Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Integral Human Development

Monica Gupta

Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Integral Human Development

Designing a Future Discipline of Study

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*For Sri Aurobindo and The Mother
for the revelatory power of the 'Word'
contained in their writings which has
dynamically sustained me through the entire
process of writing this work*

Preface

This work attempts to bring together the developmental insights contained within the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. I have made a conscious attempt in my work to present Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's ideas in their own terms and to avoid unnecessary generalisations. The main aim is to identify key developmental ideas from the *original* works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and put them together in coherent developmental framework that represents the theoretical and application potential. The main method adopted for collating these insights is not just an intellectual analysis but a more comprehensive Indian method of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nidhidhyāsana*—i.e. listening to or reading the words and meditating on them deeply. I have attempted to practise some of the concepts mentioned in this work in daily life in the past 10 years and to find their verification in experience. Thus, the aim has not been to collect *information* but represent *real living dynamic ideas* that have made deep personal sense to me and have changed the way in which I have lived and experienced life and *its developmental potential*.

[Chapter 1](#) begins with outlining the aim of the work and the need for undertaking this study. It examines the limitations of the current structuring of the discipline of human development and the relevance of studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's perspective on human development and their vision of psychology as a discipline of study in yielding an alternate agenda of human development. In all, there are identified four major lines of development that are explored across chapters—the cosmic, social, individual and the inner-yogic lines of development. The key ideas of individual and social evolution which form the core of Sri Aurobindo's developmental theory are examined in [Chaps. 2](#) and [3](#). [Chapter 2](#) examines the nature and expanse of human personality, the process of forming the human individuality, and the dynamics of its further evolution into a divine individuality. [Chapter 3](#) looks at the broader stages or cycles of social evolution based on Sri Aurobindo's book *The Human Cycle* and also examines the spiral nature of development guided by the principles of progress and perfection as given by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The understanding of stages of collective human evolution forms the necessary backdrop against which the emergence of major metatheoretical perspectives in academic discipline of human development are engaged with in [Chap. 4](#). [Chapter 4](#) investigates the nature of the European

culture within which the contemporary discipline of human development took its first form and its key difference from the psychological perspectives based on the Indian view of spirituality. Two broad perspectives—the Neo-Darwinian and the relational metatheories—largely the products of the rational age as conceived by Sri Aurobindo are discussed further in the chapter, in terms of their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions and their view on the nature of development. Chapter 4 ends with a comment on the limitations of the dominant metatheoretical perspectives in the discipline of human development and a need for deepening the discourse, in keeping with the emergence of the subjective age as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. Chapter 5 examines the nature of cosmic development and the metatheory of human development based on Sri Aurobindo's perspective on evolution of consciousness i.e. the ontological, epistemological, methodological assumptions and its implications for the nature of development. It revisits the Neo-Darwinian and the relational meta-theoretical perspectives from the integral-developmental perspective and analyses two major psychological theories of development in its light. Chapter 6 attempts to synthesize the key developmental ideas of Sri Aurobindo from across different chapters. It begins by examining the ways in which Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary discourse potentially extends the boundaries of the current field of inquiry and design a future discipline of study. This is followed by a proposal of a new agenda for human development based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works. Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter where application potential of this developmental agenda is outlined for its power of informing practices in the areas of education, parenting, work, human relations and healing.

A few names, terms and usages may need clarification in terms of their usage. This work is based on the yogic vision and writings of both Sri Aurobindo and The Mother—who was the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. Also, the reference to the academic discipline of 'Human Development' subsumes within it the discipline of 'Developmental Psychology' or 'Developmental Science'. The term 'Human Development' when used from Sri Aurobindo's perspective indicates an *evolutionary* view of development.

I would like to thank Dr. Suneet Varma and Prof. Girishwar Misra for the valuable inputs in this work. I would like to thank my family for their unfailing support, and affection. A special thanks to Shikha for her help at a crucial time. And finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Nirodbaran, Ms. Ameeta Mehra and the Gnostic Centre Family for nurturing my inner growth and progress.

New Delhi

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Contents

1	Introduction: The Need for a New Psychology of Human Development	1
1.1	The Aim	1
1.2	The Relevance of Studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother	2
1.3	Understanding Metapsychology	3
1.4	Examining the Current Agenda of the Discipline of Human Development: The Limitations and Unanswered Questions	4
1.5	Exploring Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Psychology as a Field of Study	7
1.6	Re-examining the Methods of Studying Human Development	11
1.7	The Contemporary Crisis and Responsibility of the Psychological Sciences	14
1.8	Conclusion	15
	References	16
2	The Process of Individual Evolution: Moving Towards a Gnostic Individuality	19
2.1	Introduction	19
2.2	Exploring the Nature of the Human Person: The Structure and the Expanse of the Being	20
2.2.1	The Parts of the Being	20
2.2.2	The Planes of the Being	24
2.3	Developmental Implications of Sri Aurobindo's Perspective on Personality	28
2.3.1	A Comprehensive and Complex Understanding of Human Nature and Its Development	28
2.3.2	A Developmental Science of Human Subjectivity	29
2.3.3	Ascent as a Basis of Descent of Divine Consciousness	30
2.3.4	Development Through the Connection of the Spiritual and the Material	31
2.3.5	Human Being as the Divine-in-the-Making	32

