

New Race

**A Journal of
Integral & Future Studies**



Human Unity

SPECIAL

**Institute of Human Study
& Sri Aurobindo Center for Advanced Research (SACAR)**

August 2024



Unity Through Conformity Vs. Uniqueness and Universality

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A more comprehensive, holistic vision of life includes the lesser views. It puts forth the proper significance and value of all its aspects that a diminished or limited perception cannot comprehend.

Chaos exists at one level of reality—clashing forces of desire and ideas. In a global cosmic perception, reality is order and harmony, desire becomes love, and ideas are pure intelligence.

Without self-knowledge, our present predicament cannot be resolved. Sri Aurobindo's approach to knowledge is integral. In other words, to be complete, self-knowledge cannot be separated from world knowledge—an understanding of the universal energies which constitute the world.

Therefore, self-knowledge and world-knowledge are entwined; the universal and the individual coexist and are necessary for each other to unfold and fulfil their divine destiny. Furthermore, Sri Aurobindo tells us that transcendental knowledge is the key to understanding our manifested world.

The Transcendent is the source and explanation of the universe and the individual: the Self of all, the origin of all creatures and worlds. We face the mystery of a double infinite—the Timeless eternal infinite and the Temporal infinite from which all finite beings have emerged. In retrospect, we can understand our deeply polarised world with all these principles: our universe individualises itself, and the individual universalises himself. This mighty bond polarises the truth of our being and our nature. The pressure of one on the other ensures never-ending growth. Sri Aurobindo says:

"We miss the divine reality in man and the secret of the human birth if we do not see that each individual man is that Self and sums up all human potentiality in his own being." (Sri Aurobindo, Social and Political Thought, Vol. 15, p.60, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary-Popular Edition, 1971.)

Chaos exists at one
level of reality...

All truths pre-exist in their pristine form in the Absolute and are seeds or archetypal ideas that Mother Nature releases to create our manifested world. Nature's purpose is to actualise all these seeds of truths to bring the formless into form.

True and authentic knowledge can be revealed only by delving into things' origin. Polarity is one strategic manoeuvre of Nature that brings things together, which starts at the beginning of evolution as separated, fragmented, and isolated in the compound of the atomic structure.

All things are unconsciously pulled magnetically towards that Oneness of being. Human beings, therefore, have a dual origin—one in the Absolute, the undifferentiated Oneness, and the other in the earth principle, matter, from which our separated body has evolved. A "One" which has become the "Many" through the complicity of Nature.

A divine polarity whose function is to create a world starting from the lowest common denominator of Matter returning to Spirit.

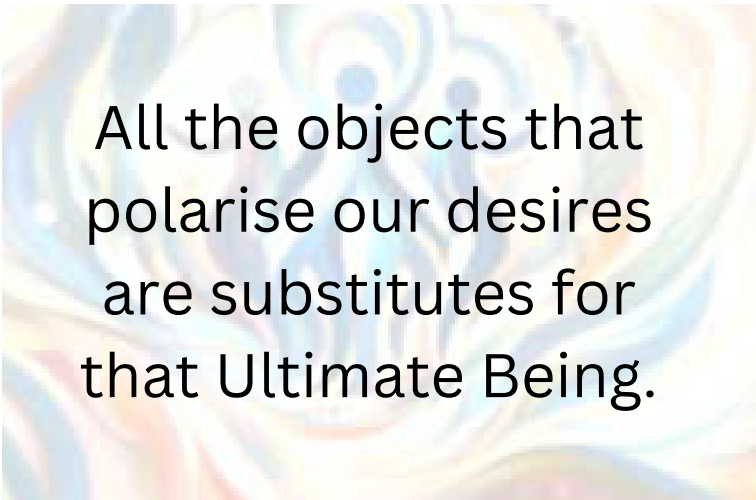
A magnetic pull is exerted between these two poles of creation, giving impetus for evolution.

Our journey starts with separation, isolation, and frustration and ends with the delight of Union and the pure love of Spirit.

Each thing or being—a finite—is an "infinite" which does not know itself. It is ignorance that triggers an unquenchable thirst or lust for things and knowledge to possess and acquire. A force from an unknown resource begets a continuous pressure that compels us to grow and evolve. Each stage has its objects of desire on the ladder of being, but no object that captivates our attention can fully satisfy us.

In our journey from gross to subtle objects, we unconsciously search for the ambrosia of that lost oneness, a "re-found" Union with the Ultimate Reality—the Being of our being. All the objects which polarise our desires are substitutes for that Ultimate Being.

