

Connecting Thought and Action for Beginners: A Meditation on Integral Philosophy and Experiments in the Yoga of Love, Action, Knowledge

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Abstract: This paper has a two-fold purpose: to examine some of the main precepts in chosen works of Sri Aurobindo and Dr. Haridas Chaudhuri regarding the philosophical basis for integral understanding and to describe concrete ways to introduce the integral paradigm into practice in the U.S. within a particular undergraduate course titled *Body, Mind, Spirit: Yoga and Meditation* at DePaul University in Chicago. The introduction includes a brief description of the cultural milieu of 21st century American realities for adult students, identifying some of the conditions which can serve as impetuses to integral thought and action. The main text contains certain basic tenets of integral wisdom, which combine Eastern and Western thought in revolutionary ways, and examples from an introduction of integral yoga into higher education for adult learners. This can serve those who are just beginning to explore integral being and evolutionary action through intellectual, psychological, physical, and spiritual pursuits and those who already teach the integration of love-action-knowledge.

Keywords: Haridas Chaudhuri, integral yoga, integral education, integral philosophy, Sri Aurobindo.

Introduction

The true and full object and utility of Yoga can only be accomplished when the conscious Yoga...becomes, like the subconscious Yoga in Nature, outwardly conterminous with life itself and we can once more, looking out both on the path and the achievement, say in a more perfect and luminous sense: 'All life is yoga.'"(Ghose, 1990a, p. 4)

We are presently living through some of the greatest transitions on the planet. These include: large ecosystem alterations of the earth (climate change and its effects); enormous societal changes (increased corporate globalization, resource wars, grassroots democratization, cross-

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cultural exchanges); and transformations of individuals (in all aspects of thinking, doing, being). These systems changes are interdependent.

Modern complex conditions demand of us an unparalleled paradigm shift. The urgency rings clear for spiritual leadership and philosophical direction during these times and the task of educators is to prepare the ground for creative emergence of more integrated thought and action. The integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and Haridas Chaudhuri can provide leadership for academic areas such as contemplative studies, consciousness studies, and transformative adult education.

The U.S. is characterized by a dominant culture steeped in strong individualism, dualistic thinking, reductionist approaches, consumerist materialism, hierarchical power structures, and propaganda which promotes violence as a solution to problems. The present worldwide economic, energy, and ecological crises have exposed the necessity for more holistic approaches to the problems of life. Agitations from the larger systems' schismogenesis have increased the tensions in individual lives. People search for ways to make sense of their lives, feeling great hunger for spiritual renewal but still trapped in old ideas and conditioned habits.

Many people are coping with enormous changes by returning to school. Adults are returning to higher education to widen their economic opportunities but this action is also an invitation to expand philosophical understandings. Rarely do students at the initial stages recognize the transformational nature of the education process itself. However, the body of literature on adult transformative education is expanding rapidly to include more spiritual and multicultural perspectives (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Tisdell, 2003). In addition, a new body of literature regarding contemplative practices within education has emerged (Altobello, 2007; Duerr, Zajonc, & Dana, 2003; Robinson, 2004; Rockefeller, 2006; Roth, 2006). Scientific studies also point to a more holistic approach to the development of consciousness and cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1991; Varela, 1999).

Filled with family obligations, stresses from work and unemployment, and unaccustomed intellectual challenges, the circumstances of adult student lives can present difficulties. In addition, lack of health insurance for millions of Americans and detrimental U.S. lifestyle habits contribute to unhealthy, "dis-eased" students. Students have largely been trained to: hurriedly multi-task rather than concentrate; employ subject/object dichotomy in dualistic framing of themselves, the world, and knowledge; obey in hierarchical work structures rather than freely create; and separate body from mind from spirit. People are taught a distinctly undemocratic, fragmented way to be with their own entities and within society. These proclivities, combined with other obstacles, make learning in higher education settings problematic.

Restless bodies, agitated minds, and forgotten spirits need to be addressed in the process of education. Intellectual progress can no longer be separated from psychological, physical, and spiritual realities. Direct facing of the fragmentation problem can be turned into lessons for real self-finding (and world-finding) for students when combined with new learning through yoga. Yoga is an entranceway into necessary epistemological and philosophical shifts. Yoga is a metaphor for life's unity. Yoga is life and life is yoga.

