

## PEOPLE AND MATERIALS IN INTEGRAL MANAGEMENT

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*Integral management for a new world (visageventures.com)*

What is integral management? We understand by the term 'integral' something which is total, complete, absolute. Integral management may be defined as a system of management based on the principles of the Integral Yoga as formulated by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, as well as on their personal management styles. It includes the advantages of modern and emerging concepts of management, but goes beyond them. It is not only a management by consciousness, but it is a spiritualized system of management. Through a conscious approach, the individual directs a divine Force to act upon him so that it can become the architect of his destiny. Just as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the harbingers of the New Race—the race of supermen—similarly this unique form of management based on their teachings is meant for those who belong to the new world.

### Management of individuals

In today's world, people are evaluated by their productivity. As long as employees are sufficiently creative or innovative and abundantly productive as per the requirements of the company, they are much in demand. But the day the higher authorities notice a slight dip in their productivity or observe that they are unable to meet with the standards set by the enterprise, within no time they are asked to leave. This is the culture of the corporate sector. But what about the ultimate value of people? In this context Sri Aurobindo has written: "The ultimate value of a man is not to be measured by what he says or by what he does but by what he becomes."<sup>1</sup> So, in integral management, the value of people is not judged by a short-term or mid-term dip in productivity or in temporary actions but by what they become at the end of the day.

In integral management, people are not looked upon as mere mortals; on the contrary, they are viewed as instruments of the Divine. Since integral management is a management by consciousness, therefore, we also must become conscious of our soul, of the spark of divinity which lies latent in us. The powers that are present in the universe are present in us as well, but we are unaware of what we possess. Why are we unaware? Because we are imperfect beings who are in love with our ignorance. But why is this so? Sri Aurobindo has written that ignorance is the "non-perceiving principle" which exists in our consciousness and it opposes the "truth-perceiving conscious vision and knowledge."<sup>2</sup> He has further explained that ignorance also is a knowledge, but a knowledge with a difference. And what is that difference? It is a limited knowledge which is based on the "division of undivided being" and established on the "fragmentary, the little, opposed to the opulent, vast and luminous completeness of things."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, to overpower and conquer this ignorance, we have to awaken the divinity within us and the process of doing so can begin if we attempt to become conscious. By overcoming the shortcomings of our heart and spirit, we can take the first steps towards progress. To quote the words of Sri Aurobindo:

For man intellectually developed, mighty in scientific knowledge and mastery of gross and subtle nature, using the elements as his servants and the world as his footstool, but undeveloped in heart and spirit, becomes only an inferior kind of *asura* using the powers of a demigod to satisfy the nature of an animal.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, Sri Aurobindo has written: "A cultivated eye without a cultivated spirit makes by no means the highest type of man."<sup>5</sup>

So, the first thing for us to do is to become conscious of the Divine Force working within us and around us for our own betterment, that is, to become conscious of our true Self. Here comes the need of yoga, for it is through yoga that a change or transformation occurs in the consciousness and the mind becomes an instrument of the Truth. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are three ways by which mind can become a channel or instrument of the Truth: (1) It may become silent in the Self and make way for a vaster consciousness. (2) It may transform itself passive to an internal Light, thus, allowing the Light to use mind as a means of expression. (3) It may transform itself into an intuitive intelligence from the 'questioning intellectual superficial mind,' and when it has successfully done so, it will have the precise perception of the divine Truth. This is the way we can grow in consciousness and reside in its higher levels.

However, a few things should be remembered. First of all, before becoming conscious, we have to become aware—aware of the things occurring in the consciousness—and witness them in their true form. Sri Aurobindo has said that awareness by itself is not enough, however, and that a Will and a Force are needed to make the consciousness effective. We may be conscious of what needs

to be done, how it is to be done and when it is to be done, but at the time of actual implementation we may become helpless to do it. This happens because we may not possess the Will and the Force which are required for the successful implementation. Alternatively, we may possess the Will and the Force, but may not have the awareness of how to implement the thing in the right way and at the right time. To quote the immortal words of Sri Aurobindo with reference to this issue:

