

# Philosophy of Aurobindo Ghosh: A theoretical Assessment

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Aurobindo Ghosh is considered one of the most insightful Indian patriots who contributed to creating a politically and spiritually united humanity. Moreover, he strongly believed in the power of human virtue in realizing the haven on earth, and that only this virtue can be realized by human virtue. He affirmed both political liberty and spiritual liberty in a unity (Mcdermott 1972; Deutsch & Pantham 1986: 192). Despite the fact that the yogic elements of Aurobindo's "integral philosophy" are most recognized, it would be incorrect to separate Aurobindo's philosophy and his political views. Rather than arguing that the metaphysical and cosmic perspectives are inextricably linked to humanity's social and political life, he contends that they are intrinsically intertwined. Before we may appreciate Aurobindo's perspective of the interrelationship between cosmic consciousness and human social existence (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 192), one must be aware of the following points. This paper is divided into five parts. First of all, we will describe a philosophical and spiritual evaluation of Aurobindo thought in the article. The second part of the essay discusses Aurobindo's notion of man. The third section presents a theoretical discourse concerning Aurobindo's concept of freedom. The fourth section discusses Aurobindo's ideas on human unity as well as society's goals. In conclusion, this paper emphasizes the relevance of his philosophical ideas regarding individuality, society, freedom and man's evolution, as well as a critical appraisal of his ideas.

## **I. The Philosophical and Spiritual evolutions**

Aurobindo carried out a spiritual revolution, a 'moral and spiritual task.' Three fundamental concepts from his philosophy underpin it: Sachchidananda, the Supreme Reality, and Supermind, the Consciousness of Truth. His interpretation of Vedantic doctrine revolved around the idea that everything we experience is shaped by Brahma, the foundation of it all. Brahma was the 'Idea' behind humanity. Though humans are born into matter, their purpose is to become true embodiments of the Idea of informing humanity. If man's Mind could control his senses, he would see Brahma directing matter from behind matter. The spirit of man is contained in the Mind that enables him to attain communion with Brahma. Spiritual perfection or self-realization is closely aligned with man's purpose and depends on him transcending matter to consciousness. Through such a transcendence, it is the only way in which we can realize communion with Brahma, the Mind behind all minds, including our own (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 194-95).

Brahma represents humanity as a whole, as each member shares freedom equally and as organically connected to every other human being. A state of bliss or delight refers to Brahma, the Omnipresent Reality that is the basis for the universe. Bliss refers to its presence and the purpose of its self-manifestation. A delight manifests itself in order to share its delight. In essence, the meaning and substance of evolution can be summed up in pleasure or bliss (Ulrich, 2010).

The super mind is the highest level of spiritual consciousness. In the realm of the super mind, one possesses the divine qualities of all-knowing, all-powerful consciousness. There must be a link between the Absolute (Brahma) or Super consciousness and the Mind (ordinary consciousness). This link is referred to as the 'Super mind' by Aurobindo. It alone contains the self-determining truth of the divine consciousness. To enter supramental awareness is to live consciously in the *Sachchidananda* (the Absolute, Bliss, Brahman)<sup>i</sup> (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 195-96). The human Mind, which is capable of intellectual knowledge, is concerned with cognition and intelligence, ideas, with mental or thought perceptions, and integrating reality through abstraction rather than through concrete vision and spiritual contact. The human Mind participates in the super mind in a limited and diminished way. In essence, the human Mind is merely an interpretive system for interpreting the truth of universal existence for practical purposes; it is a fall from the super mind, and its salvation lies in being able to climb back to or evolve towards the super mind.

As per Aurobindo, the whole of reality involves a process of spiritual evolution. Evolution is the process by which Consciousness liberates itself. It doesn't mean Sachchidananda is incomplete. Rather, evolution is teleological (or purposeful) because of the world and people. For Aurobindo, spiritual evolution is a pressure from above and an impulse from below, which work together to unfold the Absolute gradually. The pressure from above calls the lower forms to evolve out of their limitedness and break through to higher stages of Consciousness. There is a possibility of evolution due to the involvement of the Absolute in the inconspicuous matter. Evolution is purposeful in the sense that it is an expression of the Spirit's presence throughout all levels of existence for the simple joy of sharing it with others (Ulrich, 2010).

