect their existence. It has been held by a certain opinion that consciousness in itself does not exist, there are only phenomena of reactions of Matter to Matter or of Energy in Matter to Energy in Matter to which by generalisation we give the name.

There is no person who is conscious, thinks, speaks, perceives, wills, acts; it is an organised body in which certain chemical, molecular, cellular, glandular and nerve activities take place and certain material results and reactions of these activities take place in the brain which take the form of these phenomena.



“Consciousness,—but what is consciousness? And first of all we have to face the possibility that there is no such thing. ”

It is the body that thinks, perceives, wills, speaks, acts; it is Matter that goes through these operations and becomes aware of them; it may be said that brain-matter makes a record or notation of these actions and this notation is consciousness and this record is memory. There is nothing in the world except Matter and the operations of Matter.

This theory arose when physical Science concentrated on the operations of Matter, saw only Matter and energy of Matter everywhere; it persists even after that seeing of things has been severely shaken. For now we are driven to see and say that there is no such thing as Matter in itself; what we call Matter is only a mass of phenomena of Energy, events of energy, which our senses regard as objects and our minds classify under the general name of Matter.

But we can still hold that all phenomena are phenomena of Energy acting in the forms or sensible events which we call Matter and the phenomena of consciousness are of that character.

There is nothing else to it, nothing but the mobile and executive Energy, Nature, Prakriti; there is no soul, no Purusha.

Consciousness would still be a general name for a brain-record and notation of these events of material Energy and this will still be the true character of thought, perception, will, speech, act. All these events are separate phenomena which may act and react on each other or group themselves together, but they are not the result or manifestations of any one general force or power of being that we can call Consciousness.

Consciousness,—but what is consciousness? And first of all we have to face the possibility that there is no such thing. For many hold that the word is an unreal generalisation invented to cover a class of material phenomena having their origin in Matter and material in their nature and essence, an operation of Matter on Matter and in Matter.

Thoughts are only vibrations of the grey matter of the brain; they are not something other [than] that or capable of existing beyond the material plane; they cannot exist independently of the brain; brain is not their instrument of expression or manifestation; they are [its] instrument made of its substance, dependent on [its] substance, inexistent without it.

Mind is an action of Matter, not a separate power or force; there is nothing in it superior to the physicality of the body; it exists by the body and as a part of its activity, lasts along with it, dies with it. Mind is a product of gases, some operation of Nature's chemistry, glandular influences, nervous stimuluses; it is matter and records the operations of Matter.

But why then this appearance of mentality, of consciousness, of a conscious being? That too is only a trick of Matter. They are reflexes and reactions to the contacts of things outside, to other material objects, bodies, movements, forces. Sense and sensation are the reply of the nerves to stimulus of external and material things or to internal stimuli that are still material.

To the experience of the body the result of these, recoils, reflexes, reactions, may seem mental, but that cannot alter the fact that they are material products of the workings of Matter. Well, be it so; but still this mentality creates an awareness of self and things and the movements of self and things, even if both be only a body and so many other bodies, and it is difficult to describe awareness as an inscient movement or condition or as the inscient seeming to be conscious.

Evidently we are in face of a general sophism invented by specialists of a limited field of data, the data of incon-

“The emergence of an ideal in human thought is always the sign of an intention in Nature...”

-scient Matter, who are determined to force everything into its characteristic formulas and refuse to admit everything else. We must at least recover the right to see this awareness and its movements as they are or as they present themselves to us and see how far it leads us and whether indeed, even if it occurs in matter and the body, it does not lead us to something other than the body and other than Matter.

The materialist contention that consciousness is not a separate power or force or manifestation of energy like electricity or magnetism or steam, but only a name for a particular bundle of brain phenomena, cannot hide the startling fact that inscient and insentient Matter has become sentient and conscient even if it be only at points, in jets, in small masses.

This awareness has created at least the appearance of a sentient and conscient being who not only becomes relatively aware of self and things, but can study them, discover their nature and process, determine and develop the possibilities of his own consciousness and the possibilities of the world's forces and processes, can will and can create, can ponder and philosophise, can write poetry and create works of art, can use to modify and alter the world around him and make for himself a different life-environment, can look beyond Matter, can tend

towards the heights of consciousness not yet developed, can envisage the Superconscient.

If the consciousness that can do all this is not a force, a power in itself, it at least looks strangely like it. And we have the right, at least hypothetically, to study it as such a power or force and find out how far that leads us. It may even lead us to the discovery of a Reality greater than the world of Matter or of Energy building up shapes of Matter and movements in Matter. It may take us beyond phenomena and appearances to the truth of things and to something that is the origin of all that seems to be[.]

At the other extreme of human mentality we meet a similar and more devastating denial. Consciousness has no real existence; or, so far as it exists at all, it is as a dynamic Power, a creator of illusions. There is nothing sound or real in what it builds; there is nothing true in what it sees; the world it shows us is [an] impossible chimera, a mass of figments and falsehoods.

“It may take us...to the truth of things and to something that is the origin of all that seems to be[.]”



The sole consciousness that is true is the self-awareness of some absolute Silence, a spaceless immobile Infinite, a timeless featureless Eternity.

Or, as the materialist sees only a bundle of phenomena material and dependent on Matter or a fortuitous result of material operations, so the Nihilistic Buddhist sees only a bundle of associations, *sanskaras*, which stuck together produce the false appearance of a continuity of concrete phenomena or a stream of momentary perceptions giving the impression of a false self and coherent world, a coherent personality, but if the bundle is dissolved, if the stream ceases to flow, all dissolves and collapses and shows the empty Nothingness which is the only eternal truth and the sole eternal reality.

This superconscient Nothingness has no need of consciousness [for] the greatness of its emptiness or its everlasting peace of unconscious bliss. To return to Nothingness is the only use or meaning of existence.

Here too we seem to be in front of [the] sophism of a specialist seizing the sole salient and striking side, the one prominent aspect of Truth in which he is versed putting aside all the rest as inconsistent or invalid.

“World-consciousness may be only one aspect of our being, but it is a big and momentous aspect and it too should be given its full chance of justifying itself before it is ruled out...”

After all the world exists and is too persistent and effective and solid a phenomenon to be put aside or merely whistled off the field with an airy "It is not";—a mirage is ineffectual and recedes or fades if it is touched, an illusion dissolves if revealed but this is stupendously effective, overwhelmingly persistent and we have to sound all its possibilities before dismissing it as something vain and trifling.

World-consciousness may be only one aspect of our being, but it is a big and momentous aspect and it too should be given its full chance of justifying itself before it is ruled out of court.

The eternal reality of a pure immobile existence and its self-awareness is also a truth of our being. But it is not impossible that these are two aspects of one Reality and not so incompatible as the metaphysical logician imagines.

This is what we propose to do integrally and with a full and exhaustive inquiry before we decide either way.

The chances are that so enormous a thing as this world is something more than an astonishing chimera. The chances are that when two such great aspects of existence confront each other, there is a connection somewhere, a reconciliation of their contraries. It is possible that both are aspects, static and dynamic, of some absolute Reality from which both have drawn their own reality and in which they have their true and inevitable place.

In any case consciousness is the one thing by which we can consider or decide the question at all. It is the one thing by which we know at all that world exists or can inquire into its truth and its meaning.

If consciousness has no reality and no value, then there is nothing by which we can know the truth,—one explanation of things has then as little value as the other, neither can be claimed as the truth. The consciousness by which we affirm the featureless sole Reality can be as fallacious as that by which we affirm our individual self and the universe.

If consciousness is the self-awareness of the eternal Existence, it can only be this self-awareness seeing its own power and the works of its power as a real world. If consciousness is a creation of the evolution, it is also the one thing by which it receives some value, the one thing by which its values can be reckoned, its [. . .], its one central and essential value.

It is not by the development of forms that evolution reaches its height, but by the evolution of consciousness. The degree of consciousness is the degree of evolution; the extent to which consciousness has developed its powers, range, height, its fullness of vision and self-vision, is the measure of the evolution's development of its work and aim, its progress towards its goal, if goal indeed it has and is not the incoherent working out of an accidental Chance.

Indeed, if we look at the way in which the Inconscient has devised the world and the sequences by which it has arrived at intelligence, we have some reason [to think] that it is a secret Consciousness which has made this world and under the mask of inconscience has emerged as a slow process of an Ignorance developing Knowledge. If so, it may well be that it is the self-awareness of the [eternal Existence] that is working out in the formula of inconscient Matter and ignor-



-ant Life and half-awakened Mind its own self-manifestation in the material universe.

But what is consciousness and what is its relation to existence?

How and why did it come into being in an inconscient universe, a universe which even if it originated by an inexplicable chance, has assumed the proportions of a huge and complex inexorable mechanism repeating the same processes through the aeons without respite or cessation?

By what spiritual or mechanical necessity? By what mechanical chance or accidental process of Energy? To what end or purpose, if any purpose there can be in an inconscient mechanism of brute Necessity or inexplicably organised Chance or any end in a movement which never had any reason for beginning? Does consciousness exist or is it a fortuitous illusion? Who or what is it that becomes conscious in the animal and in the body of the human being?

**“But what is
consciousness
and what is
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to existence?”**

Three possible solutions.

Consciousness has not come into being but was and is always there, a fundamental power of existence, latent or involved or concealed from our mind and sense even in what we call inanimate and unconscious things. It has not come into existence but has emerged from existence; involved it has evolved in the general evolutionary process. Or consciousness is only a phenomenon, a surprising result of certain inconscient processes of Nature, unintentional but actual, unnecessary and accidental or else somehow inevitable as an output of chemical and other physical energies which could not help imposing itself at a certain point of their activity in the natural course of things. It did not exist before that point was reached; when another point has been reached it may go out of existence.

Or again the world is a creation of an extracosmic or immanent conscious Being personal or impersonal who has either put his consciousness or a consciousness resembling his into his mechanical creation to be an element there or else has infused it from within into the mechanical self-expression in which he has chosen to dwell as its upholder, inspirer, inhabitant.

What is meant by consciousness? what is this phenomenon which seems to have so small a part in the vast inconscient mass of things and is yet the sole element here that can give any value to the universe? And to come to the heart of the difficulty—is it indeed only a phenomenon, an appearance that has emerged in the course of the workings of an Energy which was, is and will always remain inconscient? Or is it something fundamental, an inherent reality or a latent character or power of that Energy and bound to emerge at some time once it had begun its workings?

It is to a mass of ill-connected and ill-understood phenomena that we give this name of consciousness; when these are at work we say that a man or animal is conscious, when they are suspended we say that he or it is unconscious; where they are absent, as in a tree, we suppose the object, even if it has life, to be inconscient by its very nature, incapable of sensation no less than empty of thought and will. Where life is not, inconscience seems to us a still more self-evident character of the thing or being. Man alone is fully conscious, for he alone is aware of himself, reflective on things, in full possession of mental capacities and their aware and observant use.



Mind and consciousness are almost synonymous to our ordinary notions; where consciousness is not mentalised, we find it difficult to recognise its presence, hardly possible to follow its movements; even in the animal we are apt to regard it as reflex movement not aware of itself, undeveloped, primitive.

All that exists or can exist in this or any other universe can be rendered into terms of consciousness; there is nothing that cannot be known. This knowing need not be always a mental knowledge. For the greater part of existence is either above or below mind, and mind can know only indirectly what is above or what is below it. But the one true and complete way of knowing is by direct knowledge. All can be rendered into terms of consciousness because all is either a creation of consciousness or else one of its forms. All exists in an infinite conscious existence and is a part or a form of it. In proportion as one can share directly or indirectly, completely or incompletely in the eternal awareness of this Infinite, or momentarily contact or enter into it, or formulate some superior or inferior power of its consciousness or knowledge, one can know what it knows, in part or whole, by a direct knowing or an indirect coming to knowledge. A conscious, half conscious or subconscious participation in the awareness of the Infinite is the basis of all knowledge.

All things are inhabited by this consciousness, even the things that seem to us insciant and the consciousness in one form can communicate with or contact the consciousness in another or else penetrate or contain or identify with it. This in one form or another is the true process of all knowledge; the rest is ignorant appearance.

All things are one self; it is the one Knower who knows himself everywhere, from one centre or another in the multiplicity of his play. Otherwise no knowledge would be possible.

Excerpt from:

Essays Divine and Human, Vol. 12, 1997 CWSA (Part II, Section II – Psychology: The Science of Consciousness), Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry



Auroville - An Experiment in Global Consciousness: Aphorisms & Writings by The Mother



Editor's Note: The concept of Global Consciousness and its implications for human unity appears far-fetched, considering the wars and conflicts in the Middle East, Ukraine, and parts of Africa—although these are grabbing headlines and eyeballs, they are not the only ones.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), there are currently over 120 armed conflicts worldwide, most of which are non-international. If people are fragmented and divided even within the same country, doesn't the idea of "global consciousness" and human unity seem ludicrous?

If we freeze the moment of time today, the answer to this question is perhaps a "yes". But if we think of time as a long-winding continuum stretching into the tunnel of the future, maybe there is cause for hope; perhaps a dim light flickers at the end of the tunnel that only a few can currently see. To view what that future could look like, we turn to Auroville—the City of Dawn.

The city, or rather the township, in the southern part of India adjoining the city of Puducherry (formerly Pondicherry) and the state of Tamil Nadu symbolises an experiment in human unity as visualised and aspired to by the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. We turn to the Mother's sayings and writings about Auroville to get a sense and spirit of the original vision and aspiration.

"Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities.

The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity."

8 September 1965

14



“Auroville should be at the service of Truth, beyond all social, political and religious convictions.

Auroville is the effort towards peace, in sincerity and Truth.”

20 September 1966

“Auroville: At last a place where one will be able to think only of the future.”

January 1967

Conditions for living in Auroville:

“From the psychological point of view, the required conditions are:

(1) To be convinced of the essential unity of mankind and to have the will to collaborate for the material realisation of that unity;

(2) To have the will to collaborate in all that furthers future realisations.