Man, the individual, has to become and to live as a universal being; his limited mental consciousness has to widen to the superconscient unity in which each embraces all; his narrow heart has to learn the infinite embrace and replace its lusts and discords by universal love and his restricted vital being to become equal to the whole shock of the universe upon it and capable of universal delight; his very physical being was to know itself as no separate entity but as one with and sustaining in itself the whole flow of the indivisible Force that is all things; his whole nature has to reproduce in the individual the unity, the harmony, the oneness-in-all of the supreme Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.<sup>6</sup>

Because of our undeveloped heart and spirit, we tend to get disturbed and distracted from the true mission of life. If success is followed by a failure, then we may be unable to accept it in the right attitude. We are willing to taste the nectar of success but not the poison of failure. And if we commit a mistake, then we become even more depressed by thinking of the consequences that we would have to face. In such circumstances, we find Sri Aurobindo to be an excellent motivator and a remarkable personnel manager. In his letters to his disciples he has given invaluable advice about how to overcome our shortcomings and conquer brief spells of depression. It is interesting to note that these advices given more than 70 years ago are still as relevant as ever:

- Do not allow yourself to be worried or upset by small things. Look at things from an inner point of view and try to get the benefit of all that happens. If you make a mistake, don't get distressed because you made a mistake—rather profit by it to see the reason so as to get the right movement in future. This you can do only if you look at it quietly from the inner being without sorrow or disturbance.<sup>7</sup>
- Why get excited over these small things? or let them disturb you? If you remain quiet, things will go much better and, if there is any difficulty, you are more likely to find out a way in a quiet mind open to the Peace and Power. That is the secret of going on, not to allow things and happenings, not even real mistakes, to upset you, but to remain very quiet, confiding in the Power to lead you and set things more and more right. If one does that, then things do get actually more and more right for learning and steps towards progress.<sup>8</sup>

- When some weakness comes up you should take it as an opportunity to know what is still to be done and call down the strength into that part. Despondency is not the right way to meet it.<sup>9</sup>
- Whatever you see, don't get disturbed or depressed. If one sees a defect one must look at it with the utmost quietude and call down more force and light to get rid of it.<sup>10</sup>
- ...One ought not to indulge ideas of incapacity, inability to respond, dwelling too much on defects and failures and allowing the mind to be in pain and shame on their account: for these ideas and feelings become in the end weakening things. If there are difficulties, stumblings or failures, one has to look at them quietly and call in tranquilly and persistently the Divine help for their removal, but not to allow oneself to be upset or pained or discouraged.<sup>11</sup>

So far we've discussed about the management of people as individuals. But in an enterprise it is the collective effort which is the focus. Human beings are social animals and no matter how competent or self-sufficient we are, we cannot live and work all alone. Even Robinson Crusoe needed Friday. Therefore we need companions or colleagues. So now from the individual person we come to the collective person.

### Management of people in groups

When we work at an enterprise, we do not work all alone. We must work with our colleagues. Just as five utensils, if kept together, would bang against each other, similarly we may not always enjoy a very harmonious relationship with our colleagues. While every community and enterprise aims at the attainment of harmony, few achieve this goal. Sri Aurobindo has pointed out categorically in his *The Life Divine* that "all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony." According to him, these problems emerge from the "perception of unsolved discord" as well as "the instinct of an undiscovered agreement or unity." He explains the reason in the following words:

To rest content with an unsolved discord is possible for the practical and more animal part of man, but impossible for his fully awakened mind, and usually even his practical parts only escape from the general necessity either by shutting out the problem or by accepting a rough, utilitarian and unilluminated compromise. For essentially, all Nature seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. The greater the apparent disorder of the materials offered or the apparent disparateness, even to irreconcilable opposition, of the elements that have to be utilised, the stronger is the spur, and it drives towards a more subtle and puissant order than can normally be the result of a less difficult endeavour. The accordance of active Life with a material of form in which the

condition of activity itself seems to be inertia, is one problem of opposites that Nature has solved and seeks always to solve better with greater complexities; for its perfect solution would be the material immortality of a fully organised mind-supporting animal body. The accordance of conscious mind and conscious will with a form and a life in themselves not overtly self-conscious and capable at best of a mechanical or subconscious will is another problem of opposites in which she has produced astonishing results and aims always at higher marvels; for there her ultimate miracle would be an animal consciousness no longer seeking but possessed of Truth and Light, with the practical omnipotence which would result from the possession of a direct and perfected knowledge. Not only, then, is the upward impulse of man towards the accordance of yet higher opposites rational in itself, but it is the only logical completion of a rule and an effort that seem to be a fundamental method of Nature and the very sense of her universal strivings.<sup>12</sup>



