

SPIRITUALIZING POLITICS: ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY IN PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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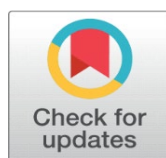
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ABSTRACT

The crises of political instability, conflict, and fragmentation in contemporary society demand frameworks that go beyond materialistic and transactional approaches to governance. Sri Aurobindo, a philosopher, mystic, and revolutionary, provides a transformative vision of politics rooted in spiritual principles and the evolution of human consciousness. His philosophy of integral yoga emphasizes the need for a supramental transformation, which harmonizes individuality and universality. This paper critically examines the theoretical underpinnings of Aurobindo's spiritualized politics, focusing on seminal texts such as *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and *The Life Divine*. It also explores the practical applications of his ideas in conflict resolution and peace-building, drawing insights from grassroots initiatives and restorative justice frameworks. It also looks at the idea of Divine Anarchy as the model of governance and how it leads to conflict-free governance. By addressing critiques and contextual challenges, this research underscores the enduring relevance of Aurobindo's ideas in fostering a harmonious and unified global society.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo, Spiritual Politics, Peace and Conflict resolution, Governance and Divine Anarchy

1. INTRODUCTION

The modern world is characterized by persistent conflict, systemic inequality, and environmental degradation, highlighting the limitations of conventional political paradigms that prioritize power and material gain. While these paradigms focus on managing the symptoms of crises, they often fail to address the deeper causes rooted in human consciousness—egoism, fear, and fragmentation. This lacuna calls for an alternative approach, one that integrates spiritual values into the political realm to foster genuine transformation. Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), a seminal figure in Indian philosophy and spirituality, offers a visionary framework for addressing these challenges. His philosophy, grounded in integral yoga and the evolution of consciousness, reimagines politics as a spiritual practice aimed at realizing

divine harmony. Aurobindo rejects the dichotomy between spirituality and politics, arguing instead that the two must converge to serve humanity's highest aspirations. His works propose a radical shift from ego-driven governance to systems rooted in spiritual unity, inclusivity, and collective well-being. This research paper explores the theoretical and practical dimensions of Aurobindo's spiritualized politics, emphasizing its application in conflict resolution and peace-building. Through an analysis of key texts and case studies, the study seeks to demonstrate how Aurobindo's philosophy provides a transformative pathway for addressing modern socio-political challenges. It also engages with critiques and practical limitations, offering a nuanced understanding of the relevance and feasibility of Aurobindo's vision in contemporary contexts.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

In this section we will explore the philosophical underpinnings in the writings of Sri Aurobindo. His texts will provide us with the theoretical foundations that will help us in analyzing his philosophy for peace and conflict resolution. The first text we will discuss here is 'The Life Divine' where we will see his idea of integral philosophy and integral yoga. Then we will discuss his other seminal writing which is the 'Human Cycle' and finally moving on to the 'Ideal of Human Unity'. We will analyse these texts with specific reference to its relevance in addressing conflict and establishing peace.

2.1. INTEGRAL YOGA AND THE SUPRAMENTAL VISION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S FRAMEWORK

At the heart of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy lies his concept of integral yoga, a transformative spiritual practice designed to harmonize the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human existence. This holistic approach reflects Aurobindo's belief in humanity's potential to transcend its limitations and realize the supramental state—a higher consciousness that unites individuality with universality. This essay explores the philosophical underpinnings of integral yoga, its connection to Aurobindo's evolutionary framework, and its implications for political thought, governance, and societal progress. Integral yoga, as articulated by Sri Aurobindo, is not merely a spiritual discipline but a comprehensive path aimed at integrating all aspects of human life. It seeks to transform the ordinary consciousness of individuals, enabling them to align their actions, thoughts, and emotions with a higher spiritual truth. Unlike traditional paths of yoga that may emphasize a singular focus—such as devotion, knowledge, or physical discipline—integral yoga encompasses all these dimensions, emphasizing their interdependence.

Aurobindo viewed humanity as an evolving consciousness, inherently capable of ascending beyond its current state of ignorance and fragmentation. He posited that this evolution would culminate in the realization of the supramental consciousness, a state where the divine and human merge seamlessly. Integral yoga serves as both the means and the goal of this transformative journey, offering individuals a framework to transcend the dualities of existence and realize their divine potential. Central to Aurobindo's philosophy is the concept of the supramental consciousness, which he describes as a higher level of existence beyond the mind. This supramental state is characterized by the integration of individuality and universality, allowing individuals to retain their unique identities while simultaneously experiencing their oneness with the cosmos. In Aurobindo's words, the supramental consciousness is "the truth-consciousness," embodying a perfect harmony between the finite and the infinite. The realization of the supramental state, according to Aurobindo, represents the next stage in humanity's evolutionary journey. Just as life evolved from matter and the mind emerged from life, the supramental consciousness will transcend and integrate the limitations of the mind. This transformative vision provides a hopeful perspective on human potential, suggesting that the divisions and conflicts of the current age are temporary stages in a broader evolutionary process.