It is only human beings who are capable of participating consciously in evolution. It is our task to reflectively create a psychic change in which the whole person is transformed into a 'soul instrumentation.' Ascension into the Supermind entails an ascent into spiritual liberation, where even the lowest dimensions of life, body, and subconscious are penetrated by a "higher light, knowledge, power, force, bliss, purity" is spiritual liberation. The evolution of history is leading toward this spiritual liberation. Those who radically open their hearts and minds to the divine can create a new order of being and a new socio-political order. It is the discipline of yoga that helps to bring about spiritual and political change in an individual. Therefore, Aurobindo believed that evolution, yoga, and social change are intimately related (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 195-96).

The notion of the rational faculty or autonomous mind as the norm of life is quite critical of Aurobindo, a notion that dominates Western liberalism and philosophy. In particular, he rejects the philosophy that views man as a discrete individual—a self-motivated system. Additionally, Aurobindo was highly critical of utilitarianism as a political philosophy aimed at increasing happiness for the greatest number of people. Taking this approach exposes the limited range of rationalism and technology and betrays its helplessness in evolving to spiritual and political levels (Ibid.195-96).

Man, according to Aurobindo, is neither merely a material reflection nor a mere soul animal. Man is a spiritual and evolutionary being and a conscious force of the Spirit that enables its evolution and progressive manifestation in the world. The Absolute manifests itself in the individual and the collective, as we will explore in this essay. Individual liberation serves both as an instrument of expression of the Absolute's omnipotence and as a means for realizing the Collective Will of Mankind. Civil society's primary purpose is to provide Swaraj (political liberation) with the necessary conditions for life and growth and to communicate the Light, Power, Beauty, Harmony, and Joy found in the Spirit to the rest of mankind. Spiritual and political liberation is to be found in a very specific kind of relationship between the individual and society. In his insightful discussion of this relationship, Aurobindo has made a significant contribution to world political thought, becoming the basis for his solution to the perennial question of how political freedom can be realized in a spiritual context (Banerji cited in Mahapatra, ed. 2020: 43-46).

## II. What does the notion of man entail?

With a vision of evolution closely linked to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary theory (1881-1955), Sri Aurobindo stresses that man is not a bunch of stones held together by interfused elements of material energy but rather the highest creative reaction in the universe, a collective consciousness, and action in the development process that constitute the highest creative reaction in the universe. He never looks at man as a single 'ego' cut off from the whole of reality. Instead, he views man from the viewpoint of totality, as the entire universe evolves upward toward the spirit. As one looks in the direction of totality or wholeness, one observes one immense process: the evolution of the universe. A vast phenomenon is taking place here. Within that phenomenon lies the meaning of mankind. In living forms of self-consciousness, the evolving universe is reaching its purpose (CWSA 1997 Vol-12- 221-225).

As a phenomenon in the universe, the embodied unified living centers, which we call man, reveal the psychic current of energy hidden in the universe as a phenomenon. The psychic factors of self-consciousness and freedom become central to man's world. Humanity is humanizing the world around it, building a network of communication with shared ideas and conversation. Similarly to Chardin's philosophy, the phenomenon of evolution appears to have reached a climax in human consciousness as such, and the process appears irreversible. Aurobindo established a clear synthesis between the spiritual and material aspects of the universe in the same way that Chardin did. Humans have embodied spirits, and God enters into creative union with the creation he created. The human condition can be interpreted as anticipation and demand for ultimate reunification (Ibid. 1997).

Aurobindo believed that the human struggle for a self-conscious experience of dignity is communal and that the human goal of unity is hidden in the future. Nevertheless, multiplicity produces loving self-consciousness and creative effort in man to bring the whole into communion with itself. Yet, multiplicity produces multiple creations, including the accompanying groping and pain. According to Aurobindo, human striving for the self-conscious experience of dignity is communal, and the ultimate goal of unity is in the future. However, the multiplicity of man leads to loving self-awareness and creative effort to bring the whole into harmony with itself. However, multiplicity also results in numerous creations, including groping and pain that accompany these creations.

Having the ability and freedom to think and reflect makes it possible for a man to create society as such; by utilizing technology to create technological society. The eventual enlargement of technological society will lead to an increased compression of socialization, in which men are forced to reflect and converse more deeply in a communal manner. Although a person may believe he is an independent person, he is still bound to think collectively due to the present historical situation. As we see now, man has become closer together as conscious beings over the mechanization of our life and its forced compression. He now faces the problems of the whole world. Conclusively, Aurobindo indicated that the need of modern society is not religionism but true religion flowing from the law of the Spirit<sup>ii</sup> (Ibid. 1997- 225-244).