Even though integral yoga goes beyond the hatha yoga of India and the popular westernized versions, physical yoga sets the conditions for quieting the minds of students. This prepares the ground for the planting of integral philosophy seeds. A few stretches, some breathing techniques, and meditation methods can open up possibilities for a wider acceptance of integral yoga concepts.

Philosophical Principles

It is when we are guided from the very beginning with an integral view of Being to its multidimensional fullness that we can hope to understand philosophically the total truth as the identity of change and permanence, of the temporal and the eternal.” (Chaudhuri, 1974, pp. 86-87)

Before illustrating applications of integral yoga, some basics of integral philosophy require exploration. The philosophical principles addressed here include: the nature of being and unity with the divine; non-dualistic thinking in the heart of yoga; emergence of the feminine principle; and evolution in love-action-knowledge.

The Nature of Being and Unity with the Divine

Being is on the one hand cosmic energy and on the other formless eternity, self luminosity, formless being,, cosmic consciousness, unitive consciousness, creative void, unfathomable mystery, self-light of the eternal, mysterious self-light of Being, evolutionary urge of Being ...Whereas consciousness is an emergent value, the self-light of the eternal is the primordial reality. (Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 41)

In his writings, Sri Aurobindo elucidated the unity of Shankara’s *transcendent being* with the Buddha’s *non-being*. The nature of beingness, described in philosophical discourse by Western writers, is similar to Sri Aurobindo’s yogic unity with the Divine (Ghose, 1990a). The conceptions of the divine as transcendent, as immanent in all of that exists, and as a personal God are three ways to experience the multi-dimensional beingness. While Chaudhuri employs the western philosophers’ language of “Being” and “the Absolute,” Sri Aurobindo explicitly and continuously used the word “Divine.”²

The integral notion of being/divine goes beyond what the ancients had proclaimed because not only the ultimate ground of all being is realized, but also its dynamic nature is accented. integral yoga provides the steps for a more perfect unity with life. The aspiration for knowing our essential nature must first be in the heart of the seeker and surrender to the divine or truth is a prerequisite to this knowledge. Practices can develop the full surrender of ego in order to bring about the bliss of this mystical knowledge. Purely intellectual approaches for understanding ontological reality are insufficient. Both Sri Aurobindo and Haridas Chaudhuri have written with many references to the development of ontological ideas and metaphors in both the eastern and

² Editors’ note: These terms are not capitalized in the remainder of the essay to be consistent with the journal’s publishing style.

western traditions. However, the fullness of the experience is a spiritual, not an intellectual realization.

Spiritual experiential learning promotes the dissolving of separative ego consciousness when enhanced by a call to participate in the infinite. This connection to enlarged beingness also diminishes fear and insecurities. It is a way to become familiar with immortality in the present (Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 139). The thrill of experiencing the impermanence of being is not the goal of integral yoga, however. This non-temporal understanding needs to be combined with the fullest flowering of the psychic, intellectual, and other potentialities of human existence for the purpose of participating in co-creation of a better world, for cooperation in the divine unfolding through history.

Non-Dualistic Thinking in the Heart of Yoga

The fundamental requirement of our present age is to enlarge and enrich the nondualistic outlooks with a creative sense of history. A harmonious blending of eastern nondualism and western historicism can provide a comprehensive philosophy of life such as can inspire the future progress of civilization. (Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 22)

One of the greatest gifts that the culture of India has bestowed upon the world is the philosophical concept of non-dualism. In integral philosophy, this non-dualism reaches a new height. The heart of this is the unity of eternal beingness with an evolutionary unfolding. Under the huge umbrella of integral thought, we find the dialectical combinations of idealism and pragmatism, spirituality and science, mysticism and evolutionism, formless being and forms, essence and existence, the ultimate ground and multidimensional reality, change and permanence, the temporal and the eternal, subject and object, the knower and the known.

Non-dualistic thinking is a particularly difficult concept for Westerners to accept. A big part of this comes from the orientation of Eurocentric culture and the depth in which we are all trained to think in “either/or” rather than “both/and” categories. Another reason is the artificial division between means and ends. To fully grasp both distinctions and their unities, one needs to experience an embodiment of non-dualistic thinking. Chaudhuri refers to this as a “spiritual breakthrough” (Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 30). Without non-dualistic thinking it is difficult, if not impossible to grasp the full nature of being in pure eternal, dynamic universal, and individual manifestations.

The Emergence of the Feminine Principle

There are four fundamental principles of creative existence: aspiration, action, meditation, and love (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 89).