2.4	Moving Towards a Divine or Gnostic Individuality: Developmental Aspects and Dynamics	32
2.4.1	From Human Individuality to Gnostic Individuality	33
2.5	The Transformation of Consciousness: Methods and Processes	41
2.5.1	The Integral Yoga and the Psychological Levers of Change	42
2.5.2	The Psychicisation of the Being	45
2.5.3	The Spiritualisation of the Being	47
2.5.4	The Supramentalisation of Being: The Gnostic Individual and the Life Divine	48
2.6	Conclusion	49
	References	49
3	The Process of Social Evolution: The Human Cycle	51
3.1	Introduction	51
3.2	The Psychology of Social Development: The Cycles of Society	52
3.2.1	The Symbolic Stage	52
3.2.2	The Typal Stage	53
3.2.3	The Conventional Stage	54
3.2.4	The Individualistic Stage	54
3.2.5	The Subjective Stage	56
3.2.6	The Spiritual Stage	59
3.3	The Ideal Law of Social Development	60
3.4	The Dimensions of Human Perfection: The Relation Between the Individual and the Collective	61
3.5	The Nature of Human Progress	62
3.6	The Relation Between Progress and Perfection	64
3.7	Conclusion	65
	References	65
4	The Contemporary Discipline of Human Development: The Dominant Metatheories	67
4.1	Introduction	67
4.2	Sri Aurobindo on Human Development in Indian and Western Cultures: Implications for Knowing and Being	67
4.2.1	The European Cultural View	68
4.2.2	The Indian Cultural View	69
4.3	Human Development as a Field of Inquiry: A Historical View	70
4.3.1	The Issues of the Foundational Period	70
4.3.2	The Concept of 'Development' and 'Evolution'	72
4.3.3	The Contemporary Conceptualisation of Development. . .	74

4.4	The Dominant Metatheories in Human Development	76
4.4.1	The Neo-Darwinian Metatheory	76
4.4.2	The Relational Metatheory	80
4.5	Conclusion	84
	References	87
5	Sri Aurobindo's Perspective on Evolution of Consciousness:	
	The Metatheory	89
5.1	Introduction	89
5.2	The Origins of the Universe: The Puzzle	90
5.3	The Divine Plan: The Answer	90
5.3.1	The Descending and the Ascending Scales	91
5.4	Sri Aurobindo's Ontological Position	93
5.4.1	The Sevenfold Chord of Being	93
5.4.2	A Summary	102
5.5	Sri Aurobindo's Epistemological Position	103
5.5.1	The Nature of Knowledge and Ignorance	104
5.5.2	The Fourfold Order of Knowledge	105
5.5.3	A Summary	107
5.6	Sri Aurobindo's Methodological Position	108
5.6.1	The Method of Integral Yoga	108
5.6.2	Methodological Implications of the Fourfold Order of Knowledge	109
5.6.3	A Summary	111
5.7	The Nature of Human Evolution: The Processes and the Principles of Change	111
5.7.1	The Three Principles Evolution: Ascent, Widening and Integration	112
5.8	The Aims of Life: Four Theories of Existence	114
5.9	Understanding the Neo-Darwinian and Relational Metatheories in Light of Sri Aurobindo's Perspective on Evolution of Consciousness	115
5.10	Revisiting the Developmental Agenda of the Contemporary Psychological Theories	123
5.10.1	Robert Kegan Theory of 'The Evolving Self'	123
5.10.2	Csikszentmihalyi's Theory of Flow, Complexity and Optimal Development	125
5.10.3	An Analysis of the Two Theories	126
5.11	Conclusion	129
	References	130
6	Designing a Future Discipline of Human Development:	
	The Agenda	131
6.1	Introduction	131

6.2	Creating a New Vision for the Discipline of Human Development.	131
6.3	Articulating a New Agenda for Human Development	138
6.3.1	The Metapsychological Foundations of Human Development	138
6.3.2	A Blueprint of Human Development: The Key Developmental Dimensions	141
6.3.3	The Unfolding of the New Agenda: Bringing Together the Key Themes of Development	142
6.4	The Integral View of Human Development: Contemporary Relevance	147
	References	148
7	Applying the New Agenda of Human Development	151
7.1	Introduction	151
7.2	Integral Education	152
7.3	Conscious Parenting.	158
7.4	Work as a Means of Self-Development	158
7.5	Towards New Forms of Relating.	159
7.6	New Ways of Psychological Healing	160
7.7	Examining the Hidden Curriculum of Modern Life: Proposing an Alternate Integral-Developmental Agenda.	161
7.8	Some Challenges of Using the New Agenda of Human Development.	166
	References	166
	Appendix A.	169
	Appendix B.	175
	Glossary	177

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