### **III. Aurobindo's thoughts on freedom**

Sri Aurobindo's particular love of his motherland was not motivated by either sentimentalism or chauvinism. Besides being a geographical entity, India was also a spiritual entity that could lead humanity to spiritual perfection. Since India was enslaved during the Raj, nationalism was a spiritual sadhana (moral endeavor) (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 198).

In Aurobindo's view, India must play a seminal role in the spiritual regeneration of humanity by emancipating itself from colonialism. As both a political and spiritual movement, the national movement is essential for India and Europe to accomplish their missions. Once India has been freed, it is of great interest to the world to have her become herself (Banerji cited in Mahapatra, ed. 2020: 35-36).

Nevertheless, Swaraj cannot be fully realized without the resumption of India's role as a spiritual guide for humankind and maintaining political independence. In essence, Swaraj represents the realization of the ancient life of India in modern times, the emergence of the Satya-yuga of national greatness, the restoration of the greatness of the teaching role, self-liberation for the ultimate realization of the Vedantic ideal in politics, and the return of her outstanding role as a guide and teacher. This is India's true Swaraj (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 198-99).

As Aurobindo viewed nationalism as a religious activity, it is not a religion of contemplation but rather a religion of activity. A nationalist movement may seem to resemble a political movement, but it is a religious one (Banerji cited in Mahapatra, ed. 2020: 47-48). The gospel is a gospel of faith, hope, and knowledge. Once India gains political independence, the Vedantic realization can only spread worldwide. It is an aspiration and a moral attitude. Aurobindo reminds us repeatedly that political independence is only a short-term objective.

*Swaraj* is also advocated for other reasons:

“... first, because Liberty is in itself a necessity of national life and therefore worth striving for its own sake; secondly, because liberty is the first indispensable condition of national development, intellectual, moral, industrial, political (we do not say that it is the only condition)- and, therefore, worth striving for for India's sake; thirdly, because in the next great stage of human progress it is not a national but a spiritual, moral and psychical advance that has to be made and for this a free Asia and in Asia a free India must take the lead, and, Liberty is therefore worth striving for the world's sake” (Verma 2000:52).

The realization of *Swaraj* in Aurobindo's fuller sense of the term must begin at the individual level. In 'The Morality of Boycott,' he makes a claim that it is to be expected that the nation may interfere with individual liberty:

“The whole of politics is an interference with personal liberty. Law is such an interference; protection is such an interference; the rule which makes the will of the majority prevail is such an interference. The right to prevent such a use of personal liberty as will injure the interest of the race is the fundamental law-of society” (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 1999).

As described in Aurobindo's 'The Doctrine of Sacrifice,' individuals must sacrifice themselves for the country's benefit. To achieve "the supreme object of building up the nation," individuals, families, and groups must sacrifice together. Although the nation consists of individuals, it does not operate as a mere aggregate. It was more like a group of abstract individuals rather than a nation. Consequently, a nation has a personality that is unique to itself, like an individual. To achieve fulfillment, an individual must identify with the national will. Essentially, Aurobindo believed that as a nation we should not suppress the free expression of the imagination of its citizens due to his comparison between the nation and the Virat Purush (the Collective Being). Yet, each individual had to find the meaning of his life within the broader framework of the national community.

In order to reach the true station of one's life within the national organism, the individual may have to 'wade through blood and ruins' if his oppressors obstruct his pursuit. In oppressive conditions, those who strive for spiritual perfection may have to endure hardships, but without suffering, there is no growth (spiritual). While oppressors may have political consequences, humankind must strive toward spiritual perfection despite their oppression. Defying colonial authorities, Aurobindo devised the Boycott and Passive Resistance strategies as a supporter of the Swadeshi movement. *Swaraj* could be pursued without murdering the foreign agents of the British Raj (Mahapatra, ed. 2020: 188).

Understanding Aurobindo's ideas require a thorough understanding of his early nationalist political thinking, namely his resistance to national oppression. As Aurobindo pointed out, political liberty is the lifeblood of a nation, so it needs to be protected from those who try to suppress it. Resisting passively or aggressively depends on the pressures encountered.

As Aurobindo puts it:

“It is the nature of the pressure which determines the nature of the resistance. Where the need for immediate liberty is urgent and it is a present question of national life or death on the instant, revolt is the only course. But where the oppression is legal and subtle in its methods and respects life, liberty, and property and there is still breathing time, the circumstances demand that we should make the experiment of a method of resolute but peaceful resistance” (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 200).