*Manage conflicts by raising the consciousness (blog.cesptions.com)*

Therefore, it is because of disharmony among individuals and groups that conflicts arise in an organization. Employees may become so engrossed in these self-created conflicts that they tend to deviate from their goal of achieving the organizational objectives. Disharmony can emerge due to several reasons. Let's take remuneration as an example. Individuals working in the same department might get different pay-packages. The remuneration of young employees with a fresh professional degree could be more than that of other employees who are more experienced. If the latter compare their pay-package with that of the former, they might feel dissatisfied and disturbed due to ego-related problems and this could give rise to disharmony. Again, if individuals compare their remuneration with those who are in the same position in some other department and find it to be comparatively less, their mind could become disturbed and as a result disharmony would be created. The same mental frustration may emerge if they compare their salary with those who have a similar type of position in a

different industry and find their own to be less. It is the mind which is the epicentre of all these ego-related problems. After all, the mind is imperfect; Sri Aurobindo has defined this desire-prone aspect of the mind in his epic poem *Savitri* in the following words:

A thinking puppet is the mind of life:  
Its choice is the work of elemental strengths  
That know not their own birth and end and cause  
And glimpse not the immense intent they serve.<sup>13</sup>

People are insatiable; when we are given less, we feel that we have not got what we deserve. When others get more, we feel that these undeserving individuals have used manipulation to get more than us. Gradually we may develop an inferiority complex which compels us to ponder whether perhaps we are mediocre with no special talents or qualities, and as a result we get depressed. Here we find Sri Aurobindo is an excellent coordinator who advises us how to cope up in such situations and how to deal with our colleagues. He writes:

...in your relations with others, – which seem always to have been full of disharmony, – when incidents occur, it would be much better for you not to take the standpoint that you are all in the right and they are all in the wrong. It would be wiser to be fair and just in reflection, seeing where you have gone astray, and even laying stress on your own fault and not on theirs. This would probably lead to more harmony in your relations with others; at any rate, it would be more conducive to your inner progress, which is more important than to be the top-dog in a quarrel. Neither is it well to cherish a spirit of self-justification and self-righteousness and a wish to conceal either from yourself or from the Mother your faults and your errors.<sup>14</sup>

And elsewhere he writes:

As for comparison with others, one ought not to do that. Each one has his own lesson to learn, his own work to do and he must concern himself with that, not with the superior or inferior progress of others in comparison with himself. If he is behind today, he can be in full capacity hereafter and it is for that future perfection of his powers that he must labour... But learn to welcome criticism and the pointing out of imperfections – the more you do, the more rapidly you will advance.<sup>15</sup>

If we should become sunk in the darkness of depression or despondency, we can avail ourselves of the following advice of Sri Aurobindo:

Cast away from you these movements of doubt, depression and the rest



which are no part of your true and higher nature. Reject these suggestions of inability, unfitness and all these irrational movements of an alien force. Remain faithful to the Light of your soul even when it is hidden by clouds... The one need for you and for all is to be, even in the darkness of the powers of obscurity of the physical consciousness, stubbornly faithful to your soul and to the remembrance of the Divine Call.<sup>16</sup>

### Qualities of Leadership

We do not always work as an employee or subordinate, we may also function as an employer or manager or leader. No matter how competent a person is, at some point of time he or she requires the guidance and help of superiors. That is when the need of the leader emerges. In Integral Management, how should a leader lead? To illustrate the answer, I would like to quote a passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga* where he has written about the teacher of Integral Yoga. While discussing the role of the teacher, he has actually pointed out the attributes of an ideal leader, and where he refers to the disciple, we can substitute it with 'a subordinate.'