2.2. CRITIQUE OF MATERIALISTIC POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Aurobindo's philosophy of integral yoga extends beyond personal transformation to encompass collective and societal progress. In *The Life Divine*, he critiques the materialistic foundations of modern political systems, arguing that they perpetuate division, discord, and short-term thinking. Materialistic governance, driven by ambition, greed, and power, fails to address the deeper spiritual needs of humanity. He writes, "Politics, divorced from spirituality, becomes a field for the unchecked play of ambition, greed, and division." This critique is particularly relevant in the context of

contemporary global politics, where the pursuit of power often undermines ethical governance and social justice. Aurobindo challenges the dominant paradigms of power-driven governance, proposing instead a system informed by spiritual consciousness. True governance, he argues, must align human actions with the higher truth of unity, fostering harmony and collective upliftment.

2.3. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESOLVING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Aurobindo's philosophy provides valuable insights for addressing the complex challenges of the modern world. The ecological crisis, rising inequality, and cultural polarization are manifestations of the fragmentation and ego-driven systems critiqued by Aurobindo. By fostering a shift in consciousness from competition to cooperation and from materialism to spiritual awareness, his ideas offer a path for achieving sustainable progress and lasting peace.

One practical implication of Aurobindo's vision is the need for leadership rooted in spiritual consciousness. Leaders who embody the principles of integral yoga would prioritize long-term well-being over short-term gains, viewing their roles as opportunities to serve humanity rather than accumulate power. Similarly, organizations and institutions that integrate spiritual values into their practices—such as corporate social responsibility initiatives and community-driven development projects—reflect the transformative potential of Aurobindo's philosophy. While Aurobindo's vision of integral yoga and the supramental state is inspiring, it also raises important questions about its feasibility and universality. Critics argue that the integration of spirituality into governance may be challenging in secular societies, where diverse religious and philosophical traditions coexist. Additionally, the realization of the supramental consciousness may seem idealistic, requiring profound cultural and psychological shifts that could take generations to achieve.

Another critique concerns the balance between individuality and universality in Aurobindo's framework. While the supramental state harmonizes these dimensions, achieving this balance in practice involves navigating complex ethical and practical dilemmas. For instance, reconciling the interests of diverse communities and nations within a unified vision of global harmony requires careful negotiation and compromise. While Aurobindo's ideas may face critiques of idealism and practicality, their relevance to contemporary challenges cannot be overstated. From fostering ethical leadership to addressing global crises, his vision provides a hopeful perspective on humanity's evolutionary journey. Ultimately, Aurobindo's philosophy invites us to reimagine the possibilities of governance, society, and individual transformation in alignment with the deeper truths of existence.

3. STAGES OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION IN THE HUMAN CYCLE: SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF HUMANITY'S EVOLUTIONARY TRAJECTORY

Sri Aurobindo's *The Human Cycle* presents a profound philosophical framework for understanding the evolution of human societies. He identifies distinct stages of social development, each characterized by a unique engagement with collective values, truths, and structures. These stages—the symbolic, typical, individualistic, and subjective—culminate in a spiritual age, which Aurobindo views as the fulfilment of humanity's evolutionary journey. This essay examines the defining characteristics of each stage, critiques of existing systems, and the transformative potential of Aurobindo's vision for achieving global harmony and sustainable peace. The symbolic stage represents the earliest phase of human societal evolution. During this period, human communities derive meaning and cohesion from shared myths, rituals, and symbols that express their collective understanding of the world. Societies in this stage are deeply rooted in spiritual traditions, viewing the cosmos as a living, interconnected whole. These symbols and myths are not mere superstitions but profound attempts to articulate truths that transcend individual experience. In Aurobindo's analysis, the symbolic stage reflects humanity's intuitive engagement with the spiritual dimensions of existence. Social structures are inherently collective, with rituals serving as a medium for maintaining harmony within the community and with the natural world. While this stage fosters unity and coherence, it also limits individual expression, as personal aspirations are subordinated to the collective ethos. The symbolic stage can be observed in ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley, where religious and cultural symbols played a central role in shaping societal norms. However, as societies evolve, the limitations of this stage—particularly its rigidity and resistance to change—necessitate a transition to the next phase of development.

The typical stage follows the symbolic age, marked by the establishment of fixed social hierarchies and institutional frameworks. During this phase, societies prioritize order, stability, and adherence to established norms. The focus shifts from the intuitive and spiritual to the codified and structural. Caste systems, feudal hierarchies, and rigid codes of conduct exemplify this stage, where social roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and enforced. While the typical stage provides stability and continuity, Aurobindo critiques its tendency toward stagnation and dogmatism. The rigidity of typical societies suppresses individuality and innovation, leading to a lack of dynamism and adaptability. Over time, the inherent limitations of this stage give rise to tensions and conflicts, as individuals and groups challenge the oppressive nature of fixed systems. Historical examples of the typical stage include medieval feudal systems in Europe and the caste-based social orders in ancient India. These systems maintained social order for centuries but eventually faced upheaval as the pressures of change and individual expression became unavoidable. Aurobindo argues that the typical stage, while necessary for consolidating early societies, cannot sustain the complexity of human aspirations and must evolve into more flexible structures.

The individualistic stage emerges as a response to the constraints of the typical phase, prioritizing personal freedom, rationality, and self-expression. This stage is closely associated with modernity, characterized by the rise of liberal democracies, industrial economies, and secular ideologies. Individual rights, scientific progress, and the pursuit of personal goals define this era, reflecting humanity's increasing focus on autonomy and reason. Aurobindo acknowledges the significant achievements of the individualistic stage, particularly in fostering creativity, innovation, and human rights. However, he also critiques its inherent fragmentation and materialism. The excessive emphasis on individual freedom often undermines social cohesion, leading to alienation, inequality, and a loss of collective purpose. In his view, the individualistic stage represents a necessary but transitional phase in humanity's evolution. The Enlightenment era and the Industrial Revolution exemplify the individualistic stage, as societies shifted from rigid hierarchies to more flexible and dynamic structures. However, Aurobindo cautions against viewing this stage as the culmination of human progress, emphasizing the need for a deeper integration of individuality with collective values.