As a conclusion, During the course of his activist career, between 1905 and 2010, Aurobindo's reflections prompted him to recommend the following strategies, (a) self-help and prudentially appropriate resistance in order to achieve political freedom, and (b) yogic discipline and concentration, so as to achieve individual and collective liberation.

#### **IV. Concept of Human Unity and Society's goal**

The incident occurred during Aurobindo's imprisonment in British prisons due to his participation in the nationalist resistance. In this regard, he became aware of the need for a broader conception of Swaraj than a merely political or economic one. In order to pursue a spiritual and political improvement of Indian society, he disengaged himself from Indian politics and developed integral yoga techniques, which enabled him to realize his vision of the divine life<sup>iii</sup>. While in Pondicherry, he developed a comprehensive socio-political philosophy that remained a constant concern of both his philosophy and life (Banerji cited in Mahapatra, ed. 2020: 76).

In the West, Aurobindo believed that science and technology had become essential foundations for social and political organization. A society dominated by these principles will only result in its members' isolation, alienation, and autonomy, resulting in the sense of insignificance and helplessness and, ultimately, the resignation of power. In shaping society, we must emphasize goals (teleology) and ideals and how they can be achieved. A society's ideals should be derived from a thorough understanding of human characteristics since it provides the conditions necessary for humans to achieve their ideals. To achieve complete unification with spirit or consciousness, Aurobindo proposes the concept of Ideal society, which is intrinsically organic and has ontological unity with human consciousness (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 200-201).

In an ideal society, human relationships are not marked by the conflicts that currently characterize them on a mental level. Each individual would have the freedom to develop their spiritual potential without restraint in an ideal society abounding with freedom. Because individuals would be transformed, '... a self-aware spiritual unity of being and a spiritual conscious community and interchange of nature would be the deep and ample root of understanding' (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 201).

In Aurobindo's ideal society, there would be no need for coercive legal instruments that impose good upon human beings. The ideal society is expected to transcend the dichotomy of good versus evil, thus eradicating it! Based on Aurobindo's political ethics (like Chardin's), the intent was to create conditions for the spiritual transformation of individuals and to encourage the evolutionary process that would result in the spiritualization of society, the appearance of the 'ideal of human unity.' Aurobindo propagates the idea of a perfect society to achieve this higher goal of human life. He characterized and pointed out the barbarian mentality of modern Western liberal-individualistic society tightly combined with the 'idea of possessive individualism' having a deep root in the West.

This rationalistic current in modern Western civilization must be challenged by *subjectivism*-the recognition that 'the primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self-development. The individual and community development must be based on eternal truth, a 'self-manifestation of the cosmic Spirit. The subjective view of life rejects the notion that life is to be technically managed, mechanized, and manipulated. Life must concentrate on a need for a developing self-consciousness where *institutional* processes of knowing to allow the individual to be in touch with the self (Heehs 2015).

Growth in realizing one's divine destiny is not rooted in egoism or 'lonely salvation.' Rather, spiritual growth is intensely communal. 'True goal' is, according to Aurobindo, a Self of indifference that relates each individual's good to that of the rest of the world on an equal footing, without strife or dominion. Community properly functions to help the individual and humanity to fulfill or complete the other. A community that imposes a sovereign claim on the individual is as perverse as an individual's decision to live egoistically. The individual must contribute to the well-being of the community. The community must satisfy the needs and aspirations of divergent individuals. Ultimately, the perennial tension between the individual and the community in politics is to be resolved by the following two principles: 'treat others as self and 'help any other person in need. Only with the realization of these two moral imperatives as the basis for the ideal of human unity will individual existence within the community be held sacred. In effect, in the ideal human society, it is the aims and ideals of man in his spiritual perfection that must determine socio-political structures. Aurobindo summarizes the intimate holistic (or 'integral') relation between the 'law of the individual, the community, and humanity in his political vision (Heehs 2015).

Further, in an explicit political application of his vision, Aurobindo contends that there is an inherent synthesis between liberty, equality, and fraternity. When liberty is taken to the extreme, 'it arrives at competitive individualism' in liberal democratic societies. When equality is taken to its extreme, 'it arrives first at strife, then ... constructs an artificial and machine-made society' that is prevalent in socialist societies.

In the spiritualized polity, the fulfillment of the individual and the community can emerge only through a supramental (supermind) consciousness and power where the predominance of a fraternity of brotherhood allows the union of the impulses for freedom and equality. Fraternity is grounded in the spirit, and without it, neither liberty nor equality can be actualized (Heehs 2015).