In Sri Aurobindo's own words, "the struggle for possession has been the first crude means towards union, the aggressive assertion of the smaller self the first step towards a growth into the larger self" (ibid, p.157).



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The Union is the most potent force that polarises all that exists. The entire creation exerts itself towards this act of union. The fall of Spirit into matter is the ultimate separation, followed by an overwhelming need to unite.

The initial movement of manifested life was to possess, conquer, take, and have, to regain a feeling of unity before our world's birth.

In the process of evolution, this first instinct was counteracted by an equally powerful opposing instinct initiating the second movement of manifesting life towards love, sharing, association, cooperation, and self-sacrifice.

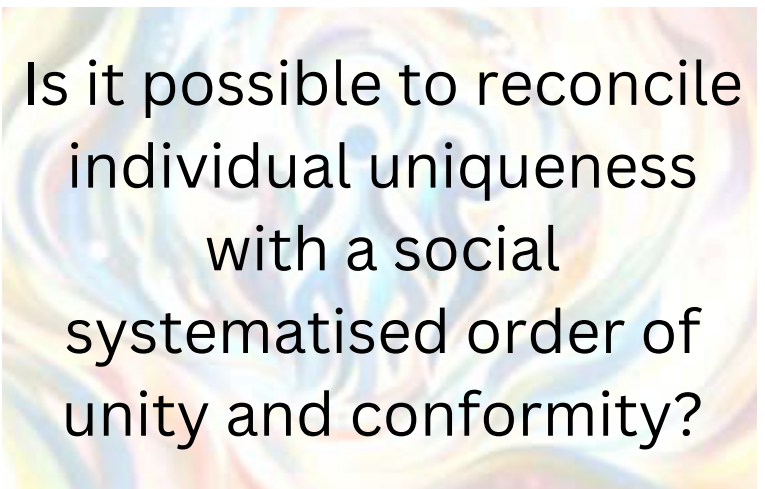
The individual, separated from the "Totality", begins their return journey of reunion with substitutes. 'To unite' is, therefore, our most powerful instinct. This is how the return journey begins, and its completion will occur once the individual has discovered their transcendental origin.

Is it possible to reconcile individual uniqueness with a social systematised order of unity and conformity?

According to Sri Aurobindo, individualism and collectivism are two equivalent phenomena in which nature has evolved. They are clashing, for the individual is trying to retain their autonomy while the collective wants to absorb them.

The outcome is competition, egoism and self-assertiveness or a repressive ordinary mind of the group, which pressurises the individual into conforming to its dicta and sacrificing all personal self-seeking. This negative polarity is unavoidable.

Space and freedom are necessary for the individual to survive. However, to be united in one sole voice of the community, each separate self must be reduced to the common denominator of its motto.



This antagonism is, in fact, a temporary and evolutive phenomenon. The duality of the individual and the group or society will be healed when humanity has reached true maturity and spiritual realisation in the Oneness of life.

The clashing of the waves on the surface subsides in the realisation of the unalterable oneness of the ocean. (contd.)



(contd.) In this metaphor, the depth supports the surface without imposing itself. Likewise, the individual and the society express a unified field in which all individuals coexist. The solution to this false problem of opposition and brutal competition is neither to sacrifice the individual for the group nor to reject community life for separate self-affirmation, but to realise their bonded unity rooted in polarity, which allows for creativity.

In the following quote, Sri Aurobindo, in his own words, expresses the true relation of the individual and the group:

“He is not merely a member of a human pack, hive or anthill; he is something in himself, a soul, a being, who has to fulfil his own individual truth and law as well as his natural or his assigned part in the truth and law of collective existence. He demands freedom, space, initiative for his soul, for his nature, for that puissant and tremendous thing which society so much distrusts and has laboured in the past to suppress altogether or to relegate to the spiritual field, an individual thought, will and conscience.” Ibid, p. 20

“...the individual and the society express a unified field...”

These words, written over one hundred years ago, are strikingly relevant today.

With the advent of our computerised world and the new subtly disguised tyrant—Artificial Intelligence (AI)—the individual is unaware of the danger of being willingly subdued and manipulated into thinking according to specific patterns in a mould which promotes the loss of individual freedom in favour of a robotised society.

Nonetheless, the merging soul, the psychic being evoked by Sri Aurobindo, revolts inwardly when faced with events such as a state or a world government controlling humanity.