The material conditions will be worked out as the realisation proceeds.”

19 June 1967

“The aims of Auroville:

*An effective human Unity and
Peace upon earth”*

*“Auroville the City at the service
of Truth.”*

28 February 1968



*“It is not for comfort and satisfaction of desires that one comes to
Auroville; it is for the growth of consciousness and consecration to the
Truth that has to be realised.”*

“Unselfishness is the first need to participate in the creation of Auroville.”

5 November 1968

*“No big creation is possible without discipline—
individual discipline, group discipline, discipline towards the Divine.”*

16 September 1968

*“All those who wish to live and work at Auroville must have an integral
goodwill, a constant aspiration to know the Truth and to submit to it,
enough plasticity to confront the exigencies of work and an endless will to
progress so as to move forward towards the ultimate Truth.*

*And, finally, a word of advice: be more concerned with your own faults than
with those of others. If each one worked seriously at his own self-perfection,
the perfection of the whole would follow automatically.”*

6 February 1969

(Message for the first anniversary of Auroville)

*“Freedom is possible only in union with the Divine.
To unite with the Divine one must have conquered in oneself the very
possibility of desire.”*

28 February 1969

*“Earth needs a place where men can live away from all national rivalries,
social conventions, self-contradictory moralities and contending religions;
a place where human beings, freed from all slavery to the past, can devote
themselves wholly to the discovery and practice of the Divine
Consciousness that is seeking to manifest. Auroville wants to be this place
and offers itself to all who aspire to live the Truth of tomorrow.”*

20 September 1969

Excerpts from:

The Mother – Words of the Mother – I, Vol. 13, 2004 CWM, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry





Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of the Ideal of Human Unity



Late Prof. Kireet Joshi

Editor's Note

Prof. Kireet Joshi (1931-2014) was a rare blend of educator, administrator, philosopher, thinker, writer, speaker, and perhaps, most significantly (in our humble view), an "integral yogi" – practitioner of Sri Aurobindo's "Sapt Chatusthaya": The Seven Quartets of Self-Perfection-based yoga philosophy. Prof. Joshi brought clarity and personal power of mental and spiritual realization to his commentaries on Sri Aurobindo's many treatises. An example of that is the following excerpt from his essay on the idea of global consciousness and human unity as elaborated by Sri Aurobindo in the book, "The Ideal of Human Unity". This essay is one among others in Prof. Joshi's book, "Philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Other Essays". The excerpt published here has been lightly edited by way of formatting for better online readability.

Globalisation is an attractive word; for it evokes in us a noble sentiment of "one earth" and of humankind as one race born of one common Mother Earth; it raises in us a dream of the ideal of human unity and of universal fraternity. But when we examine the current phenomenon of globalisation, we find that it is a growing network spreading over the whole globe in which the old forces of competition and resultant asymmetrical relations constitute the central forum of action and reaction.

Here globality is the globality of market forces that are free to develop hegemony of dominant and rich nations. We do not find here global relations of cooperation, even of friendliness. This is no manifestation of global consciousness in which unity and oneness predominate.

At its root, contemporary globalisation is a result of the material circumstances where scientific discoveries have made our earth so small that its vastest kingdoms seem now no more than the provinces of a single country.

Considering also that the human intellect has at present been so mechanised that it is likely to push forward the tide of globalisation through mechanical means and through social and political adjustments. This is where we can foresee the perils of the coming day, unless the normative consciousness of humanity intervenes in a decisive way.

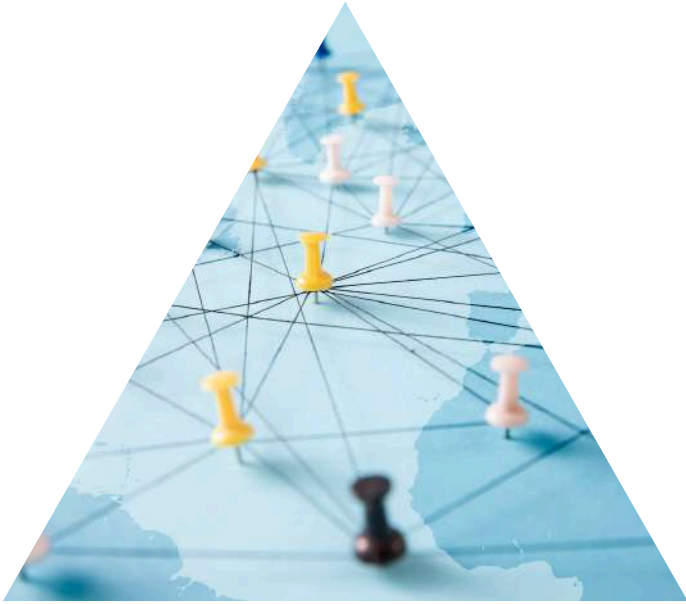


Globalisation can not be arrested; mechanical means for their operations and rapid advancements have been set to work, and there is no agency of wisdom which has yet come to the surface to control and to guide; and, in reality, wisdom can not become mechanical and can not translate itself into any artificial agency.

If, therefore, perils of globalisation are to be avoided, efforts have to be made to effect a great change in the heart and mind of the human race; people have to awake to wisdom in time and accept the difficult process of inner change, even though external adjustments will also need to be effected.

The truth behind globalisation is, indeed, that of the ideal unity of the human race, but

to bring forth that truth and to make it operative, we seem to be in need of a deeper study of the issues and of a greater opening to profounder means and remedies.



At this juncture, we are impelled to think afresh of globality, global consciousness and the ideal of human unity. For globalisation can be turned into a favourable circumstance if we consciously strive at the concrete manifestation of unity of the human race, which has always been latent and secretly operative.

It can even be said that the ideal of human unity seems to be making its way to the front of our consciousness because this is the opportune moment when that ideal can be actualised.

Four factors have combined together to generate the present phenomenon of globalisation.

Firstly, there is the amazing triumph of science and technology which have been applied on a large scale to the production of services and goods and their transportation across the globe.

Secondly, social, political, commercial and industrial institutions have tended towards standardisation, mechanization and even dehumanisation in the processes of management, governance and even in human relationships.

Thirdly, there has been a grim battle between the ideals of capitalism, socialism and communism which stand today at a point of disequilibrium that tilts heavily towards privatisation and capitalistic forces which favour the growth of multinationals and expansions of markets that promote multiplication of physical and vital wants, consumerism and motivations of economic security, competitive methods of enrichment, and profit-making.

And, fourthly, science and philosophy, the two great magnets that uplift the powers of Reason towards greater heights of truth, beauty and goodness, have tended towards the denials that emerge from materialism resulting in refusals to inquire into claims of ethical and spiritual domains. The general climate that rules the globe today is that of the pull of humanity downward towards confinement to the demands of physical and vital life.

In terms of the history of civilisation, humankind is turning more and more decisively and globally, not only towards philistinism but even a kind of barbarism where the barbarian can roam about the world taking full advantages of the civilisation that has been created so far by the past achievements of culture, of reason, ethics, aesthetics and religious and spiritual pursuits.

This is a kind of invasion of barbarism that aims at physical stability in what seems to be a hostile world.

In the past, history has witnessed the floods of the overpowering invasions that have devastated the cultures that had reached some kind of climactic points of achievements.

In the present stage of history, on account of the fact that science has reached such a triumph of knowledge and its application that the invasion of the barbarians from outside, except in terms of terrorism and allied forms, may become impossible.

But the peril is that of the invasion of the barbarian from within, from the circle of the civilised world itself. And this peril, -- the peril of the monstrous barbarian controlling the civilised world on a global scale, -- needs to be combated if the future is to be saved from the suffocations and sufferings that afflict the inner spirit when it is denied its natural

upward urge towards its highest cultural fulfilment.

Indeed, there are behind the contemporary globalisation higher and nobler motives at work, the most important of which is the drive towards the fulfilment of the dream of humanity to arrive at a form of organisation that would foster a united family of humanity in a state of perpetual progress, prosperity and multi-layered happiness that comes from constant ascension from height to greater heights.

These nobler and higher motives that have inspired the ideal of human unity and brought about the birth of noble and momentous institutions such as those of the United Nations and its international agencies do not, however, seem to be strong enough to meet the present perilous situation that confronts us today.





We need to study the reasons for this so that we may arrive at better propositions of solution than what have been offered to us so far. This study will lead us to the consideration of the problems of centralisation and decentralisation, of the relationship between the individual and the collectivity, the drift of history at the present juncture, and the possibilities of the future in the light of the nature of the human situation in its horizontal and vertical possibilities.

Human history may, in a sense, be perceived as a multilayered and complex struggle to harmonise the claims of the individual and those of the collectivity. The development of this struggle seems to be cyclic or spiral rather than linear in character.

This has also to be seen in terms of the evolution of the human species and the laws of that evolution. For these laws follow the

curve of the development of the faculties of the body, life and mind in which the concern for the physical base and infusion of the developing and developed powers of life and mind in a very zigzag swinging curve of advance appears to be predominant.

There are, what we may call, the laws of ascent and integration, as a result of which the relationships between the individual and the collectivity are being built up in such a way that as soon as lower elements of achievement reach a point of maturity they tend to higher grades of achievement in a gradual manner so as to interweave the lower and the higher in a complex series of harmony of conflicting claims.

If we study these laws, we find that evolution is a continuous process and humanity is one of the crucial links in the process that seems to lead it to levels of progression that in turn

lead the development of the mind to that which lies beyond the mind and even higher grades of consciousness which are appropriate to the spirit, and its wider, deeper and higher domains.



The evolutionary study of humanity has its origin in our times in the Darwinian theory, but it has found developments in the writings of philosophers like Bergson, Alexander, Smutts, Whitehead and Teilhard de Chardin. But the most elaborate and comprehensive study is to be found in the writings of Sri Aurobindo, particularly, in his *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. In one of the important passages, Sri Aurobindo states:

“The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious cooperation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God?”

“For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realisation of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and apparent Nature is secret God, then the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realisation of God within and without are the highest and most legitimate aim possible to man upon earth.”

According to Sri Aurobindo, the evolution of the human being in regard to the development of human faculties and those that are beyond human limitations is conducted, firstly, by a conscious effort of the human mind, and it is not confined to an unconscious progression of Nature.

Secondly, this evolution takes into account the sense of freedom that emerges along with the development of self-consciousness, and with the process of a rational and normative consciousness. The evolutionary process is, therefore, marked by alternative possibilities which can even be perilous, as in any great adventure. Evolution, as conceived by Sri Aurobindo, is a great adventure of consciousness, in which the operation of free will is a necessary component.



It is against this background that the conflict between the individual and the collectivity needs to be understood.

Human history may be considered as a long story of the sway of the developing consciousness between three preoccupations of human idealism, — the complete single development of the human being himself, the perfectibility of the individual, a full development of the collective being, the perfectibility of the society, and, more pragmatically restricted, the perfect or best possible relation of individual with individual and society or of community with community.

Hence, we find in history that sometimes an exclusive or dominant emphasis is laid on the individual, sometimes on the collectivity and society, sometimes on a right and balanced relations between the individual and the collective human whole.

According to one ideal, freedom and growth of perfection of the individual is to be held up as a true objective of our existence. This ideal is sometimes conceived as that of a mere free self-expression of the personal being or as a self-governed whole of complete mind, fine and ample life and perfect body, or a spiritual perfection and liberation.

In the perspective of this view, the society is conceived only as a field of activity and growth for the individual mind and serves best its function when it gives as far as possible a wide room, ample means, a sufficient freedom or guidance of development to his thought, his action, his growth, his possibility of fullness of being.

The opposite ideal gives the collective life the first or sole importance; the existence, the growth of the race is of the highest value in this view; the individual is expected to live for the society or for mankind or even, he is considered only a cell of the society, and he has no other use or purpose of birth, no other meaning of his presence in Nature, no other foundation. Or, it is sometimes held that the nation, the society, the community is a collective being, revealing its soul in its culture, power of life, ideals, institutions, or its ways of self-expression.





In this context, the individual life has to cast itself in the social mould, serving the power of its life, consent only to exist as an instrument for the maintenance and efficient existence of the society.

In a third ideal, the perfection of man lies in his ethical and social relations with other human beings, his social being and his love for society, for others, for his utility to the race. In this view, society exists for the service of all, to give them their right framework of relations, education, training, economic opportunity, and right frame of life.

Sri Aurobindo points out that in the ancient cultures, the greatest emphasis was laid on the community and a fitting of the individual into the community. Even then, however, there grew up an ideal of a perfect individual and it is found that the idea of the spiritual individual was dominant in ancient India, although the society was of extreme importance and the individual had to pass first to the social states of the physical, vital, mental being with satisfaction of interest, desire, pursuit of knowledge and right living – kama, artha and dharma – before he could reach fitness for the truer state of free spiritual existence (moksha).

In contrast to this, Sri Aurobindo finds that in recent times the whole stress has fallen on the life of the race, to search for a perfect society, and the right organisation and scientific mechanisation of the life of mankind as a whole.

Under this circumstance, the individual now tends to be regarded only as a member of the collectivity, a unit of the race whose existence must be subordinated to the common aims and total interest of the organized society, and much less or not at all as a mental or spiritual being with his own right and power of existence.

Again, under the same circumstances, the modern State erects its godhead and demands his obedience, subjugation, and self-immolation. The individual is then required to affirm, against this exorbitant claim, the rights of his ideals, his ideas, his personality.

The conflict between the individual and the collectivity seems at this stage to have reached, according to Sri Aurobindo, the stage of an acute conflict of standards, which presses us towards a search for a unifying and harmonising knowledge, and even integrality of knowledge.

The individual in Sri Aurobindo's view, is the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself and becomes conscious of the Reality and its relationship with the collectivity.



According to this vision, the individual does not owe his allegiance, either to the State which is a machine or to the community which is part of life and not the whole of life; his allegiance to use Sri Aurobindo's own words, "must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of existence."