The Teacher of the integral Yoga will follow as far as he may the method of the Teacher within us. He will lead the disciple through the nature of the disciple. Teaching, example, influence, – these are the three instruments of the Guru. But the wise Teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is productive and sure as a seed which will grow under the divine fostering within. He will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will give a method as an aid, as a utilisable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine. And he will be on his guard against any turning of the means into a limitation, against the mechanising of process. His whole business is to awaken the divine light and set working the divine force of which he himself is only a means and an aid, a body or a channel.<sup>17</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has explained how ideal leaders should work. As mentioned in the preceding quotation, the Guru or the leader should use 'teaching', 'example' and 'influence' as his instruments. Sri Aurobindo has specifically pointed out the importance of each of these three instruments. According to him, example is much more powerful than instruction. Here, we must note that by 'example' he didn't refer merely to the external acts or the 'personal character,' but to the very life of the Teacher in its entirety and all the actions associated with it. However, 'influence' is much more important than example. Influence is not the external authority which an ordinary leader imposes upon subordinates; on the contrary,

it is, as been defined by Sri Aurobindo as "the power of his contact, of his presence, of the nearness of his soul to the soul of another." The leader channels this influence into the subordinates for their development. The leader should be a channel, a representative of the trust from above who acts as a helper and guide. A leader should be, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "a child leading children, a Light kindling other lights, an awakened Soul awakening souls, at highest a Power or Presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine."<sup>18</sup>

The tasks of a leader are to lead subordinates towards the successful accomplishment of the organizational goals, motivate them to work better by improving their morale, imposing discipline whenever and wherever required in the organization and ensuring the establishment of a perfect harmony among them. While imposing discipline, a leader should keep in mind that whatever needs to be done should be done in the right spirit. The subordinates should also



*The leader sets the trail for others to follow (blog.mkg.org)*

realize that they are being guided by a leader who may be strict but at the same time is upright, insightful and sympathetic towards them. In his letters, Sri Aurobindo has written that efficiency and discipline—though they are indispensable for work—are dependent on the "personality of the superior, his influence on the subordinates, his firmness, tact, kindness in dealing with them."<sup>19</sup>

Often a leader might have to face certain circumstances which are beyond his or her control. What should be done then? What should be the code of conduct if something untoward happens? Sri Aurobindo has advised that in such cases the person should keep the right inner attitude and remain open to the Force and its power so that ego-resistance and ego-centric troubles do not emerge and destroy what is being done. With the help of this Force, all the difficulties of the untoward circumstances can be conquered and turned towards the right direction. But no matter how grave the situation becomes, one must have a sense of perfect equanimity, what in Sanskrit is called *samata*. Sri Aurobindo has said that the

leader must be an instrument of this invisible Force coming from above so that it could be used for the necessary purposes. Through the power of equanimity, the Force is capable of transforming not only the attitude of a person but also the course of events and actions

A leader who follows the philosophy of integral management and practices it in day-to-day activities must not think and act like the leader of an ordinary enterprise. For an integral leader, work is not an avenue of earning money by maximizing the returns on an investment. On the contrary, the leader assumes the role of a servitor and consecrates all possessions for the success of the enterprise. Such a leader looks upon the business as a medium of sadhana and works for the growth and development of the enterprise as a service to the Divine. This type of leader has to be selfless and rely entirely on the true Self and Spirit for inner guidance; this becomes the architect of his or her destiny. Care should be taken so that no superiority complex arises due to his or her high position in the organizational hierarchy, for this may result in the expansion of ego. It is essential to look at colleagues and subordinates as brothers and sisters and to treat no work or workers as lowly, because in integral management, all work is looked upon as work for the Divine. Work is actually worship and the worshippers, that is, the workers, should not be viewed in a discriminatory manner.

It reminds me of an incident. Once, someone complained to the Mother that people were not working satisfactorily in a particular department. The Mother said: "People work according to their nature and capacity. If you are not getting satisfaction, do it yourself."

The leader must have empathy, and while dealing with inter-department or inter-personal problems, must see both sides of the issue. No anger or reproach should arise, for these elements tend to raise the same in the people involved on the other side. Above all, the leader has to be an epitome of humility. No great work can be done if the leader is not a humble person.

Let me narrate an incident to illustrate this particular point. Once the Mother asked B who was in charge of the Electric Department of the Ashram: "Will you please give me a piece of wire?" B said: "Mother, why don't you order me? All this belongs to you." The Mother replied: "I must be an example of how to ask."