Aurobindo expresses the soul-power of brotherhood by claiming that:

“... brotherhood is the real key to the triple gospel of the idea of humanity. The Union of liberty and equality can only be achieved by the power of human brotherhood and it can be founded on nothing else. But brotherhood exists only in the soul and by the soul it can exist by nothing else” (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 205).

In effect, the individual's primal law and purpose are to seek self-development within the context of a spiritualized polity based on the soul power of brotherhood grounded in a supramental realm of Divine consciousness. In such an 'integral society,' there is an intimate concern to discover the Divine in a holistic appreciation for education, administration, protection, and the productive economy.

Professor V.R. Mehta, a contemporary political philosopher, has been profoundly influenced by Aurobindo in defining 'Integral Pluralism' as a progressive alternative to liberalism and Marxism.

As Professor Mehta puts it:

“Aurobindo was perhaps the first to emphasize the profound insight contained in the millenniums of Indian thought ... ; he was the first to relate all of them to the bi-polar world of the individual and the collective, and to define all subsidiary values as freedom and equality in terms of this holistic picture of society” (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 206).

Yet Mehta remains quite critical of Aurobindo's failure and the failure of his followers to explicate a strategy that can lead to the fulfilment of his vision. Mehta presents his criticism pointedly:

“It must be clearly stated the enunciation of the deep elements of the Indian value system by Aurobindo remained confined to an esoteric circle, not only because it was couched in the most obscure language, but also because no attempt had been made to link it to any concrete plan of action or to the concrete issues raised by the fulfilment of human needs. He did not take into account the real determinants of the social situation which the historical process had created at this point of time, nor did he provide the precise action required to remove the poverty of the teeming millions, the gap between the proclaimed ideals and their practice.” (Deutsch & Pantham 1986: 206).

## **V. Critical evaluation of Aurobindo's ideas**

Aurobindo's greatest contribution to political theory is the construction of a holistic vision of human evolution in the life of the Divine that attempts to reconcile matter and spirit, the individual and the community, and liberty and equality in the context of compassion, love, and aid toward the whole human community. It is a magnificent spiritual vision of politics that calls for self-surrender and infinite self-knowledge ontologically related to divine consciousness<sup>iv</sup>. In Aurobindo's integral vision, there is an attempt at a grand synthesis of the partial truths of other positions. This synthesis, of course, emanates from the yogi experience. Ultimately his vision is based on what he had seen and is beyond conventional modes of political analysis. One can accept



the Divine Reality intuitively as Aurobindo sees it, deny it completely on empirical scientific grounds, or be intellectually drawn to its all-encompassing quality without fully accepting or rejecting it. Few can deny that they beckon us to go on a Utopian search for political and spiritual liberation that might serve as an alternative to the 'modern barbarian mentality in-'Liberal Democracy' or the 'war of classes' found in 'Socialist Democracy. This vision of totalism and communalism is worth the scrutiny of both Eastern and Western political thinkers during our age in which there is compression of socialization due to the influences of technology (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 206).

There are, however, great pitfalls for those who wish to join Aurobindo's quest. As Professor Mehta has indicated in the preceding, Aurobindo's yogic surrender shows the activity to underplay specific socio-political obligations in the face of *specific* human needs and historical circumstances. How one can maintain high levels of political and spiritual sensitivity is a basic question that Sri Aurobindo's life and thought do not answer (Heehs 2015).

Sri Aurobindo's life and work certainly provoke us to take seriously the notion that we are advancing towards a phase of collective and superior thought which is the critical point of socialization and co-thinking. Yet those who are not completely socialized are regarded as 'lower' forms of evolution. The future belongs to the 'human mass,' not to individuals. Individual man's alienation and frustration are cries that find no echo for Aurobindo (Mcdermott 2003:15-18).

In conclusion, we can state that Aurobindo provides students of political thought with a vision that completely negates the notion of 'original sin' as inherent in the human condition. The dawn of a new era towards the 'ultra-human' finally awakened human intelligence and spirit, which is at the threshold of a greater consciousness. Many ordinary qualities are blown to cosmic proportions. Aurobindo is a political enthusiast who sees signs of incipient collectivization everywhere, making them supremely confident in the future. In the coming centuries, we shall take enormous steps toward an 'enlarged consciousness. 'Like all political enthusiasts in history, they exalt the individual's unique experiences in a 'collective will of Mankind' or a 'super humanity' without the benefit of rational norms.

