

## Forward to *A Greater Psychology* by A. S. Dalal

Sri Aurobindo Ghose was India's greatest modern philosopher-sage, flowing out of a country that is one of the most astonishing and profound geographical sources of spiritual awareness on the planet. But Aurobindo's genius was not merely that he captured the profundity of India's extraordinary spiritual heritage. He was the first great philosopher-sage to deeply grasp the nature and meaning of the modern idea of *evolution*. And thus, in Aurobindo, we have the first grand statement of an *evolutionary spirituality* that is an integration of the best of ancient wisdom and the brightest of modern knowledge.

It wasn't that other great thinkers had not seen that evolution is basically Spirit-in-action (it was obvious to Schelling and Hegel, for example). Nor was Aurobindo necessarily the most enlightened spirit in modern India (many would point to the illustrious Sri Ramana Maharshi in that regard). But nobody combined *both* philosophical brilliance and a profoundly enlightened consciousness the way Aurobindo did. His enlightenment informed his philosophy; his philosophy gave substance to his enlightenment; and that combination has been rarely equaled, in this or any time.

There is no question about it: the modern world has irreversibly discovered the fact that the world evolves—matter evolves, life evolves, mind evolves. And Spirit evolves... or, we might say, Spirit is the entire evolutionary process of its own unfolding, from matter to life to mind to the higher and superconscious realms of Spirit's own being. This evolutionary unfolding of Spirit—as it plays out in psychology, anthropology, religion, politics, psychology, the arts, and spiritual practice itself—is the central message of Aurobindo's voluminous writings.

As such, Aurobindo's message is still far ahead of its time. The world remains, to speak in very general terms, divided into two highly contentious camps: those who believe in the ancient wisdom traditions (and therefore tend to completely distrust the modern notion

of evolution), and those who believe the modern scientific view of evolution (which completely dispenses with any notions of Spirit). Both of those views are terribly partial and fragmented, even though both claim to have the inside track on truth. But as Aurobindo saw—probably more clearly than anybody before or since—the scientific account of evolution, which relies on nothing but frisky dirt, dynamic matter, and process systems (e.g., chaos theories, far-from-equilibrium dissipative structures, autopoiesis, etc.) cannot even begin to explain the extraordinary series of transformations that brought forth life from matter and mind from life, and that is destined to bring forth, in just the same way, higher mind and overmind and supermind: Spirit alone can account for the astonishment that is the glory of evolution.

Likewise, there is nothing that authentic religion should fear in the notion of evolution. Real spirituality is not a theory about how to make the beans grow, nor is it an empirical account of anthropological data. It is not about whether or not Moses actually parted the Red Sea. It is about whether or not you can awaken to the Spirit in you which is beyond you, and that therefore plugs you straight into the Source and Suchness of the entire Kosmos. That you can develop your own contemplative abilities to recognize this Spirit is only to say that you can evolve into your own highest Estate—and that is yet another example of Aurobindo's message of evolutionary spirituality.

Aurobindo thus stands as one of the great founders of integral spirituality and integral practice. All subsequent attempts at such integrative efforts must, I believe, at least acknowledge Aurobindo's enduring genius and in many ways still unsurpassed efforts. His influence at home and abroad has been, and continues to be, enormous. At the very least, special mention should be made of the work of Mike Murphy (*The Future of the Body*); Murphy and Leonard (*The Life We Are Given*); and my own *Integral Psychology*.

As a pioneer, of course, Aurobindo made occasional mistakes and sometimes embraced less than wise ideas. There are, for example, a few clearly racist remarks in some of his works. But these failings, as always, must be seen in the light of his work as a whole. It

would be a great shame to dismiss the profundity of his contributions because of the occasional lapse in judgment. Moreover, were he alive today, he likely would have redressed them himself.

When it comes to a “greater psychology”—one which includes body, mind, soul, and spirit, in both ascending/evolutionary and descending/involutionary currents—Aurobindo again has much to teach us, as is clearly and beautifully documented in the book you now hold in your hands. A. S. Dalal has done a superb job in presenting a balanced sampling of Aurobindo’s psychological writings. Because of its fair and representative nature, its comprehensive examples, and the clarity of Dalal’s own commentary, this book is surely the finest overview of Aurobindo’s psychological thought now available, and it will likely remain a classic reference for the foreseeable future.

All of those who are deeply interested in a greater psychology—and what sane soul cannot be?—will find this book a wonderful companion, and I believe we can all thank A. S. Dalal for this noble effort. Aurobindo stands as a towering lighthouse signaling to all of us, through the stormy waves of life, that home can be found at the Source of that light, which, once found, transfigures everything.