The subjective stage represents a transitional phase in Aurobindo's evolutionary framework, where humanity begins to explore the deeper dimensions of consciousness and inner truth. Unlike the previous stages, which focus on external structures and material achievements, the subjective phase emphasizes introspection, self-awareness, and spiritual growth. Societies in this stage seek to harmonize individual aspirations with collective well-being, recognizing the interconnectedness of all life. Aurobindo envisions the subjective stage as a period of profound transformation, paving the way for the spiritual age. This phase challenges the dominance of ego-driven systems and materialist ideologies, offering an alternative vision rooted in higher consciousness and ethical responsibility. The subjective stage is characterized by the rise of movements that emphasize inner development, ecological awareness, and holistic approaches to education, healthcare, and governance. Contemporary examples of the subjective stage include the growing interest in mindfulness, yoga, and alternative forms of spirituality, as well as global movements for environmental sustainability and social justice. These trends reflect humanity's increasing awareness of the limitations of materialism and the need for a more balanced and integrative approach to progress.

The culmination of Aurobindo's framework is the spiritual age, where societies are guided by higher consciousness and universal values. In this phase, humanity transcends the limitations of ego and self-interest, achieving a state of collective harmony and enlightened governance. The spiritual age is not an unattainable utopia but a natural progression in humanity's evolutionary journey, rooted in the realization of oneness and the integration of diversity. Aurobindo argues that the spiritual age addresses the failures of current political systems, which are often driven by competition, greed, and short-term thinking. By fostering a sense of shared purpose and ethical responsibility, the spiritual age offers a path for resolving conflicts and achieving lasting peace. This vision aligns with his broader philosophy of integral yoga, which emphasizes the evolution of consciousness as the foundation for personal and collective transformation. Aurobindo's framework offers valuable insights for understanding the failures of current political and economic systems. The rise of populism, environmental degradation, and global inequality reflects the limitations of ego-driven systems that prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability. By shifting the focus from external structures to inner transformation, Aurobindo's philosophy provides a roadmap for addressing these challenges and fostering a more harmonious world. The relevance of Aurobindo's vision is evident in contemporary movements that seek to transcend traditional boundaries and promote holistic approaches to governance, education, and community development. For example, the integration of spirituality and mindfulness into leadership practices has gained traction in recent years, reflecting the principles of the subjective and spiritual stages. Similarly, global initiatives such as the United Nations'

Sustainable Development Goals embody the spirit of collective responsibility and ethical governance envisioned by Aurobindo.

3.1. CRITIQUES AND CHALLENGES

While Aurobindo's framework is inspiring, it also raises questions about its practicality and universality. Critics argue that the transition to the subjective and spiritual stages requires significant cultural and psychological shifts that may be difficult to achieve in the face of entrenched power structures and systemic inequalities. Furthermore, the emphasis on spiritual consciousness may be viewed as idealistic or incompatible with secular ideologies.

Another challenge is the tension between individuality and collectivity in Aurobindo's vision. Balancing personal freedom with collective responsibility requires navigating complex ethical and political dilemmas. While Aurobindo's framework provides a philosophical foundation, its application in diverse cultural and historical contexts remains an ongoing challenge. While Aurobindo's ideas may face critiques of idealism and practicality, their relevance to contemporary challenges cannot be overstated. From addressing environmental crises to fostering intercultural dialogue and ethical governance, his philosophy provides a blueprint for transformative change. Ultimately, Aurobindo's framework invites humanity to embrace its evolutionary potential and work toward a future rooted in harmony, unity, and spiritual fulfillment.

3.2. THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY: A SCHOLARLY EXAMINATION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

Sri Aurobindo's seminal work, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, addresses the profound challenges of achieving global harmony amidst a fragmented and divided world. In this text, Aurobindo explores the philosophical and practical dimensions of unity, rejecting simplistic and coercive approaches in favor of a more profound, integral realization of human oneness. This essay examines the key tenets of Aurobindo's philosophy, critically evaluating his critiques of mechanical unity, his vision of spiritual harmony, and the practical implications of his approach to global peace-building. Aurobindo critiques models of unity that rely on centralized governance, imperialism, or other coercive frameworks. He perceives such models as fundamentally flawed because they prioritize uniformity at the expense of individuality and diversity. In the early 20th century, when Aurobindo wrote his treatise, the world was witnessing the rise of imperial powers and the spread of centralized bureaucracies. These trends, while ostensibly aimed at unifying disparate peoples under a single system, often led to the suppression of cultural identities and the imposition of a hegemonic worldview.

Aurobindo argued that mechanical unity is inherently unstable and unsustainable because it overlooks the complex psychological, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human life. Systems of governance that enforce conformity—whether through political domination, economic exploitation, or ideological indoctrination—fail to recognize the inherent value of diversity. He observed that "unity" imposed through force is ultimately counterproductive, as it breeds resentment, resistance, and fragmentation. This critique remains relevant in contemporary global politics, where debates over nationalism, globalization, and cultural preservation continue to challenge the ideals of universal harmony.