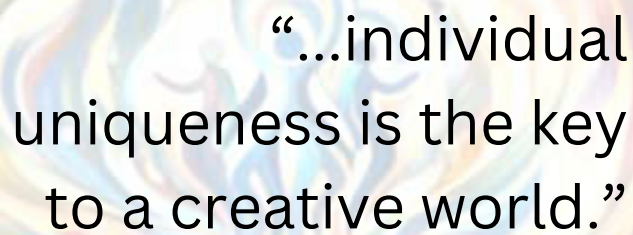
In a way, that danger of complete control encourages the individual to grow and awaken their initiative.

The freeness of the soul cannot be easily harnessed by compulsion or utilitarian profit.

Even if it is not apparent, adversity to humanity's “God-seed” always brings tremendous opportunities for growth and re-evaluation of the true meaning of life.

Eventually, that collective pressure on the individual to conform will trigger the opposite reaction, a drive towards self-finding and spiritual realisation engendering a new impetus for our civilisation.





“...individual uniqueness is the key to a creative world.”

Sri Aurobindo's evolution is not unilateral but bilateral. It is a “polarised unity” where the individual and the universal dynamically interact to fulfil their divine destiny of Oneness in an infinitely enriched diversity. There is no end to perfection.

Achieving human unity by flattening down all that diverges to produce well-trained people for the common good is not what Mother Nature has in store for our ultimate accomplishment and well-being.

Through us, she is trying to accomplish a far more profound Oneness in which individual Uniqueness is the key to a creative world.

Instead of the individual moulded to the expected format—a cog in the social machine—we have a completely different paradigm.

The individual awakened to their soul within becomes, at the same time, Unique and Universal.

With this new realisation, society becomes a ground for that uniqueness to flourish, which benefits the whole.

From the present negative antagonistic polarity of the individual and the society, we achieve creative, dynamic and positive relationships, forever growing and fulfilling one another.

In Sri Aurobindo's words: *“That law is that all things are in their being or origin, one in their general law of existence, one in their interdependence and universal pattern of their relations; but each realises the unity of purpose and being on its own lines and has its own law of variation by which it enriches the universal existence.”* (Ibid, p. 56)

What is “unique” is an absolute in itself and cannot be tamed or educated according to any specific, typical pattern. With the birth of the new consciousness and the emergence of the soul, a new polarity of divine origin becomes the driving force of our lives.

Our “finiteness” opens to its infinite counterpart, who inspires all our movements. The polarity is now from the above down, and the soul becomes a window whose transparency allows the divine light to shine through in its pure state, thereby recreating a new, beautiful world through us. The soul, being unique, can only produce a uniqueness of vision.

The world, thus newly recreated, carries the stamp of that uniqueness. Each soul participates in a new creation, which becomes the delight of every soul, multiplying the wholeness of being in the rich texture of infinite uniqueness.



"The ideal of human existence personal and social would be its progressive transformation into a conscious outflowing of the joy, power, love, light, beauty of the transcendent and universal Spirit." (Ibid, p. 55)

This is the future of humanity predicted by Sri Aurobindo.

For this future to manifest, a mutation has to occur from the ego to the individual soul. The ego—a phenomenon of Nature—is only a product of Her mechanism and involvement.

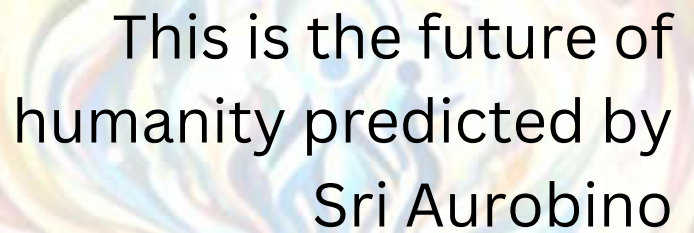
When the ego is hungry, it is Nature in its organism which is hungry. When the ego desires, whatever the objects, Nature is the instigator.

Sex and attraction are a blinded force of Nature fulfilling her task of reproduction, which compels all creatures.

At this stage, there is no true individuality; the ego is only an amalgam of conditioned responses to stimuli.

In other words, conditioned individuality has no real autonomy: that is why society or government forces feel the right to submit the masses to a workable, manageable pattern within a fixed system.

As long as we live in an ego consciousness, unity can only be achieved through conformity and uniformity.