Another feature that must exist in a leader is right judgment. This includes knowing what is good and bad for the organization but also not being judgmental towards people on the advice of others. No one except the Divine can truly judge and the leader, as an instrument for the Divine's work, should only rely on the inner command or intuition for the proper course of action.

Coming to the point of judgment, let me narrate another incident to illustrate how the Mother refrained from following such judgmental advice. In the Ashram there was an old inmate whom everyone found to be absolutely useless, quarrelsome and crazy. One of the inmates asked the Mother: "Why do you keep him?" She replied: "But he makes such nice envelopes! No one makes envelopes as well as he does."

In an organization, there exists a variety of employees. Some are industrious, some are comparatively lazy, some are highly efficient, while some may be slow at work. Every employee comes from different social backgrounds but they work together as per the organizational culture to fulfill the goals of the organization. It is the duty and responsibility of the leader to see to it that they work for the achievement of the organizational goals.

In the Ashram too, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother chose disciples who represented symbolically the difficulties which existed in the outer world for the purpose of conquering them for the work of transformation. The Mother has said that each inmate represented an impossibility to be resolved for the accomplishment of their work. Some of these disciples had difficult characters; some were excessively sensitive, some were hot-tempered, some were extremely impatient and so on. And Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had to work, as leaders of the organization, for their inner transformation.

While the disciples could meet the Mother and talk to her directly about their problems, they couldn't do the same with Sri Aurobindo. With Sri Aurobindo the only medium of communication was the correspondence they had with him. As we know, both verbal and written communication plays a very pivotal role in any enterprise. Communication facilitates the development of plans for the accomplishment of organizational targets, utilizes manpower and other resources in the best possible way, enables employee appraisal and performance evaluation, generates motivation among the subordinates and above all, facilitates control over the organization. So, as the leader of the organization, Sri Aurobindo had to perform all the aforesaid functions through the medium of correspondence.

Endurance is said to be the most important quality a leader should possess and both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were epitomes of endurance. If one reads the letters Sri Aurobindo had to write to his disturbed disciples to calm them down, one can sense the pain he had to undertake to maintain harmony in the Ashram. He was not a leader who kept himself aloof from the problems and difficulties faced by his disciples. He acted as a motivator, a coach and a mentor who spent sleepless nights answering hundreds of letters addressed to him. It was like a correspondence workshop of motivation. One of his dearest disciples, Dilip Kumar Roy, has written about him:

He never minded if any of us wanted to experiment with an escalator "going in the wrong direction." For he had never believed in hard and fast taboos...His tolerance and charity would have been incredible had it not been a fact of almost everyday experience. In the Ashram he tolerated quite a battalion of fire-eaters even when they were found out to be disloyal and treacherous. He gave a long rope even to some insolent rebels who, from calling him names and misrepresenting his catholic views, told deliberate lies—just to do him down. Even such calumniators and traitors he not only declined to expel from the Ashram but actually forgave again and again till I

had to ask him which he loved more: to encourage the faithless or discourage the faithful?<sup>20</sup>

One might ponder: what was the source of this unlimited patience of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? The answer is simple. Their patience was based on unbounded divine love. Human love may sometimes fail but divine love neither fails nor falters. So a leader willing to follow the principles of integral management should have profound love and sympathy for subordinates. It is only love and sympathy that can mould and transform the nature, character and personality of human beings, and that is the mantra of integral management.

However, one must always remember that love and sympathy cannot always be the best medicine for labour trouble. At times it is essential to be strict for the benefit of the organization. The practice of integral management does recognize the merits of strict disciplinary action. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, the Mother could be very strict at times and she successfully managed all the labour problems that had taken place in the Ashram during and after Sri Aurobindo's lifetime. While Sri Aurobindo's approach was more persuasive in nature, the Mother's approach often was direct action. An ashramite related to me an incident, in which the workers of the Ashram Press had pasted a handwritten notice on the wall of the workers' washroom in which they demanded three months' bonus and a sum of Rs. 15 as Dearness Allowance. When the Mother was approached for guidance, she replied: "The best is to take no notice of such demands. These people will never be satisfied: the more we give, the more they ask." She just ignored the matter and the demands died down soon. I was also told that on another occasion, a worker of the Ashram Press was sacked. The Workers' Union demanded his reinstatement and challenged the manager of the Press and the Mother. They had begun to shout slogans and were causing the other workers to stay away from work. They also threatened that they would continue with their strike for ten days or till the sacked worker was reinstated. When the matter was reported to the Mother, she was reported to have said: "Let them do – we shall see who gets tired of it first." And like the previous incident, this strike too met with a premature death. So there are two ways of managing subordinates shown by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The first way is through love and patience and the second way is through strict disciplinary measures. The leader, following the doctrines of integral management, should be prepared to adopt both the measures whenever and wherever required.