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo acknowledges that so long as human being is undeveloped, he has to subordinate in many ways his undeveloped self to whatever is greater than it.

As he develops, he moves towards a spiritual freedom, but this freedom is not something entirely separate from all existence. As he moves towards the spiritual freedom, he moves also towards **spiritual oneness**.

Editor's End Note: This "spiritual oneness" is at the core of the true meaning of Global Consciousness and human unity; until then, we will continue to witness conflicts and turmoil in one form or another.

Excerpt from:

Philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and Other Essays by Kireet Joshi published by The Mother's Institute of Research 2003

Reference: Kireetjoshiarchives: <https://www.kireetjoshiarchives.com/complete-works/>



Auroville: Towards Global Consciousness through Collaboration & Practices of Integral Education



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Introduction:

Auroville has been a space of creation, consciousness, and constant progress since its inception in 1968. In an essay titled "The Dream", written by the Mother in 1954, long before Auroville was even physically manifested, she described it as: "...a place of peace, concord, and harmony...". In a stirring elaboration, she paints a picture of such a place on earth where all people of goodwill, irrespective of their identities, could live together and obey the authority of the Supreme Truth. A place where an individual's worth would hold more relevance than material wealth and where work will not be just a means to earn money but a way of expressing oneself. Similarly, education would not be to obtain marks but to enrich existing faculties and foster new ones. Auroville would be a place where children would grow integrally without losing contact with their souls.

The educators in Auroville align themselves with this vision and aim of education. Further, their initiatives and efforts are inspired by what the Mother said about educational initiatives on September 6th, 1961: "We are here to do what others cannot do because they do not have the idea that it can be done. We are here to open the way of the Future to children who belong to the Future. Anything else is not worth the trouble and not worthy of Sri Aurobindo's help."

These underlying values and principles drive all the work in Auroville: to be a living embodiment of true human unity. The Mother called it “a city that the world needs”. UNESCO recognises it as a “project of importance for humanity.” Despite challenges, Auroville continues to evolve and serve as an example for the world. It is also a space for personal transformation and the evolution of human consciousness.

To make Auroville a reality has never been easy. At its inception, the community lacked basic necessities like drinking water, food, housing, healthcare, and education. When two of Auroville's first settlers, Bob and Deborah, reminisced about their arrival in Auroville, they described it as “a beautiful yet barren land” that possessed a certain “magic” (The Auroville Experience, p. 8-9).

The children's experiences were similar to those of adults. In 1971, when nine-year-old Miriam came to Auroville, the desolate, reddish environment made her feel she had “arrived on the Moon” (Watts, 2005). Today, Miriam is one of the senior teachers in Auroville.

The Mother called it, “a city that the world needs”. UNESCO recognises it as a “project of importance for humanity”.



Auroville is home to over 3,000 people from over 60 countries and is woven with eight villages within the original master plan. In the further sections of the article, we will examine how Integral Education in practice supports this vision.

In the following sections of this article, we will examine how Integral Education supports this vision and aspiration in practice.

A Brief History & The Current Challenges of Auroville Schools:

From almost no educational presence until 1970 to nearly 16 educational units currently that educate children in kindergarten, elementary and high schools, Auroville Schools have come a long way.

The first formal school in Auroville, Aspiration School, was established in 1970 but closed in 1976. One reason cited for its closure was that it resembled a conventional school (Auroville Experience, p. 102), making it clear that Aurovilians were not striving for a traditional education system.



To realise the dream and live by the Auroville Charter, Aurovilians persevered despite closing the first school. They experimented with a form of schooling that veered far from formal schools, but they remained close to the values of Mother and Sri Aurobindo and in line with the principles of Integral Education. Integral Education focuses on perfecting an individual's physical, mental, and vital (emotional, life force) development. Moreover, these three modalities are considered “instruments” to be perfected around the psychic and spiritual being.

Sri Aurobindo defines the psychic being as the growing soul or the *Chaitya Purusha*. In his book *The Human Cycle*, he writes that if humanity has to evolve, it needs a new approach to education that leads to the discovery that “man is inwardly a soul and a conscious power of the Divine” (as cited by Shraddhavan 2024, in Invocation).

The first point of the guidelines written by Mother, “To be a True Aurovilian”, also states that the first necessity is inner discovery.

Integral Education has approaches that facilitate inner discovery in all that is done in the physical, mental, and vital education supported by spiritual education. Integral Education aims to 'know oneself' and “align one's thoughts and actions to one's deeper being”. This allows for compassionate and collective aspirations in the world. This is the education needed for the progress of the global consciousness and is the education of the future.

Armed with the aspiration to form a schooling system based on Integral Education, Auroville Schools entered a period of stability only after establishing Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Education Research (SAIER) in 1984 with the support of the Indian government. Soon thereafter, the first Auroville school—The Transition School—was established in 1985 and exists even today. Since then, Auroville schools have found unique ways of working with children of different age groups with programmes such as “Awareness Through Body”. Auroville has trained practitioners from around the world in this unique method.

Given the diversity of the Auroville schools, it was only in 2023 that SAIER codified a school policy that all Auroville Schools abide by. The policy also clearly explains the best practices across Auroville schools. The policy follows Integral Education closely and states two objectives that are as follows:

- Allowing the psychic being of each student to come to the foreground.
- Perfecting and developing the mental, vital and physical nature of the students into good instruments for the psychic to express itself in the world.

(SAIER School Policy, 2023)

This commitment to consciously create an environment that supports children moving closer to their psychic being binds all education practitioners together. As per the SAIER policy, all the SAIER schools are expected to follow the following eight aspects:

1. Creates a physical and psychological environment that allows the psychic to blossom.
2. Follows a program based on integral education.
3. Has teachers who understand the diversity of student learning and knows can inspire them.
4. Ensures appropriate teacher learning and training and growth to equip them to fulfil their roles.
5. Tracks progress of each child through observation and meaningful assessment.

6. Has processes for teachers to self-evaluate and feedback to improve.

7. Constantly evolves through reflection of the school and needs of children.

8. Encourages research in the spirit of continuous progress.



The policy outlines a framework for potential actions in schools by integrating various best practices from different institutions, offering guidance without being overly prescriptive. While it does not provide standard operating procedures (SOPs) for all schools to follow in every activity, it indicates how schools should align with the policy. As a result, schools implement Integral Education in their own distinctive ways.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, in their writings on Integral Education, discuss the role of an educator and the attitudes, mindset and

self-awareness teachers need to adopt when working towards a new education for a new consciousness. Therefore, teachers must remain committed to their personal growth and self-discovery.

Several points in the SAIER policy also explicitly state the teachers' objectives and roles and how to achieve their aspirational goals. They must deepen their contact with their inner being and continuously develop their understanding of integral education practices. Most teachers in Auroville schools are already on this path, aspiring to and working with children; thus, it is their *Sadhana*—disciplined practice.

Integral education practitioners often work with and interact primarily with their colleagues in the same school. While this allows for close teamwork and collaboration within their school, it also creates silos, even though their collective aims are the same.

Although working in silos may not always be a matter of choice, opportunities for practitioners to engage with one another are limited. Practitioners either have busy schedules or

competing priorities, sometimes even a belief about how free progress is perceived between schools.

There are also perceived differences in goals and objectives when schools must cater to the needs of school boards or when children are required to take examinations. In such situations, it is often believed that schools lose the autonomy to pursue the aims of integral education and are left chasing degrees and certifications. This, for instance, applies to Auroville schools that serve children from the villages in the bioregion, where the necessity of being under a school board is considered essential.

SAIER school policy also explains the need for professional development processes and opportunities for teachers, such as teacher learning and sharing. However, it does not mention the need for collective training.

The Beginning of Integral Education Practitioner Gathering (IEPG):

In November 2021, the Auroville Governing Board indicated the need for Auroville to become a hub

Most teachers in Auroville schools are already on this path, aspiring to and working with children; thus, it is their *Sadhana*...



for Integral Education. In 2023, the office of the Auroville Foundation suggested the need for formal and visible teacher training across the schools of Auroville that, in time, could also include others, making Auroville a centre for imparting excellence in Integral Education.

SAIER reviewed capacity building for educators in Auroville, and it was felt that rather than organising formal teacher training, it might be more meaningful to facilitate the teachers' progress by sharing learning practices while tapping into the experiences of senior practitioners. Thus, it was decided to create a group event or gathering that would go beyond the silos of individual schools and allow practitioners and teachers to come together.

This gathering aimed to support learning by sharing experiences between Integral Education practitioners and teachers. It was open to everyone working in education in Auroville, and participants were encouraged to create genuine learning experiences for themselves and others. A short workshop-style program was organised for many active school teachers to engage with and think about what they felt needed to be addressed in their teams, among their colleagues, and with the children.



...more meaningful to facilitate the teachers' progress by sharing learning practices while tapping into the experiences of senior practitioners.

However, as this event was primarily intended for those involved in education, its underlying aim was to emphasise the values and philosophy that unite everyone and to debate how practitioners and teachers in individual schools could experiment to nurture the development of the psychic being in children.

Unlike many capacity-building interventions in industries that begin with needs analysis and primarily focus on identifying shortcomings, the core team at SAIER initiated the exercise with a constructive approach grounded in the fundamental teaching principle that “nothing can be taught”. This approach involved co-creation and incorporating various perspectives during the design and planning phase of the programme.

The Evolving Nature of IEPG:

Subsequent events have undergone some changes since the first IEPG in 2023, although the key components remain the same.

The first IEPG was designed as a residential gathering; the days began with yoga at 6 am and concluded with a collective dinner, followed by feedback from the team, which several practitioners also attended. Although the three subsequent IEPGs were not residential programmes, they were just as rigorous. The idea behind the schedule has been to create several opportunities for the practitioners to engage in conversations and work together. The sessions of IEPGs are designed and structured along the lines of the following best practices:

A. Inspirational Plenary Sessions:

Plenary sessions have proven inspirational and instrumental in fostering a collective spirit of community and action among participants. The speakers at these sessions are encouraged to share primarily their lived experiences and practices, making their talks relatable and engaging for the audience. Hearing from an experienced individual who embodies the principles of Integral Education resonates deeply, instilling a sense of purpose and commitment within the gathering.

B. Collective Reading and Anchoring:

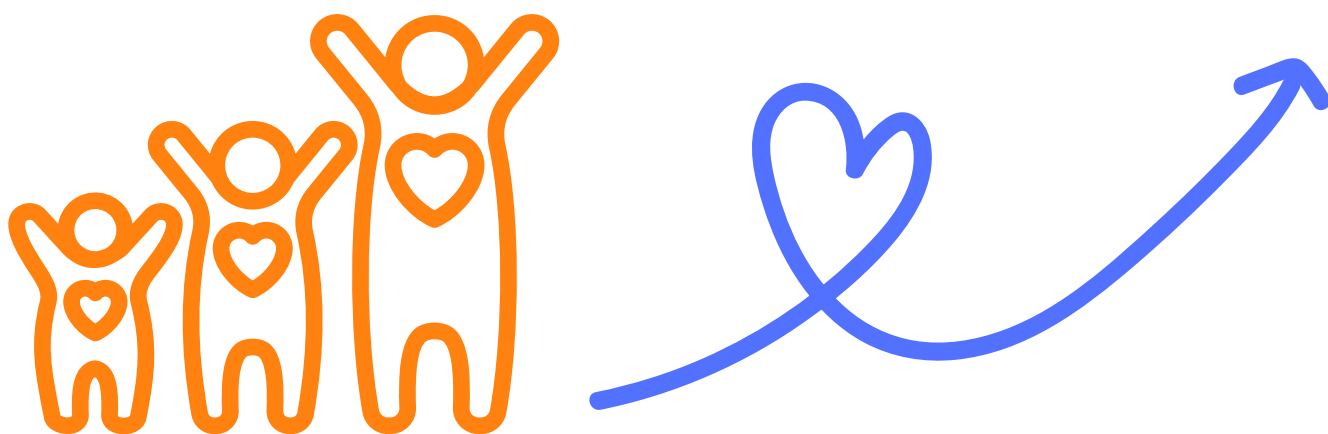
Participants are invited to join the reading group according to the age groups they engage with. The organising team preselects the reading materials from the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Integral Education. Anchors play a vital role during the collective reading session as they facilitate the reading circle based on their experience and unique style of moderating discussions on key themes from the reading materials. All anchors are mindful of consistently upholding the core aspirations of an IEPG combined with their experiential understanding of the principles of Integral Education.

C. Activity Sessions and Anchoring:

The activity sessions are scheduled after lunch. Facilitators within Auroville and occasionally from the wider Aurobindonian community offer engaging and innovative activities. Participants can select the activities they wish to join. An equal number of activities focusing on the mental, vital, physical, and spiritual aspects of learning and growth are available. Examples include games on collaboration versus competition led by P.E. teachers, introductory sessions offered by ATB facilitators, and insightful talks on artificial intelligence presented by qualified members.

At IEPGs 1 and 2, anchors played a vital role in supporting the facilitators. Their purpose was to assist the facilitators in fostering discussions that linked the participants' experiences in the activities with the principles of Integral Education. Having one anchor for each activity enhanced the overall learning experience for participants.





D. Child Development Sessions:

These sessions have been introduced to assist practitioners in utilising age-appropriate and neuro-inclusive strategies grounded in scientific knowledge of brain development. Additionally, these sessions aim to nurture the emergence of a new pedagogical approach that synthesises the spiritual aspect of “soul” education with the scientific understanding of child and human development.

E. Participant-guided Activities:

Participants are invited to offer activities on the final day of an IEPG. This is when the infectious and magical energy of co-creation is witnessed, as many practitioners step out of their comfort zones to lead sessions. Crucially, participants are encouraged to ponder and discuss self-reflective questions such as:

“What did I learn?”

“What will I do differently in my school?”