This is the future of humanity predicted by Sri Aurobindo

In one way, the undeveloped individual revolts against such an intrusion, as their basic instincts impulsively crave fulfilment without restraint. On the other hand, the emergence of the soul brings about a complete revolution in consciousness: the ego of desire, which brings strife and division, is transformed into the soul, which exists in divine unity and love.

To produce this mutation, the ego must cease. In other words, the ego must die in complete understanding for the true Soul to emerge. Sri Aurobindo writes:

"Therefore, we must find out that the true individual is not the ego, but the divine individuality which is through our evolution preparing to emerge in us." (Ibid, p. 39)

The ego and the soul have different origins, which helps us perceive their differences. Knowing these differences is fundamental for transformation.

The ego is the result of universal Nature, whereas the soul is divine and comes directly from that Transcendent Source.



While Nature conditions the ego, the soul is beyond Nature. Only when we manage to disentangle and dis-identify ourselves from our body-mind compound can we see that transcendent light is immanent in our very being and discover our soul.

No matter how much the ego strives for freedom of being and unity, this cannot be achieved at the ego level of consciousness, which begets division and fragmentation.

What can be achieved is a forced or artificial unity but not a "true" unity, which arises only through love and identification with the "whole", with everyone and everything.

That is why no individual or global action can bring us any closer to the ultimate truth of life, being, and harmony while we remain locked in ego consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo lucidly explains the reason why:

"A One there is in which all the entangled discords of this multiplicity of separated, conflicting, intertwining, colliding ideas, forces, tendencies, instincts, impulses, aspects, appearances which we call life, can find the unity of their diversity, the harmony of their divergences, the justification of their claims, the correction of their perversions and aberrations, the solution of their problems and disputes."

(contd.)

(contd.) *"Knowledge seeks for that in order that Life may know its own true meaning and transform itself into the highest and most harmonious possible expression of a divine Reality. All seek for that, each power feels out for it in its own way : the infrarational gropes for it blindly along the line of its instincts, needs, impulses; the rational lays for it its trap of logic and order, follows out and gathers together its diversity, analyses them in order to synthesise; the suprarational gets behind and above things and into their inmost parts, there to touch and lay hands on the Reality itself in its core and essence and enlighten all its infinite details from that secret centre."* (Ibid, p. 137)

The soul is the true centre of our being, which radiates the Divine Reality. Being in direct contact with its transcendent source, the soul is intimately in harmony with the divine intentions that are now its mission to realise.

Unity is the expression of the Oneness of life. From this overview of reality, nothing is divisible, like the very cells of our own body. It is a Oneness which allows undivided infinite diversity.

The ego does not see the unified field of the energy of Being, of which everything is an expression. Therefore, it moves politically in all directions to seize a fabricated unity from the left to the right to the centre in an ever-modifying pattern to forcefully achieve its ends, finishing like Sisyphus forever rolling his rock.



Life in the world is neither merely individualistic nor collective nor an amalgam of the two, but something beyond which the individual and the group are the necessary dynamic expressions of a creative polarised energy of Being.

Following Sri Aurobindo's pattern, we could say that in the infra-rational stage of evolution, the vital ego is hunger and desire and knows unity through absorption and devouring. Each one lives for oneself and self-interest. In the rational stage, the mental ego forces unity in an individualistic and collective pattern, shaping it to its ideas of reality, a mixture of subjective and objective observations derived from the surface phenomenon of life: thought imposes its limited perception on intangible life arrogantly. In a suprarational stage, the soul perceives the authentic indivisible unity.

Only the soul beyond the mind can see life's oneness directly, for they share the same texture. It sees unity and love through a holistic perception, through the wholeness of life, that which Sri Aurobindo calls "knowledge by identity".

"It is the old Indian discovery that our real 'I' is a Supreme Being which is our true self and which it is our business to discover and consciously become and, secondly, that that Being is one in all, expressed in the individual and the collectivity and only by admitting and realising our unity with others can we entirely fulfil our true being." (Ibid, p. 40)

We are facing a critical period in history when the power of science, technology, and Artificial Intelligence, controlled by a few unscrupulous and ambitious leaders and entrepreneurs, threatens to reduce humanity and all its individuals to a cog in the social machine, existing merely for things, objects, and conveniences.

It is high time that we awaken our spirit and uniqueness of being and reshape the world with the eternal values of Beauty, Love and Goodness in the Oneness of life. Uniformity must give way to "unicity" and spiritual unfoldment for a new world to emerge.