Aurobindo's alternative to mechanical unity is the concept of spiritual unity, which he defines as a state of harmony arising from an inner realization of oneness. This vision of unity does not erase differences but harmonizes them within a larger framework of mutual respect and shared purpose. He writes, "True unity can only arise from the inner realization of oneness, where diversity is not erased but harmonized." This statement underscores Aurobindo's belief in the compatibility of individuality and collectivity, suggesting that authentic unity emerges when individuals and cultures freely express their unique identities within a shared spiritual vision. Central to this idea is the recognition of humanity's interconnectedness, not just in a material or social sense, but at a deeper existential level. Aurobindo's philosophy aligns with the principles of integral yoga, which emphasizes the evolution of consciousness and the realization of the divine presence within all beings. Spiritual unity, in this context, is not merely an abstract ideal but a practical necessity for addressing the root causes of conflict and fragmentation in human society.

Aurobindo's principle of integral unity serves as a framework for conflict resolution and peace-building. He identifies fear, ignorance, and selfishness as the primary sources of discord, both at the individual and collective levels. Fear, according to Aurobindo, arises from a sense of separation and insecurity, leading to defensive or aggressive behaviours that perpetuate cycles of violence. Ignorance, in turn, fosters misunderstanding and prejudice, while

selfishness prioritizes individual or group interests at the expense of the greater good. Addressing these root causes requires a transformative approach that goes beyond superficial solutions. Aurobindo advocates for a process of self-awareness and spiritual growth that enables individuals and communities to transcend their limited perspectives and recognize their inherent unity. In practical terms, this involves cultivating empathy, fostering dialogue, and promoting values such as compassion, cooperation, and mutual respect. The application of Aurobindo's ideas to contemporary peace-building efforts can be seen in initiatives that prioritize reconciliation and restorative justice over punitive measures. For example, post-conflict societies that engage in truth and reconciliation processes—such as those implemented in South Africa after apartheid—embody the spirit of Aurobindo's philosophy. By addressing the underlying grievances and promoting healing, such approaches create conditions for lasting peace and collective progress.

The relevance of Aurobindo's vision of human unity extends to many of the pressing challenges of the 21st century, including globalization, environmental sustainability, and intercultural dialogue. Globalization, while creating opportunities for economic and cultural exchange, has also intensified inequalities and eroded traditional identities. Aurobindo's emphasis on harmonizing diversity within a shared framework of unity offers a valuable perspective for navigating these tensions. Similarly, the global environmental crisis highlights the need for a collective response that transcends national and ideological boundaries. Aurobindo's vision of spiritual unity underscores the interconnectedness of all life and the moral imperative to act as stewards of the planet. This perspective aligns with contemporary movements for ecological sustainability, which advocate for a holistic approach to environmental governance that integrates scientific, ethical, and spiritual dimensions.

In the realm of intercultural dialogue, Aurobindo's philosophy provides a basis for mutual understanding and cooperation among diverse communities. His recognition of the intrinsic value of every culture challenges ethnocentric attitudes and promotes a more inclusive vision of human progress. By fostering a spirit of openness and respect, Aurobindo's ideas can contribute to building bridges across cultural divides and addressing the root causes of conflict. While Aurobindo's philosophy offers a compelling vision of human unity, it also raises important questions and critiques. One critique is the perceived idealism of his approach, which may seem impractical in the face of entrenched political, economic, and social structures. Critics argue that achieving the level of spiritual consciousness required for integral unity is a long-term process that may not address the immediate needs of a fragmented world.

Moreover, Aurobindo's emphasis on spiritual unity may be seen as incompatible with secular approaches to governance and conflict resolution. In secular societies, where religious and spiritual beliefs vary widely, the integration of spiritual principles into public policy can be challenging. However, proponents of Aurobindo's philosophy argue that his concept of spiritual unity transcends religious boundaries and can be interpreted in universal terms, making it relevant to diverse contexts. Another critique concerns the tension between individuality and collectivity in Aurobindo's vision. While he emphasizes the importance of harmonizing diversity within unity, achieving this balance requires careful navigation of competing interests and values. In practice, this may involve difficult trade-offs and compromises that test the limits of Aurobindo's ideals. While Aurobindo's ideas may face critiques of idealism and practicality, their relevance to contemporary challenges cannot be overstated. From globalization and environmental sustainability to intercultural dialogue and peace-building, his philosophy offers valuable insights for navigating the complexities of the modern world. Ultimately, Aurobindo's vision of human unity invites us to reimagine the possibilities of collective progress and to embrace a future rooted in harmony, respect, and shared purpose.

4. CONFLICT RESOLUTION: TRANSFORMATIVE APPLICATIONS OF INTEGRAL UNITY

Sri Aurobindo's concept of integral unity offers a profound and transformative framework for addressing the complex conflicts that arise from divisions of identity, ideology, or resources. Rooted in the philosophy of oneness and the recognition of a shared spiritual essence, this approach transcends the adversarial methods of conventional conflict resolution. Instead, it emphasizes healing, reconciliation, and the transformation of consciousness as essential steps toward lasting peace. This part of the paper explores the principles of integral unity in conflict resolution, their alignment with contemporary transformative practices, and their practical applications in real-world contexts.