IEPG now plays a crucial role in fostering a collaborative space for reflection, dialogue, and innovation in education.

For instance, during IEPG 4, a discussion hosted by SAIER allowed practitioners from Auroville and outreach schools to address common challenges. One was the lack of documentation regarding best practices that demonstrated proven results.

Another example arose when the Auroville schools, which were not governed by external boards, voiced concerns about the absence of an equivalent certificate recognised by universities and educational systems, which would enable their students to be on par with those attending formal schools. Following this discussion, efforts have commenced to develop an evaluation framework that is both equivalent and distinctive, rooted in the Integral Education framework.

Some Key Outcomes of IEPGs

To begin with, it is a feeling of “Joy” that members participating in IEPGs, both as participants and organisers, experience.

This joy arises from the opportunity to explore together the central idea that unites all educators in Auroville and fosters a sense of community and belonging among practitioners. It flows from the harmony between team members and the opportunity for the community to reunite after a period of disengagement.

This experience of joy is “contagious”, as evidenced by consistent feedback and reflections gathered from practitioners from IEPG 1 through IEPG 4. This, in turn, has significantly influenced the educators to cultivate joyful learning environments for children.

The IEPGs have created collaborative spaces and provided a platform for personal transformation. For example, when the practitioners' feedback was evaluated, several common themes emerged, including feeling inspired to work on oneself, engaging in activities, and adopting thinking patterns that would lead to inner self-discovery.

Drawing inspiration from the science of living, practitioners reflected on the importance of having aims and objectives. This led to several practitioners committing to rethinking and fine-tuning their current and future goals.

Some Key Outcomes of IEPGs...contd.

The Mother guided the first few Auroville education practitioners to “lead by example”. After attending the plenary sessions at an IEPG, where speakers discuss the intricacies of practising Integral Education, the practitioners are inspired to undertake the necessary work to first transform and refine their own “instruments” of physical, vital, and mental nature before they can expect the same from children.

An example of such an endeavour is the collective book reading session. All practitioners find great value in the outcomes of such sessions. Recalling one such experience, one of the reading anchors mentioned that despite their initial hesitation to participate, most practitioners sat through the sessions with a “beginner’s mindset”, almost like children during the book reading, thus gaining new and novel insights and perspectives.

This and other shared experiences have encouraged some teachers to actively read Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s writings independently, even if the opportunities for collective readings may not always be available.

In addition, the collective book reading provides a platform for participants to reflect on their practices and explore how they can better use the Integral Education framework to advance their students’ learning and development.

Yet other teachers have enrolled in classes offering the same activities they participated in during an IEPG, such as Pilates. Some others actively use the techniques learnt in an IEPG with the students and apply what they learned from the child development sessions to adopt more age-appropriate ways of engaging with the children.

Some Key Outcomes of IEPGs...contd.

After the IEPGs, practitioners became comfortable with Mother and Sri Aurobindo's language and vocabulary. A linguistic shift is often observed during and after the IEPGs, which deepens and widens practitioners' interactions with one another. This drives the creation of new waves of synergy among teachers, facilitators, and the entire schooling community of Auroville.

Finally, and importantly, the member practitioners and teachers see substantial value in continuing with IEPGs in the future due to their potential to foster a strong community and facilitate the participants' overall progress.

Global Consciousness and IEPGs:

Supporting the development of a higher global consciousness requires us to transcend daily activities and take steps toward collaborating and realising synergies with others who may appear to be working differently but have the same goals. It requires reminders that there is a consciousness waiting to be manifested and demands us to do away with our egos to create a “magical” milieu on earth that has not been known before.

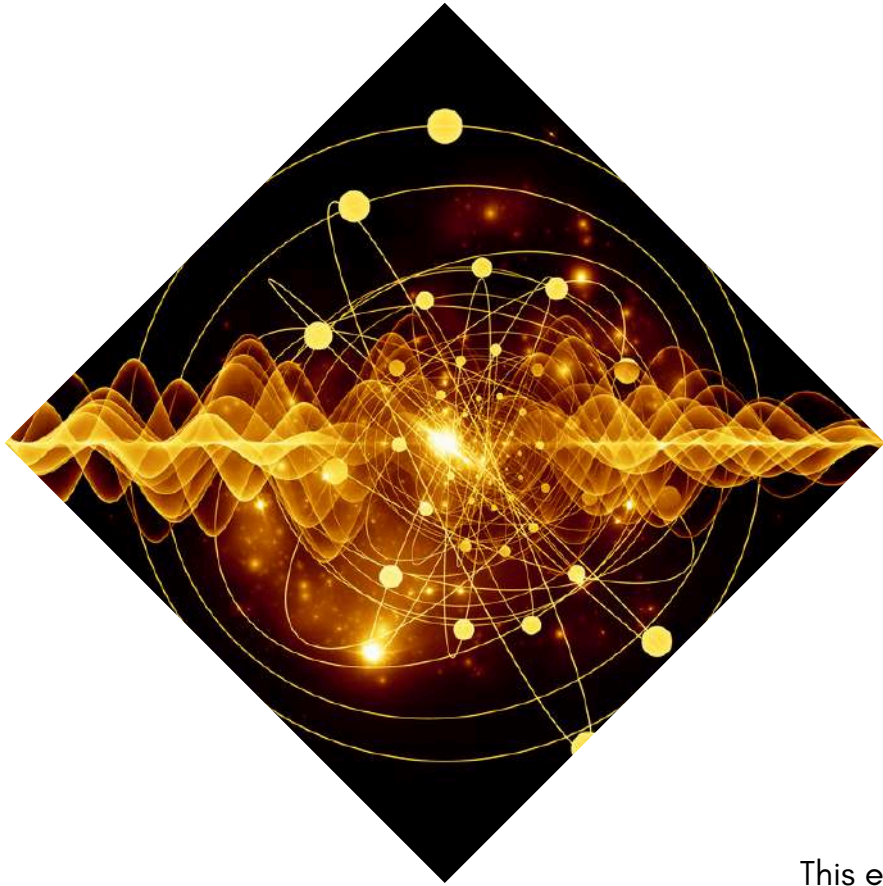
The IEPGs offer unmistakable glimpses of this transformation when the participating practitioners and teachers transition from an individual-based to a collective-based sadhana—a practice that aims for progress and perfection for everyone. Such gatherings offer a sense of belonging that helps everyone involved feel that there is “something” larger than themselves that unites them. This fosters a feeling of oneness despite having groups of individuals with different perspectives and backgrounds. The spirit of collaboration and co-creation at these gatherings brings cooperation to efforts that would otherwise be disparate and lack focus. Collective and collaborative efforts generate outcomes more remarkable than imagined at the outset.

From rejecting the comfort of silos and echo chambers to embracing spaces rich with collective growth and ongoing education, Auroville educators cultivate an environment where everyone works both independently and interdependently towards personal and collective growth and development. The energy and magic are felt and experienced by all; no one is excluded because, in the final analysis, we all emerge from the One, are One, and will forever remain in One.

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The Evolutionary Process and Transformation of Humanity

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In his complete conceptualization of the evolution of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo identifies the higher levels of consciousness that humanity can attain. These levels far exceed human mentality in their heightened and transformative progression.

Conceptualizing these levels as a higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, overmind, and supermind, Sri Aurobindo describes an extraordinary progression that ultimately leads to union with the Divine and transformation of the being.

In addition, he describes and enriches our understanding of the significant stages of human evolution that precede the progressive transformation of consciousness beyond the level of mentality. In general, Sri Aurobindo's explanations of human psychology explore ordinary human nature in considerable depth.

This essay focuses on the stages of humanity that precede the transcendence of the mental level. Describing these as the physical, vital, and mental stages of humanity, Sri Aurobindo regards these as developmental stages that form the progression leading up to the development of the full spiritual capacity and the type of evolved human being who is able and compelled to direct their energies toward a spiritual focus.

Sri Aurobindo explains that before human beings can fulfill their true potential and their ultimate purpose of attaining union with the Divine consciousness and transformation—the divinization of their being—they tend to fall into several general psychological categories according to the predominant characteristics of their natures. These categories delineate an upward progression in terms of consciousness, which, Sri Aurobindo explains, expresses increasingly widening and heightening levels as

the individual grows and develops along the evolutionary spectrum.

Sri Aurobindo explains that humanity embodies a definite departure from animal nature in several ways.

The human being is significantly more conscious, including being more self-aware, and can also be conscious of its inner being. The human mind is also capable of much more subtle action, including reflection, thought, analysis, and creativity. The animal mind operates more on a vital level and is essentially reactive in its operations.

While human beings initially use this greater mentality in their pursuit of meeting their physical needs and vital wants, they are not satisfied with this level of activity and grow towards refining and heightening the nature and quality of their endeavors.

This capability and inherent difference, Sri Aurobindo explains, relates to the fact that human beings can sense the existence of something higher than themselves and aspire to connect with and realize this. He writes:

“...it is man who first makes this upward gaze consciously his own business.”



But man not only turns his gaze downward and around him, when he has reached his higher level, but upward towards what is above him and inward towards what is occult within him. In him not only the downward gaze of the universal Being in the evolution has become conscious, but its conscious upward and inward gaze also develops. The animal lives as if satisfied with what Nature has done for it; if there is any upward gaze of the secret spirit within its animal being, it has nothing consciously to do with it, that is still Nature's business: it is man who first makes this upward gaze consciously his own business. (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 2005, p. 774.)

This innate sense of the Divine derives from the presence of the Divine within the very core of the being, the psychic being. It is this “the spark of the Divine” that drives the evolution of the individual and of humanity as a whole.

Sri Aurobindo describes the presence of the Divine within the individual, in fact, within the

entire manifestation. He explains the Divine's involution in matter and subsequent conceptualization of how this makes possible, even inevitable, the evolution of consciousness.

It is the essential fact of the Divine presence that compels the evolution of the manifestation. The manifestation is at its lowest form of expression at the physical level. Subsequently, the evolution becomes a process of rediscovery as the Divine increasingly reveals Its presence. Writing of the inevitability of evolution, Sri Aurobindo states:

It was inevitable because that which is involved, must evolve; for it is not only there as an existence, a force hidden in its apparent opposite, and every such force must in its inmost nature be moved to find itself, to realize itself, to release itself into play...."
(Sri Aurobindo, Ibid).

In examining the stages that precede the spiritual stage described by Sri Aurobindo, we begin with the focus on the physical and the functioning of the human mind at this level before proceeding to examine the progression from this point.

**It is the essential
fact of the Divine
presence that
compels the
evolution of the
manifestation.**

The physical-mental being lives in the world of physical nature and its outer concerns: physical objects, material nature, and the individual's relation to these. At this stage, the emphasis of life is on outer reality. To the extent that vital nature has a role to play, this is primarily related to instinct and impulse. The individual living in the physical mind uses mentality in practical ways and is not generally self-reflective.

This is a necessary initial stage that emphasizes physical survival and life at the material level of existence. As the basis for all that proceeds from simply living in a material body, this is the essential starting point.



Although the mind is capable of higher imaginings and aspirations, the individual does not reach farther at this stage of the evolutionary progression. Sri Aurobindo describes this:

It is inevitable that the human being should thus take his first stand on Matter and give the external fact and external existence its due importance; for this is Nature's first provision for our existence, on which she insists greatly: the physical man is emphasised in us and is multiplied abundantly in the world by her as her force for conservation of the secure, if somewhat inert, material basis on which she can maintain herself while she attempts her higher human developments; but in this mental formation there is no power for progress or only for a material progress. It is our first mental status, but the mental being cannot remain always at this lowest rung of the human evolutionary ladder. (Sri Aurobindo, Ibid, p. 746.)

Although the mind is capable of higher imaginings and aspirations, the individual does not reach farther at this stage of the evolutionary progression. Sri Aurobindo describes this:

**“Above physical
mind and deeper
within...”**



Above physical mind and deeper within than physical sensation, there is what we may call an intelligence of the life-mind, dynamic, vital, nervous, more open, though still obscurely, to the psychic, capable of a first soul-formation, though only of an obscurer life-soul,—not the psychic being, but a frontal formation of the vital Purusha. This life-soul concretely senses and contacts the things of the life-world, and tries to realise them here; it attaches immense importance to the satisfaction and fulfilment of the life-being, the life-force, the vital nature: it looks on physical existence as a field for the life-impulse' self-fulfilment, for the play of ambition, power, strong character, love, passion, adventure, for the individual, the collective, the general human seeking and hazard and venture, for all kinds of life-experiment and new life-experience, and but for this saving element, this greater power, interest, significance, the physical existence would have for it no value.

(Sri Aurobindo, Ibid, p. 746-747.)



Consequently, this stage of development greatly enlarges the field of attention and endeavor in which we human beings are engaged. Covertly influenced by the subliminal being and therefore somewhat secretly influenced by the psychic element, the individual at this stage of development is more driven by desire and aspects of life that give sensation and enjoyment or a sense of enlargement or power.

We can see these characteristics in the adventurous, the bold, the lavishly creative among us. When freed from the stronger influences of desire and more mentally concentrated, Sri Aurobindo tells us that the individual at this stage may become “the mental adventurer, the opener of the way to new mind-formations or the fighter for an idea, the sensitive type of artist, the dynamic poet of life or the prophet or champion of a cause.” (Sri Aurobindo, *Ibid*, p. 747.)

He summarizes this capacity, stating, “The vital mind is kinetic and therefore a great force in the working of evolutionary Nature.” (Sri Aurobindo, *Ibid*, p. 748.)

The next stage above the vital level is that of pure mentality. At this stage, the focus is on the mind and intelligence itself. This is the stage where the idealist, the scientist, and the philosopher emerge. Here, the individual may also be influenced by the lower elements of one’s nature. This is to be expected since one continues to live on the material plane, but the physical and vital influences are not as strong as at the earlier stages and are more controlled by the intelligence and the will. Sri Aurobindo explains the capacities of humanity at this stage of development:

The mental man cannot transform his nature, but he can control and harmonise it and lay on it the law of a mental ideal, impose a balance or a sublimating and

“The mental man cannot transform his nature, but...”

refining influence, and give a high consistency to the multipersonal confusion and conflict or the summary patchwork of our divided and half-constructed being. He can be the observer and governor of his own mind and life, can consciously develop them and become to that extent a self-creator.