The Utopian impulses of Aurobindo see a great future that can become a nightmare in reality. However, as a great visionary, he ignores the essential freedom of the soul, the fact that socio-political change involves not only gain but loss as well, and that human nature retains an aggressive dimension. The dreams and prophecies of Aurobindo are not the products of purely arbitrary imagination. He proceeds from the two-fold supposition that man is a 'divine' entity of infinite power and possibilities and that political paradise on earth alone is truly worthy of him. These *gnostic* (the view that man is perfectible and can discern that perfection) approaches to politics do not simply scale the heights of religious and political lyricism. Instead, he is a perennial type of thinking in both the East and West, which claims that the 'spirit' is sovereign as a source

of knowledge and illumination. He claims that 'impure' elements will gradually be eliminated or become suffused with spirit. Aurobindo betrays a contempt for creation, the world, and nature as they are. Original sin can truly be transcended. Universal purity is the task of man. Man possesses, in the depths of his psychic essence, the spark of knowledge that can provide human salvation when acting together. Only a coalescence of all individuals will create a restoration of the original unity—a flawless whole. Man, in effect, recreates God by restoring his lost unity and perfection. God will only emerge with the establishment of peacefulness and harmonious society (Verma 1955).

Through Aurobindo, people can get the benevolence that collectivity offers humanity. This type of collectivity can possibly bring defiance of a transcendent God, unlimited pride, a yearning for enormous power, and the assumption by this collectivity of 'divine attributes' to manipulate and shape humankind's fate. The opinion of real political vice is their construction of thought experiments that dismantle *human* individuality through the dissolution of individual conscience and consciousness, replacing these with an abstract collectivity and coalesced consciousness. Conclusively, Aurobindo gives intellectual support to those who wish to deal with one entity to simplify the political task of transforming indomitable human nature into a far more manageable phenomenon (Pantham & Deutsch 1986: 207-08; Verma 1955).

<sup>i</sup> For Aurobindo, Brahman (or Satchidananda or the Absolute) is the all-encompassing creative source and ground of existence, manifesting all existence through consciousness. In his definitive study of consciousness in the Advaita tradition, Timalina also describes Brahman in terms of conscious awareness, saying, "Pure Consciousness, identified as Brahman, is understood as the true nature of immediately experienced awareness itself" (2009, xvi), although Brahman while encompassing and transcending all possibility and impossibility, is ultimately beyond any description. However, Timalina's description of consciousness is perhaps the most authentic description of Brahman that is ever comprehensible. Atman, which is Brahman expressed via human consciousness, is described further by Elliot Deustche as "that pure, undifferentiated, self-shining consciousness, timeless, spaceless and unthinkable, that is not different from Brahman, and that underlies the individual human person." "Jiva consciousness" is Brahman and Atman expressed through human cognition as a self-aware ego wherein, in Puligandla's words, "the individual empirical self, is Atman seen in ignorance," while "Maya," or the entire universe of Brahman's diverse forms, is aptly depicted by Radhakrishnan as "Brahman seen in ignorance."

<sup>ii</sup> The concept of spirit in Sri Aurobindo differs from that of Western philosophy. Hegel, for instance, used concepts such as spirit, mind, real, and rational almost interchangeably with each other. Spirit is rational, and it operates in a dialectical manner. He famously asserted, "real is rational, and rational is real." In the case of Sri Aurobindo, the spirit is a divine spark, a divine element in every unit, including the human individual, of the universe. However, the evolution of the spirit varies in degrees in these myriad units. For a comparative perspective of the philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and Hegel, see Mahapatra (2007) and Maitra (1968).

<sup>iii</sup> Aurobindo in his essay "The Ideal of Karmayogin";

"The time has come when you must take the great step and rise out of a material existence into the higher, deeper, and wider life towards which humanity moves. The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, not by harnessing the forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of the intellect and the spirit by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within external Nature. For that work, the resurgence of Asia is necessary. Therefore Asia rises. For that work, the freedom and greatness of India are essential; therefore, she claims her destined freedom and greatness, and it is to the interest of all humanity, not excluding England, that she should wholly establish her claim". (Sri Aurobindo 1965, 386).

<sup>iv</sup> Due to the fact that his writings were primarily concerned with human life and society, Sri Aurobindo's ideas about India and the world remained at the core of his writings. His visionary nature foresaw developments that were hidden from view during his time, whether in prose or poetry, and this concern remained central to his writings. Integral Yoga is a project that makes the individual being and its collectives the laboratories of both rationalist tradition and Vedanta wisdom. Sri Aurobindo synthesized both in his project on Integral Yoga.

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