No matter how good and successful, a leader should expect to be subjected to harsh criticism. In the corporate sector, we find the Chairman or Managing Director of the company being heckled at the Annual General Meetings for not giving adequate dividends to the shareholders or for some other reasons. They forget what the leader has done or is doing for the organization. The same thing happens with spiritual leaders as well. Even Jesus Christ was betrayed by his follower, Judas. Such things happen because a time comes when no matter how intelligent or loyal, followers may become a prey to some hostile power

compelling them to deviate from the path. Therefore, integral management teaches us to identify the roots of all difficulties and work for their elimination with help from the Divine in spite of the criticism of others.

### Management of Human Potential

Let's now discuss the importance of integral management as far as human potential is concerned. Firstly, it enables us to develop ourselves by overcoming our shortcomings. It enables us to broaden our horizons – our vistas of thinking and analyzing. It enables us to evaluate ourselves so that we may undergo the SWOT analysis.<sup>21</sup> Integral management provides profound motivation which rejuvenates us when we are down. It gives that realization that nothing is over or lost; even if a battle is lost, we can still fight again and become victorious. It transforms us from individuals with limited capacities to hero warriors so that we can fight valiantly the great battle of the future. It teaches us perseverance and endurance so that we may tackle even the gravest of situations and emerge as successful leaders. It enables us to strike an equilibrium between profit-maximization and welfare-maximization. This is something which is hardly present in any of the existing or emerging concepts of management. It is a conscious way of solving problems. In other words, it teaches us to focus our concentration from being successful to becoming perfect, for when we are perfect, success automatically comes to us. A perfect person is always successful but a successful person may not be perfect. And finally we come to the most important function that integral management plays: it makes us conscious beings – conscious not only of ourselves but of the guiding force which would never leave us or let us down when we are in the greatest of perils. It enables us to identify all work as the work of the Divine and accept the Divine as a friend who would always be at our side. It teaches us to become *Karmayogis* – who work not for our own sake but for the sake of the Divine.

### Management of Matter

Management means managing people tactfully, but it also denotes the management of matter as well, that is, of materials. No enterprise or business can survive until and unless a meticulous care is taken to ensure that the materials it possesses are properly and *optimally* utilized. A deliberate stress is given on the word 'optimal' because if materials are under-utilized then the productivity of the enterprise will be hampered. And again, if the materials are over-utilized then a situation might come when the enterprise could face severe shortages. Therefore the ideal philosophy should be: the precise quantity of materials should be present at the appropriate time. For this reason, the system of 'Just-in-Time' is often adopted in theories of management.

But how does integral management look upon matter and what role it plays in matter-management? Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother taught that there is

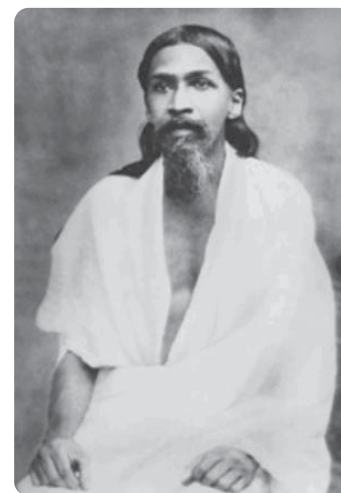


*The Mother in Japan (Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

consciousness even in matter. In his *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo writes: "Matter is the form of substance of being which the existence of Sachchidananda assumes when it subjects itself to this phenomenal action of its own consciousness and force."<sup>22</sup>