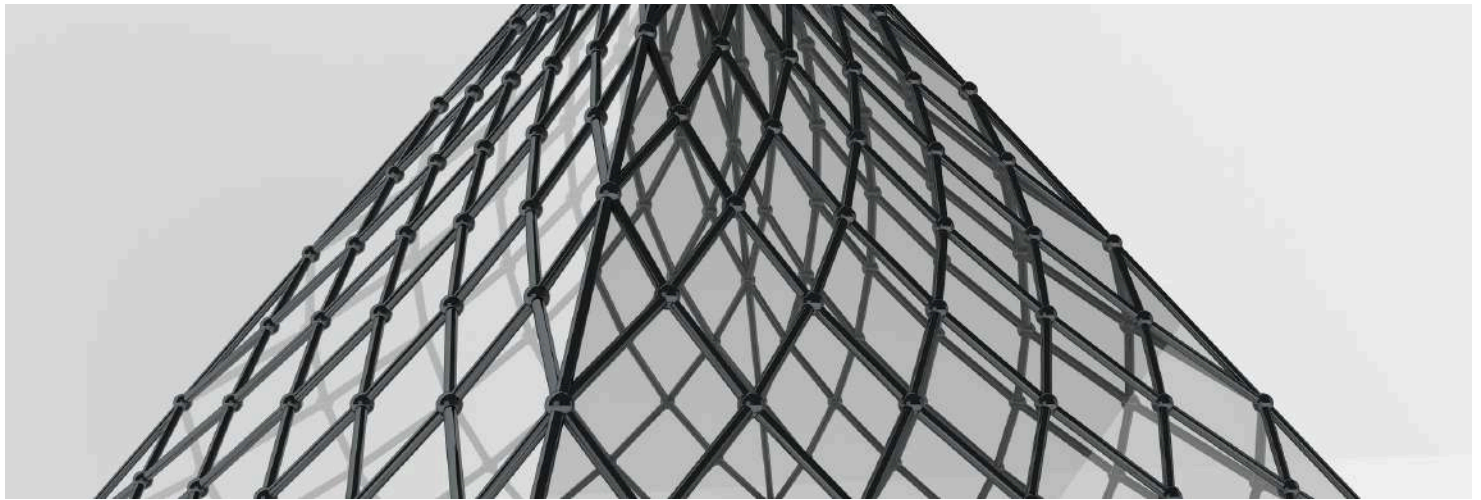
This mind of pure intelligence has behind it our inner or subliminal mind which senses directly all the things of the mind-plane, is open to the action of a world of mental forces, and can feel the ideative and other imponderable influences which act upon the material world and the life-plane but which at present we can only infer and cannot directly experience: these intangibles and imponderables are to the mental man real and patent and he regards them as truths demanding to be realised in our or the earth's nature. On the inner plane mind and mind-soul independent of the body can become to us an entire reality, and we can consciously live in them as much as in the body. Thus to live in mind and the things of the mind, to be an intelligence rather than a life and a body, is our highest position, short of spirituality, in the degrees of Nature. (Sri Aurobindo, *Ibid*, p. 748.)

Therefore, we see that Sri Aurobindo has explained that the development of the mental being is the highest stage in nature yet.



Even so, it does not embody the capacity for transforming the being to its ultimate stage in evolution. For this, it is necessary to go beyond the surface being, even beyond the mind of thought and its capacity for idealism and lofty imaginings, beyond that which is truly higher. The development of the spiritual stage is required:

The spiritual man is her supreme supernormal effort of human creation; for, having evolved the mental creator, thinker, sage, prophet of an ideal, the self-controlled, self-disciplined, harmonised mental being, she has tried to go higher and deeper within and call out into the front the soul and inner mind and heart, call down from above the forces of the spiritual mind and higher mind and overmind and create under their light and by their influence the spiritual sage, seer, prophet, God-lover, Yogin, gnostic, Sufi, mystic. (Sri Aurobindo, *Ibid*, p. 750.)



Through this spiritualization of the being, the transcendence of human nature can come about. Only then is the individual poised to be liberated from the influences of the physical, vital, and superficial mental aspects of nature.

Nevertheless, all of these aspects of our being are part of us, and each, in its own way, serves our development and contributes to our spiritual advancement. In his characteristic perspective of integrality, Sri Aurobindo explains that the evolutionary process does not involve rejecting the physical, vital, and mental aspects of being. Instead, it is a progression of ascent and integration.

Evolution moves forward, with each progressive stage integrating what came before it and transforming it into a higher form of expression. In its integrating, fully inclusive, and transformative action, evolution is complete in its advance. Having accomplished a higher stage, all that came before is included and transformed.

In this way, the physical becomes physical-vital. This then becomes infused with the mentality and proceeds to become enlightened by the pure intellect. Moving upward, we have a physical being whose life and action are influenced by its capacity for pure intellect. At this level, the lower nature has been infused with higher ideals and brought under the control of these influences.

...Sri Aurobindo explains that the evolutionary process does not involve rejecting the physical, vital, and mental aspects of being.

This higher mental being proceeds to embody all of the higher qualities of human nature and to aspire beyond these, becoming the spiritual human, with the subsequent spiritualizing of the lower aspects of nature, turning them upwards in their direction and energies. Sri Aurobindo explains that this is how we go forward and prepare for the transformative potential of the higher stages of evolution.

Becoming a spiritualized human being can be regarded as an ideal and goal in itself, as well as the aspiration to ultimately attain the highest spiritual realizations Sri Aurobindo described in his conceptualization of the evolution of consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo identifies becoming a spiritual human being as undergoing a spiritual transformation. The transformation includes the sense of being who is always in contact with the Divine, living and acting in the awareness of this relation.

The spiritual consciousness infuses all parts of the being, resulting in a change in one's entire worldview and sense of life and action. In doing so, the individual gives their complete focus and concentration to the Divine. This goes beyond a mental or intellectual concentration on spiritual concepts and ideals.

The spiritualization of the individual constitutes a transformation of consciousness, even as the individual continues to live and act in the world. Of course, this does not mean that other areas of life do not need or merit attention. Sri Aurobindo has eloquently explained this to us in his extensive writings conceptualizing integral yoga. He has also asserted this understanding in his profoundly simple statement: "All life is yoga." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 403.)



**Becoming a
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With spiritual transformation and all the higher stages of the evolution of consciousness, the consciousness has been transformed, and the individual lives and acts from this newly developed state of being. Sri Aurobindo describes spiritual transformation as dynamic and powerfully affecting the being:

What I mean by the spiritual transformation is something dynamic (not merely liberation of the self, or realisation of the One which can very well be attained without any descent). It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness dynamic as well as static in every part of the being down to the subconscient. (Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 403.)

The role of the psychic being is central to all of spiritual development, particularly since, as previously described, the psychic being is the actual presence of the Divine in the core of the being.

Sri Aurobindo writes about psychic and spiritual transformation and explains how they complement each other. He describes the psychic transformation as preceding the spiritual transformation and as coming from within the individual. The psychic transformation occurs when the psychic being comes to the forefront and proceeds to rule the outer being and life, making a profound change. In the spiritual transformation, there is a descent from above.

...the psychic being is the actual presence of the Divine in the core of the being.

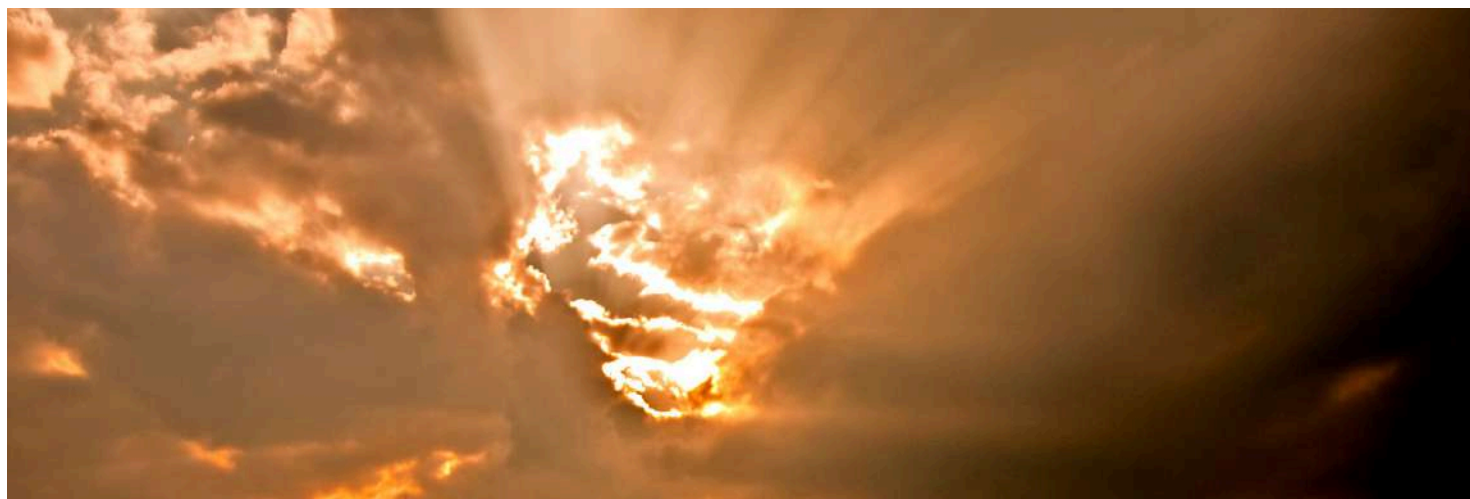
The concept of surrender is essential to Sri Aurobindo's conceptualization of integral yoga.

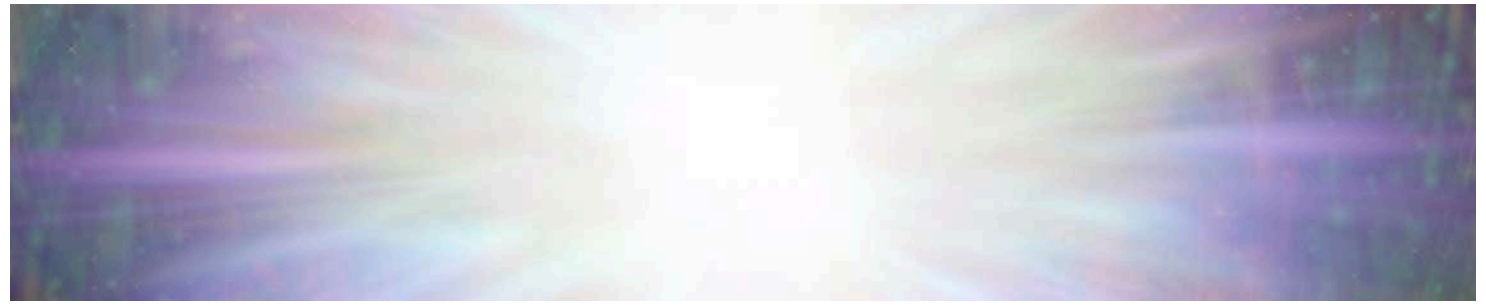
In the spiritual transformation, there is a descent from above. In a letter to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo gives the following clarification:

There are different statuses (avasthā) of the Divine Consciousness. There are also different statuses of transformation. First is the psychic transformation, in which all is in contact with the Divine through the psychic consciousness. Next is the spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the last that there can begin the complete transformation of mind, life and body—in my sense of completeness. (Sri Aurobindo, Letters on Yoga, p. 414.)

Reflecting on the action of the psychic being and the implications of its emergence, we can see that its coming to the forefront constitutes a greater opening and receptivity to the Divine and, in a sense, invites the descent from above.

This action can also be seen in relation to the concept of surrender. Real spiritual progress comes through offering oneself and surrendering to the Divine. The concept of surrender is essential to Sri Aurobindo's conceptualization of integral yoga.





Under the influence of the psychic being, consciousness turns towards the Divine, opens, and progressively surrenders to the Divine Consciousness, the Divine Shakti, who blesses with Her Force. As the depth and fullness of the surrender increase, the influence of the Divine Shakti progresses from initially prompting one's actions to taking control of one's actions and finally taking up one's actions completely, including doing the work of yoga.

With the response of the Divine in Its descent, which completes the spiritual transformation, the process has found its fulfillment. From this stage onwards, the Divine takes full charge of the individual's progress in the evolution of consciousness. The individual's inner being has given its full consent through its surrender to the Divine, and the Divine brings all Its blessings.

In the earlier stages of human evolution, from the physical through to the mental, we can consider that development is driven by egoistic self-interest, with this declining to some extent as the consciousness advances. In these stages, there is a return in life satisfaction, which relates directly to the enlargement and fulfillment of the physical, vital, and even mental drives.

It is only when the mental being, supported by the higher occult influences of the inner vital (in turn driven essentially by the psychic being influencing the subliminal), develops a sense of something beyond, higher, wider, vaster than it can comprehend with the intellect, that the power and influence of the ego begin to fade. Then, once the psychic becomes well-developed and ultimately emerges, the connection with the Divine becomes increasingly felt and recognized.

As the experience of the Divine increases, the sense of personal offering and surrender to the Divine also increases. This process enables the transformation from the mental to the spiritual being. The spiritual transformation then becomes the truly decisive step from the lower consciousness. It opens the way for the extraordinary progression Sri Aurobindo has explained in his conceptualization of the evolution of consciousness.

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Unification of Humankind – A Pipedream Destined to Fail?



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The ideal of human unity has never been more prominent in human consciousness than now. Paradoxically, the impediments and bottlenecks to such unity have become equally powerful globally. It is almost as if two equally powerful and opposing forces are butting heads like two horn-locked bulls determined to maul one another to death.