At the core of Aurobindo's philosophy is the understanding that the root causes of conflict lie in the fragmented consciousness of individuals and societies. This fragmentation manifests as divisions based on race, religion, culture, and material interests, which often fuel antagonism and competition. Aurobindo posits that resolving these conflicts requires

a fundamental shift in consciousness—a movement from division and ego-driven interests to a realization of the underlying unity that connects all human beings. He writes in *Essays on the Gita*: “Only through a higher truth can the oppositions of the world find reconciliation.”

Integral unity, as Aurobindo envisions it, is not merely a philosophical ideal but a practical framework for addressing discord. It involves cultivating an awareness of shared spiritual essence, which transcends superficial differences and fosters empathy, compassion, and cooperation. This perspective challenges conventional conflict resolution methods, which often rely on negotiation or coercion without addressing the underlying psychological and spiritual causes of discord. Instead, Aurobindo advocates for a process that integrates external solutions with inner transformation, enabling individuals and communities to move beyond their limitations and align with a higher truth. Aurobindo’s approach to conflict resolution resonates strongly with contemporary theories of transformative conflict resolution, which prioritize healing and reconciliation over adversarial processes. Transformative approaches seek to address the root causes of conflict by fostering understanding, rebuilding relationships, and promoting long-term peace. Practices such as restorative justice exemplify this philosophy by focusing on repairing harm, restoring trust, and creating conditions for reconciliation.

Restorative justice, in particular, aligns closely with Aurobindo’s vision. Unlike punitive systems that emphasize retribution, restorative justice prioritizes dialogue, empathy, and mutual accountability. It seeks to restore balance by acknowledging the harm caused and fostering conditions for healing and transformation. This approach reflects Aurobindo’s belief that true resolution is not achieved through external imposition but through inner clarity, detachment, and alignment with spiritual principles. Aurobindo’s emphasis on the inner dimension of conflict resolution also aligns with practices such as mindfulness and emotional intelligence, which are increasingly recognized as essential tools for managing interpersonal and societal conflicts. By cultivating self-awareness, empathy, and non-reactivity, these practices enable individuals to engage constructively with differences, fostering a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation.

The principles of Aurobindo’s philosophy have found expression in various real-world contexts, demonstrating their practical applicability to conflict resolution. Two prominent examples are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka. The TRC, established in the aftermath of apartheid, exemplifies the application of restorative justice principles that align with Aurobindo’s emphasis on healing and reconciliation. Under the leadership of figures such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the TRC prioritized dialogue, empathy, and forgiveness as tools for addressing the deep wounds of systemic racial oppression and violence. Victims of apartheid were given a platform to share their experiences, while perpetrators were encouraged to take responsibility for their actions in exchange for amnesty. The TRC’s approach reflected a commitment to national healing that transcended punitive justice. By fostering understanding and empathy between former adversaries, the commission created conditions for rebuilding trust and promoting long-term peace. This process echoes Aurobindo’s assertion that true reconciliation arises from a higher truth that unites rather than divides. The TRC’s success in facilitating a relatively peaceful transition in South Africa highlights the transformative potential of restorative approaches to conflict resolution. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, inspired by Gandhian and Aurobindonian ideals, provides another compelling example of integral approaches to conflict resolution. Founded in the mid-20th century, the movement emphasizes self-reliance, collective effort, and spiritual awakening as tools for community-driven peace-building. Sarvodaya operates on the principle that material needs must be addressed alongside inner transformation, creating a holistic model for fostering harmony and sustainability.

The movement’s work in post-conflict Sri Lanka illustrates the practical application of Aurobindo’s philosophy. By engaging communities in collective activities such as infrastructure development, education, and environmental conservation, Sarvodaya fosters a sense of shared purpose and interconnectedness. At the same time, its emphasis on meditation, mindfulness, and ethical living encourages individuals to cultivate inner peace and compassion, enabling them to contribute constructively to their communities. This dual focus on external and internal transformation reflects the integral unity that Aurobindo advocates. The Sarvodaya movement’s success in addressing the social and psychological scars of civil conflict demonstrates the effectiveness of holistic approaches to peace-building. By integrating spiritual and material dimensions, it offers a model for resolving conflicts that transcend immediate grievances and address the deeper causes of discord.

Aurobindo’s framework for conflict resolution offers valuable insights for addressing the challenges of the 21st century. In a world characterized by polarization, inequality, and environmental crises, his emphasis on inner

transformation and collective unity provides a hopeful vision for fostering harmony and sustainability. The principles of integral unity can inform a wide range of conflict resolution practices, from grassroots community initiatives to international diplomacy. One practical implication of Aurobindo's philosophy is the importance of fostering dialogue and empathy in addressing social and political conflicts. Initiatives such as intercultural dialogue programs, truth commissions, and community mediation efforts reflect the spirit of integral unity by prioritizing understanding and reconciliation over confrontation. Similarly, practices such as mindfulness and emotional intelligence training can enhance individuals' capacity to engage constructively with differences, reducing the likelihood of escalation and fostering a culture of cooperation.