Now a question might arise: How can one understand whether there is consciousness in matter or not? Sri Aurobindo has beautifully explained it in the following words: "As we progress and awaken to the soul in us and things, we shall realise that there is a consciousness also in the plant, in the metal, in the atom, in electricity, in everything that belongs to physical nature; we shall find even that it is not really in all respects a lower or more limited mode than the mental, on the contrary it is in many 'inanimate' forms more intense, rapid, poignant, though less evolved towards the surface."<sup>23</sup>

The Mother has told how the so-called non-living things had called her to them. Once, the Mother had gone to visit the Building Service Department. The managers and concerned staff of the department had spruced up the department for her visit and dumped certain objects in the store. When the Mother arrived, she went directly to the store and saw how the things were dumped there. When she was asked why did she visit the store, the Mother replied: "I heard the call! They were saying, 'Come and first see us. How they have kept us.'"<sup>24</sup> On another occasion, the Mother had gone to the Ashram School. As was the custom, everything was neatly arranged for her visit and certain things which remained unfinished were dumped inside a cupboard. When the Mother came, she went straight to the cupboard, opened it and saw the mess inside. These incidents are important, for they teach us that it is not only essential for us to respect matter but also respect the divine consciousness present in matter.



*Sri Aurobindo circa 1915-1918 (Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

One might wonder: what is the secret of this knowledge? Actually there is a consciousness in each and every physical thing with which, according to Sri Aurobindo, one can communicate. Even houses or cars or furniture have an individuality of a certain kind. In the words of *The Life Divine*:

...we arrive at this truth of Matter that there is a conceptive self-extension of being which works itself out in the universe as substance or object of consciousness and which cosmic Mind and Life in their creative action represent through atomic division and aggregation as the thing we call Matter. But this Matter, like Mind and Life, is still Being or Brahman in its self-creative action. It is a form of the force of conscious Being, a form given by Mind and realised by Life. It holds within it as its own reality consciousness concealed from itself, involved and absorbed in the result of its own self-formation and therefore self-oblivious. And, however brute and void of sense it seems to us, it is yet, to the secret experience of the consciousness hidden within it, delight of being offering itself to this secret consciousness as object of sensation in order to tempt that hidden godhead out of its secrecy. Being manifest as substance, force of Being cast into form, into a figured self-representation of the secret self-consciousness, delight offering itself to its own consciousness as an object, — what is this but Sachchidananda? Matter is Sachchidananda represented to His own mental experience as a formal basis of objective knowledge, action and delight of existence.<sup>25</sup>

It is precisely due to the existence of consciousness in matter that Sri Aurobindo has repeatedly advised against wastage. Time and again he has preached that the 'rough handling' or 'careless breaking' or 'misuse' or 'waste' of



physical objects is a "denial of the yogic consciousness and a great hindrance to the bringing down of the Divine Truth to the material plane."<sup>26</sup> He stressed on the orderly harmony in physical things which is required to make the instrument fit for whatever work is given to it. It is essential to fix a programme to deal with the physical things or else one would come across an ocean of confusion and jeopardy. As long as people are not adequately fit enough to deal with them, fixed rules should be imposed for the management of material things. Wastage and spoilage of materials are incongruent to prosperity and drive away the manifestation of the power of wealth. Therefore, this system of wastage has to be remedied and the meticulous utilization of materials and self-control in their usage is advisable.

To illustrate the point on how the Mother prevented wastage and controlled the supply of materials, let me narrate two incidents. In the 1930s, there was an excellent organization in the Ashram to prevent wastage. Bits of soaps and candles, empty match-boxes, burnt match-sticks, pieces of paper, old envelopes, pieces of cloth, etc. were collected and put to use in some form or the other. Bits of soap were melted and converted to bars of soaps. Similarly the small pieces of candles were melted and converted to candles. Unused envelopes were turned inside out and re-used. Handmade paper was made from the pieces of paper and the pieces of cloth were joined together and transformed into serviceable lengths. Thus, the Mother saw to it that even the minimum of wastage should be avoided.