Whether it is national politics, the international arena, or even a benign college campus, the opposition of forces, opinions, ideologies, and convictions are often colored by vehement polar-opposite positions that are impossible to reconcile despite impressive-sounding arguments, powerful rebuttals and colorfully presented data analyses. These opposing positions spill over into communities and homes, causing fractured relationships and broken, empty spaces devoid of warmth, empathy, and understanding.

When even homes and communities are divided, what hope is there for unity in this world?



The ancient Indian philosophies and writings in the Upanishads, Vedanta, Sankhya, and other metaphysical texts call this universe the world of “names” and “forms”—*nama* and *roopa*. Everything has a name and a label—even if it is a vacuum—and a form and a figure—even if it is nothingness and emptiness.

This universe of *nama* and *roopa* is forever swimming in the oceanic currents of space-time—*desa-kala*, ever-changing and transforming into dizzying synthetic permutations and combinations that are too complex for any human mind to fathom.

Big, small, white, black, round, square, solid, fluid, still, moving, dead, alive, visible, invisible—we are surrounded by and submerged in the never-ending waves of *nama*, and *roopa* enveloped in the secrecy of *desa* and *kala*—what the ancient Indian sages and intuitive thinkers have called *Prakriti*, loosely translated as “Nature” in English—not only the “natural” world around us; although that too is *Prakriti*—but also including, everything that is sensorial and extra-sensorial except for “That” which has no name, no form, and is unaffected by time or space: the Absolute One Reality and Ultimate Truth—the *Brahman* of the ancient Indian rishis, the Divine of the realized prophets and metaphysicians.

Another name associated with *Prakriti* is *maya*—again, loosely translated in English as an illusionary power with the capacity to trick the mind of the beholder. In other words, by the hallucinatory influence of *maya*, the “truth” escapes the observer, leading to delusion, incorrect perception, and illogical conclusion—collectively designated as *Avidya*—ignorance—by the ancients, thereby causing faulty perceptions, thinking, and actions.

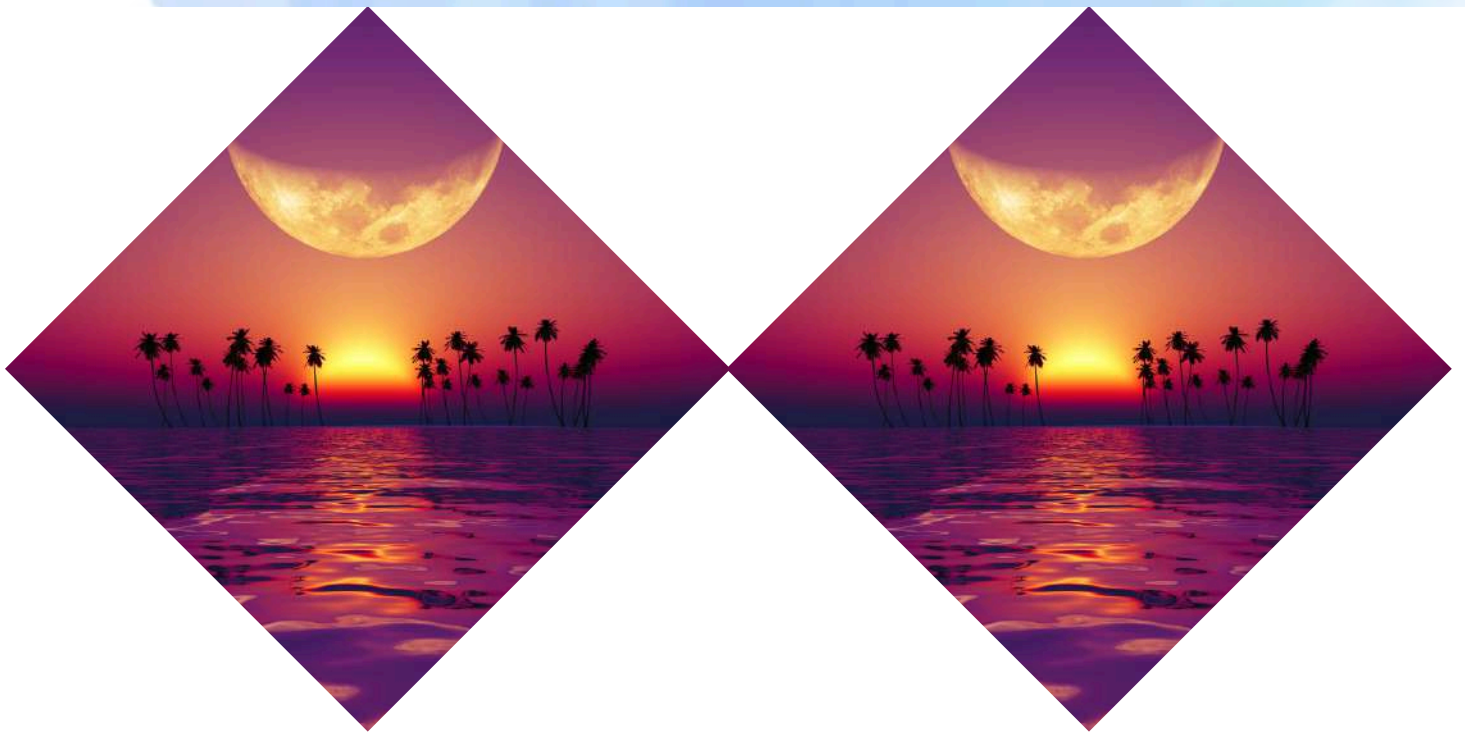


In a modern and somewhat ironic context, this is similar to how Artificial intelligence (AI) models often “hallucinate” and spit out misleading and incorrect information that fools seemingly “intelligent” people in a surprisingly consistent way.

Yet another property that is the hallmark of *Prakriti* is *ahamkara*, the separative ego-sense. This necessary but painful affliction differentiates and individualizes the multitude of names and forms and divides them into “I” and “you,” “us” and “them,” and “this” versus “that.” This ego-sense is equally valid and palpable for individuals as it is for groups of collectives, societies, and nations.

To this explosive mix of *maya* (delusion/ignorance) and *ahamkara* (ego/pride), when you add the fiery concentrate of *nama* (names/labels/identities) and *roopa* (forms/shapes/qualities), it only takes minor sparks of fear, separateness, and scarcity to ignite the volatile mass of human emotions to be engulfed in flames of passion and angst against the backdrop of the continuum of *desa* (geographical space/regions/nations) and *kala* (progression of time).

Is there any surprise that our world is constantly submerged in the undercurrents of conflict and ill-will? Despite all the progress made in education, social practices, political and human rights, and the rule of law?



In fact, in today's times, humanity appears to be retreating into the pigeonholes of isolation, escapism, mindless entertainment, and outright bigotry. Morality, ethics, truth, service, and its cousin, sacrifice, seem empty words devoid of meaning, gasping on last breaths before they are permanently banished from everyday life and dictionaries.

So, where is human unity and global brother & sisterhood in all of this? Hold this thought for the moment—we shall return to it shortly.

Ancient Indian philosophical and metaphysical sages and seers spent copious amounts of time and energy describing *Prakriti* and its myriad magical and delusional ways. They also invested equal resources in unraveling the secrets of the “generator” and the unseen power source behind *Prakriti*—the *Purusha*.

The clearest way to understand the mystical relationship between *Prakriti* and *Purusha* is to refer to the quintessentially brilliant comparisons provided in the Rigveda, Upanishads, Puranas, and the foundational Sankhya Karika by Isvarkrishna, where the Moon signifies *Prakriti* and the Sun *Purusha*.

When the moon's luminosity entralls us, we forget that it has no light of its own; it only reflects radiance from the sun, which is invisible to us at night. This causes us to disregard the true



source of the moon's illumination. We are so mesmerized by the moon's reflected and borrowed beauty that we are obsessed with its ebbs and flows and the resultant chokehold effects on our moods and modes of thinking.

This simile between the moon and the sun offers an important lesson for us humans. Everything we essentially consider "us"—our personality, physique, mind, intelligence, skills, talents, or, in other words, our nature—is our "moon," our *Prakriti*.

Just like the moon in the night sky, our nature, or *Prakriti*, has no source of power of its own but "borrows" its potency and force from our "sun"—the *Purusha* or Soul—also described by the scriptures as the "divine spark".

The stark reality of this "borrower-lender" relationship becomes crystal clear at the moment of death when the body beautiful—the vehicle of supreme human pride—starts to disintegrate minutes after the indwelling *Purusha* withdraws "his" sanction and decides to leave the earthly adobe. At that moment, our social & political beliefs, religious & philosophical tenets, dearly-held values, ethics, and morals—all disappear, like the light from a bulb switched off by an "invisible hand".

The physical, psychological, and personality-laden egoic prison walls that not only entrap us but also isolate us from everyone and everything disappear, and we finally appear free and naked



as we truly are: still slightly blemished and somewhat semi-bruised but nevertheless glowing with a luminosity that is otherworldly, blissful, and conscious of our journey thus far and the summits to be conquered, nay, discovered in the timeless future that weaves and winds through multiple births, worlds and universes of physical and extra-physical, ethereal fabrics and matrixes until our union with the One Absolute. In a somewhat simplified nutshell, this is what has been described by the ancient sages, scriptures, and teachers through revelations, visions, and experiences in most religions and philosophies.

But where do these writings and teachings leave us—today's humans—imprisoned in the modern, myriad world of deceit, division, conflict, and pain?

Confused? Disillusioned? Distrustful? Desolated? Caught alternately in the twin pincers of desperate escapism and mindless enjoyment, we feel the final juices of happiness, peace, and idealism being squeezed out of us with no relief in sight or heart. All writings and philosophies bring a sense of wry resignation and leave us chaffing at their impractical nature and ever-shorter shelf life. In desperation, we turn to the quicksand of Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, OTT streaming, online gaming, online gambling, or something even more addictive for temporary relief and numbness, only to return to an abject and iterative reality time and again.

So, where do we go from here?

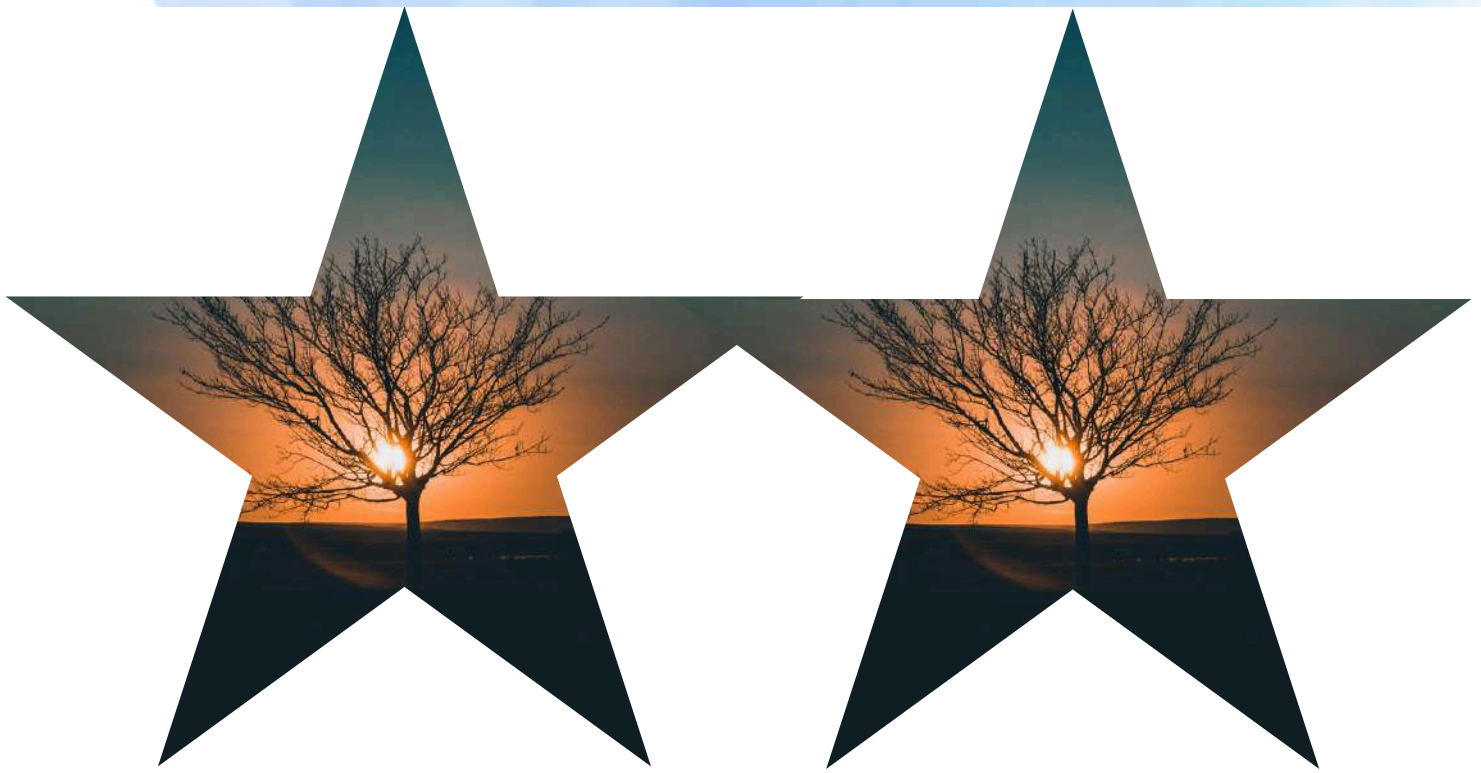


At this point in history, an unseen, unheard, and unknown minority may intuitively feel humanity's arrival at a "fork" in the highway of earthly life. One part of this fork meanders through previously familiar but increasingly sordid areas that reflect our past. Still, another part opens into somewhat unclear, hazy, and unfamiliar regions, giving us alternate and puzzling feelings of the comfort of impending dawn coupled with the terror of the mysterious and the hidden.