Another key implication is the need to address structural inequalities and injustices that fuel conflict. Aurobindo's emphasis on aligning governance with spiritual principles underscores the importance of creating systems that prioritize equity, sustainability, and collective well-being. Policies that address the root causes of conflict—such as poverty, discrimination, and environmental degradation—reflect the holistic approach advocated by Aurobindo and his followers. While Aurobindo's vision of integral unity offers profound insights, it also faces practical challenges and critiques. Critics argue that the emphasis on inner transformation may be difficult to implement in contexts where immediate material needs and security concerns take precedence. Additionally, the integration of spiritual principles into public policy and governance may be seen as idealistic or incompatible with secular frameworks.

Another challenge is the tension between universal principles and cultural diversity. While Aurobindo's philosophy emphasizes shared spiritual essence, the application of these principles must navigate the complexities of diverse cultural and religious contexts. Achieving this balance requires careful negotiation and adaptation, ensuring that universal ideals are applied in ways that respect and honour local traditions. Hence, it can be concluded that Sri Aurobindo's concept of integral unity offers a transformative framework for addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering lasting peace. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of all human beings and the importance of inner transformation, Aurobindo provides a holistic approach to conflict resolution that transcends conventional adversarial methods. The alignment of his philosophy with contemporary transformative practices, such as restorative justice and community-driven peace-building, demonstrates its practical relevance and applicability.

Case studies such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka illustrate the power of Aurobindo's principles in facilitating healing, reconciliation, and sustainable progress. While challenges and critiques remain, the vision of integral unity offers a hopeful and inspiring perspective on humanity's potential to overcome divisions and achieve a more harmonious world. By integrating spiritual awareness with practical action, Aurobindo's philosophy invites us to reimagine conflict resolution as a process of collective evolution, rooted in the higher truths of unity and compassion.

5. GOVERNANCE AND DIVINE ANARCHY

The idea of governance has traditionally been associated with systems of control, authority, and hierarchical power. These systems are structured to ensure order and compliance, often emphasizing coercive mechanisms to achieve societal stability. However, alternative frameworks challenge these paradigms by proposing governance models rooted in principles of spirituality, collaboration, and inclusivity. One such framework is Sri Aurobindo's concept of divine anarchy, which envisions a radical departure from conventional governance methods by proposing a system guided by universal spiritual truths rather than coercive authority. This essay examines the philosophical underpinnings of divine anarchy, explores its application as a political model, and considers its potential adaptations for contemporary governance.

Sri Aurobindo's concept of divine anarchy reimagines governance as a harmonious order stemming from spiritual alignment rather than institutional control. While the term "anarchy" often carries connotations of chaos and disorder, Aurobindo redefines it to denote a system of spontaneous order. In his vision, this spontaneous order arises when individuals attune themselves to the divine will, acting in alignment with universal values such as truth, compassion, and justice. This paradigm transcends the notion of governance as a top-down imposition of power and instead emphasizes the cultivation of inner discipline and collective self-awareness. The spiritual foundation of divine anarchy rests on the belief that every individual has the potential to embody and express the divine consciousness. Aurobindo posits that the evolution of human consciousness is the key to achieving a harmonious society. He envisions a world where individuals and communities act in unison with the divine, resulting in a self-regulating order that reflects spiritual harmony.

Governance, in this context, becomes a process of facilitating conditions for spiritual growth and collaboration, rather than enforcing laws and regulations.

The power dynamics within divine anarchy differ markedly from traditional governance models. Here, power is not an instrument of domination but a means of service. Leaders are not authoritarian figures but facilitators who inspire and support the collective realization of higher ideals. This approach inherently values collaboration, inclusivity, and shared responsibility, rejecting hierarchies that prioritize the interests of a select few over the well-being of the collective. The idea of order in divine anarchy is not synonymous with uniformity or conformity but with unity in diversity. According to Aurobindo, when individuals align with the divine will, they naturally embody principles that promote the collective good. Such an order is spontaneous and organic, emerging from the intrinsic goodness and interconnectedness of individuals, rather than being imposed externally. This redefinition of order challenges the conventional assumption that laws and enforcement mechanisms are necessary to maintain societal stability. Despite its philosophical appeal, the practical realization of divine anarchy faces significant challenges. Human societies are often marked by divergent interests, conflicting values, and unequal access to resources, which complicates the ideal of spontaneous order. Additionally, the reliance on spiritual alignment presupposes a level of individual and collective consciousness that may be difficult to achieve in practice, particularly in pluralistic and secular contexts. While the vision of divine anarchy may appear utopian, its underlying principles offer valuable insights for reimagining governance in contemporary contexts. By integrating elements of Aurobindo's philosophy with participatory and decentralized governance models, it is possible to create systems that prioritize inclusivity, collaboration, and alignment with shared values.

One of the most promising pathways for adapting divine anarchy to modern governance is through participatory governance models. These models emphasize the active involvement of citizens in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and collective ownership. Mechanisms such as deliberative democracy, citizens' assemblies, and collaborative policy-making forums reflect the spirit of divine anarchy by enabling individuals to contribute to governance in meaningful ways. Participatory governance aligns with Aurobindo's vision by decentralizing power and empowering communities to address their own needs. This approach encourages dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation, creating an environment where diverse perspectives can coexist harmoniously. For example, local governance initiatives in regions like Kerala, India, and Porto Alegre, Brazil, have demonstrated the potential of participatory budgeting and community-led decision-making to address complex societal challenges effectively.