The second incident took place when the Ashram had become bigger than it was in the 1930s. There was once a severe shortage of cement and the responsibility of procuring it rested on U, the in-charge of the Purchasing Department. U asked the Mother to do something about the crisis since all the work associated with construction had come to a standstill due to this crisis. The Mother assured him that she would look into the matter. Very soon, the supply of cement commenced and it took the shape of a flood. All the warehouses in the Ashram were full and the concerned departments were unable to utilize the cement fast enough to meet the inflow. So the managers of the departments asked U to stop the supply which he did without consulting the Mother. Eventually the supply stopped but it stopped completely for such a long time that there was again a shortage and this time the shortage was much more severe. U went to the Mother for help and narrated to her the entire story. The Mother was displeased at U's action in stopping the supply. She told him that when one goes to the Divine for help he should be prepared to receive it in whatever measure it comes. If the supplies were large then the capacity of the warehouses should have been enlarged enough. The Mother remarked that the order for the cessation of the supply showed a deep lack of understanding of the Divine's way of working.

We all know that any sort of wastage, which may include materials and manpower, leads to crisis. Hence, it should be our essential duty to minimize wastage as much as possible. What is available today might become scarce tomorrow. Resources are always scarce and that is why they demand a price.

So one must always work to establish a perfect equilibrium between demand and supply and preserve materials in the best possible way.

### Conclusion

In his epic *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo has prophesized the advent of a new future, a glorious future, for mankind. That same glorious future can be brought about in organizations as well if one sincerely practices integral management for this style of management has a great transforming power. And what would this transformation lead to? In the words of *Savitri*:

...knowledge shall pour down in radiant streams  
 And even darkened mind quiver with new life  
 And kindle and burn with the Ideal's fire  
 And turn to escape from mortal ignorance.  
 The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,  
 More and more souls shall enter into light,  
 Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear  
 And lives blaze with a sudden inner flame  
 And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight  
 And human wills tune to the divine will,  
 These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,  
 These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,  
 The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy  
 And mortal bodies of immortality.  
 A divine force shall flow through tissue and cell  
 And take the charge of breath and speech and act  
 And all the thoughts shall be a glow of suns  
 And every feeling a celestial thrill.  
 Often a lustrous inner dawn shall come  
 Lighting the chambers of the slumbering mind;  
 A sudden bliss shall run through every limb  
 And Nature with a mightier Presence fill.  
 Thus shall the earth open to divinity  
 And common natures feel the wide uplift,  
 Illumine common acts with the Spirit's ray  
 And meet the deity in common things.  
 Nature shall live to manifest secret God,  
 The Spirit shall take up the human play,  
 This earthly life become the life divine.<sup>27</sup>



### References and Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Dilip Kumar Roy, *Among the Great*, 1984 edition, p. 302.

<sup>2</sup>*The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA)*, Vols. 21-22 (*The Life Divine*), p. 506.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 489.

<sup>4</sup>CWSA, Vol. 1 (*Early Cultural Writings*), p. 439.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 438.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>7</sup>*Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL)*, Vols. 22-24 (*Letters on Yoga*), p. 1682.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1681.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>SABCL, Vol. 25, (*The Mother with Letters on the Mother*), p. 329.

<sup>12</sup>*The Life Divine*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup>CWSA, Vols. 33-34 (*Savitri*), p. 162.

<sup>14</sup>*The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, p. 240.

<sup>15</sup>*Letters on Yoga*, p. 707.

<sup>16</sup>*Sri Aurobindo to Dilip*, Vol. I, p. 40.

<sup>17</sup>CWSA, Vols. 23-24 (*The Synthesis of Yoga*), pp. 66-67.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>19</sup>*Letters on Yoga*, p. 710.

<sup>20</sup>Dilip Kumar Roy, *Sri Aurobindo Came to Me*, pp. 56-57.

<sup>21</sup>SWOT analysis is an evaluation of Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. The first letters of every word has been taken. In the corporate sector this SWOT analysis plays a pivotal role in strategic planning for the organization as the internal strengths and weaknesses of the organization are compared with those of other enterprises. Similarly, the opportunities and threats present in the sector in which the organization operates are also evaluated.

<sup>22</sup>*The Life Divine*, p. 277.

<sup>23</sup>Chitra Sen, "The Eternal Flame," in *Remembering The Mother With Gratitude*.

<sup>24</sup>*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 371.

<sup>25</sup>*The Life Divine*, p. 253.

<sup>26</sup>*Letters on Yoga*, p. 717.

<sup>27</sup>*Savitri*, p. 710.



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