If you are part of this indeterminate minority, please appreciate that there may be more of you in numbers than you imagine. Do not equate the silence of the many with a lack of a universally felt realization and yearning. But above all, have faith in the hidden wisdom of your inner voice, however feeble and wobbly it may seem. In a world of over 7 billion people, hundreds of thousands may have inner voices reverberating with these same but new and undefined vibrations that need to be recognized, appreciated, and respected.

The question still remains: where do we go from here?

Do we discard our religions, philosophies, histories, and treatises and wait for an all-powerful, all-knowing messiah to appear magically, even if we have to wait for what may appear to be an eternity?



One must admit that the thought and belief of there being someone, somewhere, somehow, who will save us and humanity from increasingly certain doom is so comforting. So much so that we secretly yearn for that “Chosen One” to appear sooner, the better. But placing so much faith in the sudden appearance of that “one” singular being appears somewhat risky, unlikely, and fraught with dicey possibilities, most of which may be uncontrollable and unpredictable, leading to questionable outcomes at best and inevitable catastrophes at worst.

Fortunately, we do not need to throw the baby out with the bathwater—meaning, we do not need to reject the possibility of the presence, wisdom, and guidance of an omniscient and omnipresent “messiah”—only that this all-powerful, all-knowing entity is NOT somewhere “out there” and in the future but IS “within” us, has always been there and will always be there for us into eternal time.

The quintessential emphasis of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s *sadhana*—inner practices of spiritual development—teachings and lifelong endeavors was on unveiling this “inner being”, the Psychic Being, the soul personality, and bringing it front and center in every facet of our lives, both inner and outer so that it’s divine guidance and dynamic power become the North Star of our entire being. Our Psychic Being is the divine *Purusha*, the “Sun” burning with the divine flame of aspiration and surrender to the workings of the Divine Mother consciousness-force that ultimately guides us towards the One Nameless Absolute.



To this end, Sri Aurobindo's *Sapta Chatusthaya*—the Seven Quartets or Seven Groupings of Four Elements—becomes a “manual,” or more accurately, a framework of spiritual guiding principles and practices of Integral Yoga that has the power to transform our inner and outer lives, including physical/material, vital/emotional, mental, and spiritual dimensions and make them harmonious inside out and outside in. In other words, we develop and become “integrally”—completely—in accordance with who we truly are, NOT how the world wants us to be.

Briefly, the *Sapta Chatusthayas* or Seven Quartets are:

- *Shanti Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Peace,
- *Shakti Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Power,
- *Vijnana Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Knowledge,
- *Sharira Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Body,
- *Karma Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Action,
- *Brahma Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Brahman, and
- *Siddhi Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Perfection.

In my humble view, the two that are most relevant and practical for the “new” seekers and *sadhaks* who are just embarking on this self-development journey are *Shanti Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Peace and *Shakti Chatusthaya*/Quartet of Power. This is not surprising because who doesn't desire peace in today's chaotic world? And who wouldn't want the power of self-improvement and growth? Both go hand in hand for any meaningful transformation to begin.



Like any self-transformational journey, the goals and principles are rock-solid and founded on spiritually researched and practiced wisdom. Still, the steps, processes, and experiences are as varied as individuals in this world. In other words, unlike the straight-jacketed processes and methodologies of the outer and modern world, we have the power to shape our growth journey through the wisdom of our inner guide and guru—the Psychic Being, the Soul, and the Spark of the Divine in us.

From a practical standpoint, we need to start somewhere. In today's day and age, we take special pride in our mental prowess and power. We are not convinced if we cannot reflect on, think through, and “mentalize” what we are told to believe in.

To assist us in overcoming this hurdle, I humbly suggest reading, reflecting, and practicing the principles as espoused in the book, “Seven Quartets of Becoming – A Transformative Yoga Psychology Based on the Diaries of Sri Aurobindo” by Dr. Debashish Banerji. Along with this book, you can read, reflect, and meditate on Sri Aurobindo's classic book, “The Synthesis of Yoga”. For the courageous few, the next phase can be to live the truth in Sri Aurobindo's two-volume diary compilation: “The Records of Yoga”.

At this point, I would like to point out the common error we make in thinking that by reading a few pivotal books, our lives will suddenly change for the better. None of the books I have suggested are easy text to read—in fact, they may be the most challenging “stuff” you may have encountered in a long time, if not your entire life. They are not to be read with a purely logical and reasoning mind, although a certain amount of logic and reason definitely helps!

These books are to be “approached” with a deeper mind and a belief in a hidden sense of inner wisdom. They are not to be intellectually “devoured” in days but “absorbed” in the depths of our non-thinking mind, at best a few pages a day.



The key points in the books are not to be memorized but merely allowed to be “remembered” by the primordial intelligence that is innate in us but lies dormant and forgotten by layers of conditioning and education. These are not to be read with an egoic mind that prides itself in collecting information to be spat out in meaningless conversations and parties but with a lifelong burning sense of inner aspiration that values growth towards Truth-consciousness above all else, no matter the price.

It is famously said that life’s challenges and troubles are the true learning and transformational opportunities—the greater their magnitude, the more possibility there is for personal growth. While there is much truth in this statement, in my humble view, the greatest potential for inner and outer growth and transformation lies in the small moments of everyday life—moments that we live unconsciously, hurriedly, and mechanically.

Finding *Samata*—mental and inner equality—at the moment of a missed but important appointment.

When interacting with a troublesome colleague, achieving an inner state of *Lipsa*—the “desireless” desire of service to the Supreme in everyone and everything.

These and many other instances remind us of and put us back on the long road ahead toward inner growth and self-transformation. Paradoxically, those who are closest to us, and hence, most taken for granted, are the ones who most starkly and vividly show us our mental, egoic, and spiritual wounds and pockmarks.



Only when we each begin to enter the realm of self-perfection and purification by transcending and shedding the layers of ego and mental constructs do we realize and inhabit a new individual and collective space of oneness, understanding, and appreciation.

At this point, the seeds of humanity's unification are not merely sown; they begin to sprout suddenly, unexpectedly, and everywhere because, in the ultimate reality, we are all connected and ONE within the unified spiritualized field of Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss—*Sachidananda*. When one of us grows, all of us grow. When one of us loves, everyone loves. When one of us unites, we all unite. Sri Aurobindo repeatedly implores us to have *Shraddha*: “faith” in the all-pervading, all-inclusive, all-encompassing Supreme Intelligence, without which there would be nothing at all.

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The Sacred Leap from Ego Consciousness to Global Consciousness



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"All being is one and to be fully is to be all that is. (...) to feel all selves as one's own self." Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, p. 1061, Vol. 22 (Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, 2005).

With these few words, Sri Aurobindo gives a perfect definition of what Global Consciousness consists of. Somehow, at the same time, he provides a direction to our ego, which is lost in the mischief of separateness.

The problem that humanity faces is a problem of growth. Law enforcement, conventions, and control cannot resolve the multitude of personal, social or planetary conflicts that are afflicting us because the true answer lies in an inner awakening.

"The outer apparent man, an ephemeral being subject to the constraints of his material embodiment and imprisoned in a limited mentality, has to become the inner real Man, master of himself and his environment and universal in his being." Ibid, p. 712

Education has failed us. Nowadays, its purpose is to integrate youth into the established pattern of a given system. "Education" derives from the Latin "e-ducare"—meaning "to lead out", "to bring forth", "to emancipate"—which is the complete opposite of "fitting in". It means leading one's life independently from any conditioning or social pressure and living according to one's nature (Swabhava), which, for each of us, is unique. Sadly, we are taught to become cogs in the social machine, whereas true education should aim at awakening the Spirit within. When this is achieved, all is achieved!

Global consciousness is the realisation of the Oneness of life from which is born the feeling of mutuality. Yet, we must not confuse this with the

**Education has
failed us.**

integration of humanity and the ideology of communism in which the individual being exists for the community and not for him or herself. In Sri Aurobindo's spiritual vision, the Individual is all important; we are the forerunners of the manifestation, and in fact, we are "the key" to its unfolding:

"The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality." Ibid, p. 1086

The eradication of the individual or its forced compliance is, therefore, not the way towards true unity and global consciousness but rather the end of the evolutionary impetus towards fulfilment.

"Even if all our actions are scrupulously regulated by education or law or social or political machinery, what will be achieved is a regulated pattern of minds, a fabricated pattern of lives, a cultivated pattern of conduct; but a conformity of this kind cannot change, cannot re-create the man within, it cannot carve or cut out a perfect soul or a perfect thinking man or a perfect or growing living being." Ibid, p. 1058

We could say communist-style globalization is the oneness of uniformity in which, in order to achieve perfect standardisation, the individual soul is banished.

Certainly, to live in this world harmoniously and conduct the affairs of our daily life with all its obligations, we need the stability of unity.



But our nature is fundamentally ignorant; hence, to accomplish unity, we think that we must use force, social conditioning or military pressure. This precarious oneness is achieved by reducing the individuals to conformity, globalised control and the robotisation of the planet. In this lifeless oneness, society finds its so-called security and order. But without individual creative participation, there can be neither cooperation, harmony, nor true happiness. In such a world, we do not live; we exist in a dead, static, phantom-like society.

"A unanimity of this kind can only be maintained by a compression of all freedom of thought and life, and that must bring about either the efficient stability of a termite civilisation or the drying up of the springs of life (...)." Ibid, p. 1094

**...our nature
is fundamentally
ignorant...**

Sri Aurobindo's concept of Oneness is the complete opposite. It grows from within, and it is vibrant with life. Global consciousness is actually enriched by the realisation and blossoming of each and every soul. Individually, we must realise unity with our fellow beings through the awakening of our true self, the inner spirit. For this true self is of the same essence in all mankind. Our ignorance of the fundamental unity that permeates our world has brought about the ego, a centre of division, and it is through liberating this centre of separateness that authentic global consciousness through love and cooperation can emerge. We can then witness ultimate Oneness enlivened by all the creative, liberated individuals. In fact, we are speaking of a "growing" Oneness and not a static formula manufactured by the mind. Global consciousness is, therefore, a LIVING ORGANISM that requires continual growth and contribution from each of us.



"It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop (...)." Ibid, p. 1094

To begin with, the real problem is a complete lack of Self-knowledge, of World-knowledge and of knowledge of the Reality that sustains the manifestation in its manifold realms or planes. This may sound rather abstract, but in fact, these truths lie in the recesses of our own minds and, therefore, are inherent to our nature, which means that we do not have to search elsewhere but rather delve within ourselves in order to unravel the many layers that obscure our mind.

Global consciousness is, therefore, a LIVING ORGANISM...

Along with this inner quest of our inner being, we must completely surrender our ego and simultaneously open up to the truths above to find our cosmic or Global self. In Sri Aurobindo's *Sadhana*, these two operations are called psychic and spiritual transformation, respectively.

"A complete involution of all that the Spirit is and its evolutionary self-unfolding are the double term of our material existence." Ibid, p. 708

According to Sri Aurobindo's penetrating insight, our nature is a growing expression of Spirit evolving from its "involvement" in Matter. He explains that the world results from an evolution-

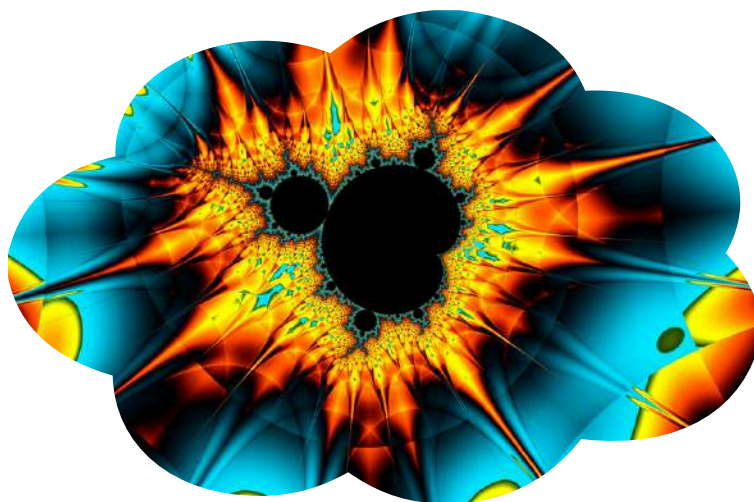
-ary process in which we are the main actors. On the ladder of evolution, we have now reached the stage of ego-consciousness, which is midway between Spirit and Matter. The Ego, in a state of ignorance, strives for knowledge but, unfortunately, "projects" its ego-ness in its endeavour, which slows the process of self-discovery.

Being incomplete and fragmented, we project our fragmentation onto all that we see and consequently divide the world into divisive compartments at war with each other.

Thus, Evolution, starting from the total involvement and submergence of Spirit in Matter, undergoes its "upward" progress through laws of divisibility. For aeons of time, Spirit is reduced to substance and suffers from obscurity and fragmentation. Our ego is the outcome, and our psychological self carries the burden of this fragmentation, which explains why, at this level of consciousness, harmony, pure joy, and happiness are impossible.

Far from being pessimistic, this picture should give us the incentive to step out of our predicament and grow. For, in fact, that is the only challenge and the true quest. Global consciousness is the victory over our diminished and impoverished ego.

Being incomplete and fragmented, we project our fragmentation onto all that we see...



What is the main obstacle which stops us from reaching higher levels of global consciousness? This horizon of true happiness and plenitude of being is impossible as long as there is division between the 'me' and the 'you'. The roots of this split are so profound that this very division divides our own self into so many, hidden selves, each with its own "agenda". For example, while we preach the unity of life, consciously or not, we exploit another to secure our separate self! These contradictory patterns are innate and remain unseen by our 'me', as we are obnubilated and blinded by our ideas and ideals. The ego is a 'split-personality' splitting everything around!