Decentralization is a core principle that resonates with the ethos of divine anarchy. By shifting authority from centralized institutions to local communities, decentralized decision-making structures empower individuals to take greater responsibility for their own governance. Models such as cooperatives, worker-owned enterprises, and community-managed resources exemplify this principle in action. In cooperative movements, for instance, members collectively make decisions about the management and use of shared resources. This structure fosters a sense of equality and mutual accountability, reducing the likelihood of exploitation and power imbalances. The success of cooperatives in various sectors, including agriculture, healthcare, and renewable energy, highlights the viability of decentralized approaches to governance.

Aurobindo's emphasis on spiritual alignment invites consideration of how governance can integrate ethical and spiritual dimensions. While secular societies may not explicitly adopt spiritual frameworks, they can draw upon universal values such as compassion, justice, and sustainability to inform policy-making. Governance initiatives that prioritize these values can bridge the gap between Aurobindo's philosophical ideals and the practical realities of diverse societies. For example, the Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework in Bhutan incorporates spiritual and ethical principles into national governance. By emphasizing well-being, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation, GNH offers a model of governance that aligns with Aurobindo's vision of serving the collective good rather than pursuing materialistic or hegemonic goals.

Implementing adaptations of divine anarchy in pluralistic societies presents unique challenges. Diverse cultural, religious, and ideological perspectives can create tensions that complicate efforts to establish shared values. To address these challenges, governance models must prioritize dialogue and inclusivity, ensuring that all voices are heard and respected. The principles of transitional justice offer a useful framework for navigating such complexities. By focusing on reconciliation, accountability, and the restoration of trust, transitional justice mechanisms can create the conditions

for harmonious coexistence in societies marked by historical grievances and divisions. These mechanisms resonate with the ideals of divine anarchy by emphasizing collaboration and healing rather than retribution.

Advances in technology provide new opportunities for realizing the principles of divine anarchy. Digital platforms for civic engagement, such as online voting systems, crowdsourcing platforms, and blockchain-based decision-making tools, can enhance transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance. These technologies enable citizens to participate directly in decision-making processes, reducing the need for hierarchical intermediaries. For example, Estonia's e-Residency and e-Governance initiatives demonstrate the potential of technology to create participatory governance models that are efficient, inclusive, and responsive to citizens' needs. By leveraging digital tools, governments can empower individuals to collaborate on solving societal challenges, reflecting the spirit of divine anarchy in action.

Sri Aurobindo's concept of divine anarchy presents a visionary model of governance that prioritizes spiritual alignment, collaboration, and inclusivity over coercive authority. While its philosophical ideals may seem distant from the realities of contemporary governance, the principles underlying divine anarchy offer valuable insights for reimagining governance systems. By integrating participatory and decentralized models, fostering dialogue and inclusivity, and leveraging technology, it is possible to create governance frameworks that embody the spirit of divine anarchy while addressing the complexities of pluralistic societies. These adaptations not only honor Aurobindo's vision but also provide practical pathways for building a more harmonious and equitable world.

6. CRITIQUES AND CHALLENGES IN THE APPLICATION OF SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy presents a transformative vision for personal and societal evolution, emphasizing spiritual integration and the realization of higher consciousness. However, its implementation in practical contexts has been met with several critiques and challenges. These critiques highlight the perceived tension between idealism and realism, the compatibility of Aurobindo's ideas with secular governance, and the practical barriers to translating his abstract ideals into actionable frameworks. This essay critically examines these challenges while exploring potential pathways for addressing them. One of the most significant critiques of Aurobindo's philosophy concerns the perceived idealism of its foundational principles. The emphasis on supramental consciousness and spiritual transformation—while inspiring—may appear impractical or even utopian in addressing immediate and pressing crises such as political instability, economic inequality, and environmental degradation. Critics question whether Aurobindo's vision, which requires a profound shift in individual and collective consciousness, can be operationalized in societies that are deeply divided by ideology, ethnicity, and materialistic priorities.

Aurobindo's notion of supramental consciousness entails a significant departure from the ego-driven systems of the present, requiring a level of spiritual maturity that many argue is not yet achievable for the majority of humanity. This raises questions about the timeline and feasibility of his vision. In contexts of urgent political and humanitarian crises, such as armed conflict or climate emergencies, the gradual process of cultivating higher consciousness may be seen as insufficient or secondary to immediate action. Critics argue that while Aurobindo's ideas provide a long-term vision for humanity, they lack concrete strategies for addressing short-term challenges. Supporters of Aurobindo's philosophy counter these critiques by emphasizing the necessity of balancing immediate actions with long-term spiritual goals. They argue that while his vision may seem idealistic, it serves as a guiding framework for evolving governance and societal structures over time. Additionally, proponents suggest that even partial adoption of his principles—such as fostering empathy, ethical leadership, and holistic education—can yield practical benefits without requiring full realization of the supramental consciousness.

Another major critique pertains to the integration of spirituality into governance, particularly in secular political systems. Aurobindo's philosophy, while universal and non-sectarian, is deeply rooted in spiritual principles. This spiritual orientation may be perceived as incompatible with secular governance frameworks that prioritize neutrality and separation of religion from state functions. Secular systems often aim to accommodate diverse worldviews and belief systems, which may create tension with approaches that draw explicitly on spiritual insights. In contemporary governance, there is often resistance to incorporating spiritual or metaphysical ideas into public policy due to concerns about alienating non-religious or differently religious populations. Critics worry that emphasizing spiritual consciousness in governance could inadvertently lead to accusations of bias or exclusivity, particularly in pluralistic societies where multiple religious and philosophical traditions coexist.