Self-knowledge is essential to heal this division and bring order into our lives. A separate, divided mind can never find true global harmony. For example, while talking about the problem of pollution, we nonetheless continue littering the earth! Therefore, we have to bear in mind that true universal global consciousness must not remain a concept.

A description of love is not love itself. It is 'loving' unconditionally all that exists, a bird, a cloud, an



old person, a child, which is the true mark of love. Thus, to become aware of our contradictory nature requires self-knowledge which must immediately be followed by self-transformation so that our awareness does not remain in the realm of mere ideas.

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is not put together by thought or by ideas, but by a direct communion with the ultimate Reality itself. In fact, Sri Aurobindo was directly connected to the 'Real-Ideas', the seed-truths held in the bosom of the Absolute matrix. That is, his Integral knowledge came from the blueprint held in the Supermind, the Truth-plane of the Divine Consciousness, which is behind the origin of Manifestation and from which our world unfolds step by step towards its divine destiny.

In our subconscious mind lie all the seed-truths which, at the right time, with the right conditions and maturity of being, are bound to emerge.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that each one of us is the indivisible expression of the Whole, and therefore, "holism" is our true nature. Global consciousness is not as farfetched as it seems, a far-off ideal or utopia, but lies in our very cells. It is actually "becoming" what we "already are".

The principles of Involution-Evolution, which is the plan of the unfoldment of the manifestation, can only be truly grasped by a thorough understanding of the principle of Ignorance (Avidya) responsible for the illusion of separateness from which we build our partial knowledge. In fact, Ignorance has many faces, and Sri Aurobindo's genius lies in not looking for truth away from ignorance but at its very core. Generally, we prefer speculating about truth instead of facing our actual ignorance and ego-ness.

"But since it is from the Ignorance that we proceed to the Knowledge, we have had first to discover the secret nature and full extent of the Ignorance." Ibid, p. 680

Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy is not put together by thought or by ideas, but by a direct communion with the ultimate Reality itself.

Sri Aurobindo proceeds by uncovering the nature of Ignorance in its sevenfold aspects. Starting from the original ignorance of the Absolute, the source of our being and becoming, he shows us that we are also ignorant of our cosmic self, the second ignorance, which he describes as our timeless-spaceless immutable Self; and then he discloses the third ignorance, egoistic ignorance:

“We are ignorant of our universal self, the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, our finite unity with all being and becoming; we take our limited egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality for our true self and regard everything other than that as not-self.” Ibid, p. 681

Furthermore, Sri Aurobindo continues his investigation with the fourth, temporal ignorance, followed by our psychological, constitutional, and practical ignorance—the fifth, sixth, and seventh ignorances, respectively. A thorough understanding of the complete picture of the nature of Ignorance opens the door to our true self and universal nature.



Sri Aurobindo proceeds by uncovering the nature of Ignorance in its sevenfold aspects.

Let us ponder on the third type of ignorance, ‘egoistic’ ignorance, which gives a clue to which direction we should take in order to realise Global or cosmic consciousness. Egoism and universality are poles apart, but as we shall see, behind our surface ego, our true self lies hidden, which has a complementary double identity, our innermost self and our spiritual self. The two together constitute our true Being. This polarity acts as a magnet that connects our personal actions to the whole. There is no longer separate action: the accomplished individual acts from the Wholeness of being. In that unified state, we become the individual-universal, an unseparated compound. It is in this state that global consciousness functions naturally, and true lasting harmony is secured.

“Man (...) has to achieve mastery of his environment but also world-union and world-harmony; he has to realise his individuality but also to enlarge it into a cosmic self and a universal and spiritual delight of existence.” Ibid, p. 711

The real challenge is how to live ego-free. “To exceed ego and be our true self.” Ibid, p. 713

For, without the separate ego, globality, universality happens spontaneously. When the clouds disperse, there is only eternal blue sky!

When we try to become universal, who is trying but our separate self? While reaching out towards the universal, we are actually strengthening self-centredness. That is why Sri Aurobindo points out that self-knowledge starts with the knowledge of Ignorance, which constitutes our outer nature. For instance, altruism is often a perfect cover for the expanding ego, for, in the act of helping, the 'me' becomes important. Another example: when we say, "I don't kill an insect because I have been 'taught' or 'have read' that it belongs to God's creation!"—that is not really what is meant by "behaving universally"!

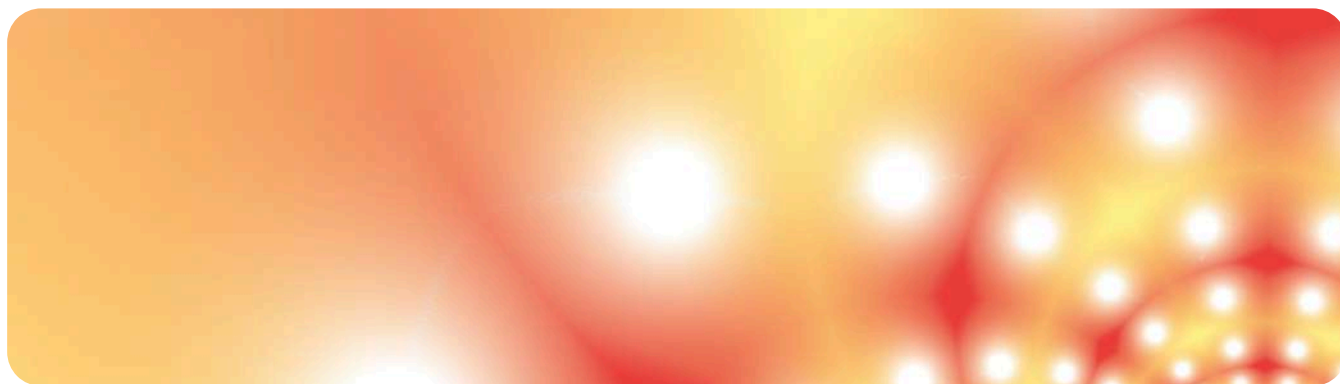
"Our utmost universalisation on the surface is a poor and limping endeavour, (...). There our very selflessness becomes more often than not a subtle form of selfishness or turns into a larger affirmation of our ego; (...)." Ibid, p. 1065

Direct understanding is essential for self-transformation, otherwise we become copycats.

The disidentification with our body-mind function, as taught in the Vedanta, unleashes the awareness of the greater world as our very self and body. This approach, if led with self-awareness and discernment, seems to be the way to reach the "globality of being" in which our 'me' is transformed. Letting go of all identifications makes us vulnerable and open to life. Global consciousness is the transparency of being.

However, one has to be cautious, for desire is pre-rational and stronger than reason. True disidentification is a matter of maturity of the soul, which comes with life experiences. If the strings of desire are more or less loose, then the process of disidentification follows its course. It is better to experience our desires and learn from them than to suppress them and believe that we are disidentified. More often, instead of the purity of being, we end up with a shadow self, which we project onto others and our surroundings.





The difficulty is reaching that “golden” moment when we suddenly and directly perceive and become aware that another is oneself, even though they exist in an independent body-mind frame. This experience can be extended to all that exists. It is, in fact, the beginning of true living. In that sense, an understanding of global consciousness is the true revolution which can put an end to individual and social disputes.

But we have to be careful not to create from this truth a new sect, a new belief system, the way we are accustomed to doing when we organise “verity”. When an idea is ‘force-fed’, it conditions the mind but does not liberate it. What is truth becomes falsehood! Instead of a global consciousness, sectarianism happens! That is the problem of intellectualism, for most spiritual issues cannot be resolved by thought or ideas but by growth of being and change of consciousness, as Sri Aurobindo aptly tells us:

“But this is not an intellectual knowledge which can be learned and completed in our present mould of consciousness; it must be an experience, a becoming, a change of consciousness, a change of being.” Ibid, p. 682

There are no shortcuts to reaching global consciousness; one must ‘deliberately’ undergo self-transformation, which is, in fact, the purpose of the Sadhana in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The crux is the first step, the “going beyond” mental consciousness, beyond mere ‘thinking’, towards a loving, living consciousness in the Wholeness of Being.

“Integral knowledge will then mean the cancelling of the sevenfold Ignorance by the discovery of what it misses and ignores, a sevenfold self-revelation within our consciousness: (...); the knowledge of the world as one with us in the consciousness of our true self, thus cancelling our division from it by the separative idea and life of ego; (...).” Ibid, p. 681

To find the truth, we must first dissipate ignorance. To discover true knowledge, we must understand “what is” our actual state of being and not pile knowledge on top of our self-ignorance. From the false, we cannot get to the real truth. “A change of consciousness” cannot occur without an awareness of our “actual” psychological makeup. A local consciousness, with all its limitations and narrowness, cannot become a global consciousness by using a formula of unity or a slogan. The wholeness and infinity of being is, in fact, a different order of reality and requires, as Sri Aurobindo tells us, “a change of being”. The ego can never embody the universality of being. It has to “die” in order to surpass itself.

Realising that the “world is oneself”—signified, first of all, by our basic and common needs for food, love and affection, security and comfort—and, more deeply, by experiencing that every one of us has a common cosmic origin—and furthermore, that all that exists is the existence of the One infinitely expressed in so many forms, is what triggers that “change of consciousness” and “change of being” mentioned by Sri Aurobindo.

**Seeing the false
is the first step, but it is
not enough: the negative
much work
cojointly with the
positive...**



That change, in contrast to what we actually are in our divided being, corresponds to a “mutation”. Whether we see another through our preferences, likes and dislikes, our a priori ideologies, self-interest, greed and needs or whether we see another through the eyes of love, without thought or motive, we live in two different worlds. Global consciousness is the bridge between a self-orientated, navel-gazing consciousness and cosmic consciousness, which always understands each part in relation to the Whole.

What are the guidelines for reaching Global Consciousness?

“Seeing the false” and simultaneously “opening up” to the higher truths, continuously widening, heightening and deepening our consciousness. Seeing the false is a first step, but it is not enough: the negative must work conjointly with the positive, as ancient wisdom points both to “neti-neti” (not this, not this) and “iti-iti” (it is this, it is this)! Otherwise, even though we have

cleared the slate of our minds, we run the risk of remaining in a no man's land. The positive transforms the void of negation into the fullness of being from which global consciousness arises:

"(...) this emptiness is the emptying of the cup of our natural being, a liberation of it from its turbid contents so that it may be filled with the wine of God; it is the passage not into non-existence but to a greater existence." Ibid, p. 1065



Never remain satisfied, always enlarge yourself, and do not hang in a comfort zone too long. When we reach the full universality of being, it is only a new beginning with new vistas of exploration. But now, instead of proceeding through the realm of Ignorance, our path unfolds in pure knowledge, joy and love.

Let bygones be bygones and move forward. According to Mother, the ego has been around for thousands of years and won't easily give up its position. Therefore, we have to be steady in our quest until a permanent change in our being and nature has occurred and the walls of

**Open your mind; don't
think you are always
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That is a sure way to
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consciousness.**

resistance created by our ego crumble. Life is a process of letting go of what we have accumulated. Otherwise, we run the risk of sharing the dinosaurs' fate. Learn to let yourself go.

Give up your opinion of what truth is. For, in one sense, before self-awakening or enlightenment takes place, all thoughts and beliefs are opinions. Open your mind; don't think you are always right. This is a sure way to achieve global consciousness. In his spiritual philosophy, Sri Aurobindo never rejected any points of view but enlarged them into an integral and positive vision of life. Behind the march of mankind, he tells us, Spirit itself is experimenting in the manifold avenues of "its creation in the making". So, at some stage or time, everything has a place and purpose, even though at another juncture, it may no longer be valid or necessary.

Universality is "never-ending Inclusiveness": the family, the clan, the tribe, society, the nation, the world, the planet, the galaxy, the universe...The Infinite becoming the finite and the finite the infinite, an unending process of the One



becoming infinitely diversified and diversity returning to the One. The Finite and Infinite are polarised in a pure Global Consciousness within which they are irresistibly attracted to each other.

First, we must learn to be open to simple things, for example, having a kind ear to the people around us, then, step-by-step opening up to the whole world. We need to outgrow narrow nationalism, which separates people, and instead cultivate a feeling of universal brotherhood. Abolish the frontiers in your mind: “Shave the mind”, says Kabir rightly.

I leave the readers to their creativity in their “growing and becoming” into a more and more perfect, all-embracing global consciousnesses...

Let us enjoy the words of the Master that perfectly describe this state of pure delight of Ananda. Let these be as a signpost, a shining flame, which directs our path towards the oneness of Being:

“The Rule of the Divine Life:

(...) This attitude is founded on the perception of unity. For it has already been said that all souls are one possessing Self, the Lord; and although the Lord inhabits each object as if separately, yet all objects exist in that Self and not outside it.

Therefore, by transcending Ego and realising the one Self, we possess the whole universe in the one cosmic consciousness and do not need to possess physically.

By having oneness with the Lord, we have the possibility of an infinite free delight in all things; we do not need desire.

Being one with all beings, we possess, in their enjoyment, in ours and in the cosmic Being’s, delight of universal self-expression. It is only by this Ananda at once transcendent and universal that man can be free in his soul and yet live in the world with the full active Life of the Lord in His universe of movement.”

Sri Aurobindo, Isha Upanishad, p. 18-19, Vol. 17 (CWSA, 2003).

"To become ourselves by exceeding ourselves, - so we may turn the inspired phrases of a half-blind seer who knew not the self of which he spoke, - is the difficult and dangerous necessity, (...)." *The Life Divine*, p. 713

Even if, only through thought, we manage to reach this heavenly picture that Sri Aurobindo describes, we must proceed in our daily life and learn to see with the divine eye, always focused on the totality, the global, and learn to see each thing and everyone from that angle in a shining light. After a while, it becomes natural to see in the way Brahman sees, for we are his delight and essence... Being lost, we must find ourselves in his greater Self. That "Sacred Leap" is all that we must dare to make.

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