However, Aurobindo's philosophy transcends specific religious dogmas and focuses on universal principles of unity, compassion, and ethical responsibility. Proponents argue that his ideas can be interpreted in a way that aligns with secular values, framing spirituality as an inner, humanistic dimension rather than a theological construct. For example, concepts such as mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership—derived from spiritual traditions but secularized in modern discourse—illustrate how Aurobindo's principles can be adapted to diverse contexts without compromising secular frameworks. The integration of these values into leadership training, education, and organizational development provides practical examples of how spiritual principles can enhance governance without challenging secular norms. By presenting spirituality as a universal human capacity for self-awareness, empathy, and ethical behavior, Aurobindo's philosophy can bridge the perceived gap between spiritual and secular traditions.

Aurobindo's philosophy faces substantial barriers to practical implementation, particularly in translating its abstract ideals into actionable policies and programs. His concepts of supramental consciousness and integral unity require profound cultural, institutional, and psychological shifts, which may be difficult to achieve within existing structures and systems. These barriers include resistance to change, lack of awareness or understanding of his ideas, and the logistical challenges of embedding his principles into diverse societal contexts. One key barrier is the complexity and abstraction of Aurobindo's ideas, which can make them inaccessible to policymakers and practitioners. The language and metaphysical depth of his writings may require significant reinterpretation and simplification to be effectively communicated and applied in practical contexts. Additionally, the focus on long-term spiritual evolution may conflict with the short-term priorities of political and economic systems, which often operate on election cycles, profit margins, and immediate crises.

Institutional resistance to change poses another challenge. Established systems and structures are often resistant to adopting new paradigms, particularly those that challenge entrenched power dynamics or require significant cultural shifts. For example, implementing policies based on Aurobindo's principles—such as prioritizing collective well-being over individual gain or integrating ethical consciousness into economic decisions—may face pushback from stakeholders invested in the status quo. To address these barriers, innovative strategies and sustained commitment are essential. Educational initiatives that introduce Aurobindo's ideas in accessible formats can foster greater awareness and understanding, particularly among leaders and decision-makers. Pilot programs and case studies demonstrating the practical benefits of his principles—such as ethical leadership, community-driven development, and holistic education—can build momentum for broader adoption. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaborations that integrate Aurobindo's ideas with contemporary fields such as psychology, environmental science, and political theory can provide new pathways for implementation.

While Aurobindo's philosophy envisions a profound transformation of humanity, incremental change can play a crucial role in bridging the gap between idealism and practicality. Small-scale initiatives that embody his principles—such as mindfulness training in schools, restorative justice programs, or community-based environmental projects—can serve as stepping stones toward broader societal shifts. These initiatives demonstrate the potential for aligning everyday practices with higher ethical and spiritual values, even in the absence of widespread supramental consciousness. Moreover, Aurobindo's emphasis on inner transformation provides a foundation for cultivating individual leaders and change-makers who embody his principles. By fostering self-awareness, empathy, and ethical decision-making, such leaders can act as catalysts for systemic change, gradually reshaping institutions and policies in alignment with his vision. The cultivation of spiritual consciousness in individual leaders can inspire collective action, creating a ripple effect that transforms communities and organizations over time.

7. CONCLUSION

Sri Aurobindo's vision of spiritualized politics presents a profound and transformative framework for addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering sustainable peace. His philosophy, which integrates spiritual principles into governance, challenges conventional paradigms of politics and emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity's material and spiritual dimensions. By doing so, it invites a rethinking of governance as a means to align human action with higher ethical and spiritual truths, rather than as a mere exercise of power and control. In an era marked by unprecedented crises—ranging from environmental degradation and social inequality to cultural fragmentation and political polarization—Aurobindo's ideas resonate with timeless relevance. His emphasis on spiritual consciousness as the foundation for governance transcends the limitations of ego-driven systems, offering a vision of politics rooted in

compassion, cooperation, and unity. By addressing the deeper causes of division—such as fear, ignorance, and selfishness—his approach provides a pathway for collective healing and progress.

Furthermore, Aurobindo's advocacy for integral unity and respect for cultural diversity underscores the importance of inclusivity in building a harmonious world. Rather than imposing uniformity, his vision celebrates the unique contributions of each culture and individual, harmonizing them within a shared spiritual framework. This perspective offers an antidote to the divisive tendencies of identity politics and highlights the potential for unity amidst diversity. The idea of divine governance, central to Aurobindo's philosophy, reimagines politics as a pathway to collective spiritual evolution. By aligning political systems with the principles of higher consciousness, Aurobindo envisions a future where governance transcends the pursuit of self-interest and becomes a tool for uplifting humanity as a whole. This transformative vision challenges the materialistic and short-term thinking that often dominates contemporary political discourse, inspiring hope and action for a more harmonious and compassionate world.

Ultimately, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy offers not only a critique of existing systems but also a hopeful blueprint for their reformation. It calls for a fundamental shift in consciousness, where spiritual awareness becomes the driving force behind individual and collective actions. In this way, Aurobindo's ideas provide both inspiration and practical guidance for addressing the challenges of our time, paving the way for a future rooted in peace, unity, and shared purpose. His work continues to inspire thinkers, leaders, and visionaries to reimagine politics as a transformative force for the betterment of humanity and the realization of its highest potential.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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