One of the most profound contributions that Sri Aurobindo made in his philosophy was the importance that he gave to the feminine principle (Ghose, 1990b, pp. 724-753; Ghose, 1995a). His spiritual knowledge allowed him to see a future unfolding where there would be a rise in: women’s greater participation in all aspects of life; incorporation of feminine qualities into all

humans in a more balanced way than had been seen in thousands of years; and spiritual renewal across cultures stressing devotion to the Goddess as Divine.

During the later part of the 20th century, the recognitions of feminine qualities such as feeling, receptivity, subjectivity, multiplicity, nurturing, cooperation, intuition, relatedness and social responsibility have come alive in practically all academic disciplines, in all aspects of life, and across cultures. That is not to say that their full power has been unleashed or that there is not great resistance to this evolutionary move, but the signs of a huge cultural transformation are underway (Eisler, 1987; Schiebinger, 1999; Shepherd, 1993; Shiva, 1989). Sri Aurobindo's partnership with the Mother (as embodied in Mirra Alfassa) and as the name for the Divine Feminine, his writings on the spiritual reality of Shakti energy, his sadhana work (spiritual discipline) to bring the descent of the unity of Shakti (feminine God-consciousness) and Shiva (masculine God-consciousness) power paved the way.

The thinking and practices of our human society have been hampered by gendered domination with overemphasis on rationalistic, mechanistic, and reductionist thinking. Sri Aurobindo has referred to the zig zag of our evolution prior to the 20th century as evolution in Ignorance, characterized by separation, but now humanity has the possibility of evolution through Knowledge, characterized by yoga or union.

The growing strength of the feminine principle creates the conditions for a wider surrender to the infinite, as well as real progress on a number of fronts, including a leap in our evolutionary development. But there still exists a great underestimation of how the absence of the feminine has distorted knowledge acquisition on many fronts. Where the masculine bias goes unrecognized (within both men and women), the truth of nature and humanity's essence are clouded over in ignorance and the impact is wide and deep. Dominator bias forms the basis for an inability to view the "other" as connected to self, promotes dualistic thinking, blocks the appreciation of the vast diversity of beingness in nature, and hampers receptivity to the divine. Ignorance of the feminine principle holds back our ecological sustenance and our evolutionary potential.

The entrance of many women into different walks of life during the 20th and 21st centuries and their needed participation in the move toward emancipatory evolution appear to have been premonitions in siddhis (spiritual gifts) that Sri Aurobindo brought forth in his decades-long spiritual practices. Sri Aurobindo's appeal to women spiritual seekers can in large part be attributed to his explicit elucidation of the importance of the divine feminine, the embrace of the Mother, and the incorporation of qualities that we attribute to the feminine side of humanity (Ghose, 1995a). For example, he wrote on human intuition and how this quality opens the possibilities for the divine force to enter (Ghose, 1990a, pp. 769-780).

The advances that have been made in human knowledge by use of the feminine principles are now being recognized across disciplines. Both men and women are seeing the world with new eyes in biology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology and other knowledge bases by employing a greater reflexivity; a sensitivity to context and cultural bias; respect for the ethic of cooperation with nature; promotion of humanitarian values; and the embrace of diversity and equality in varied communities. For the first time, women constitute the majority of undergraduates now in

the U.S., a sign of Shakti energy moving within us (Ghose, 1990a). The shift from domination to partnership is taking on more urgency (Eisler, 2002). The unity of masculine and feminine qualities opens a new window for evolutionary development with wide ramifications for how we move forward in the 21st century.

Evolution in Love-Action-Knowledge

The ancient idea of evolution was the fruit of a philosophical intuition, the modern is an effort of scientific observation. Each as enounced misses something, but the ancient got at the spirit the movement where the modern is content with a form and the most external machinery. (McDermott, 1987, p. 70)

The marriage of eastern mystical gnosis of the divine with western advances in understanding evolution was a world-historic transformation in philosophical thought. Sri Aurobindo successfully combined these in the beginning of the 20th century.

The nontemporal is without doubt the most fundamental aspect of reality. It is the ultimate ground of existence...It is no doubt the foundation of existence. But existence has also its superstructure of ever-emergent values in the historical medium. The absolute can therefore be no less than the unity of the non-temporal and the historical. It is Being in its multidimensional fullness. (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 104)

This recognition opened the gateway toward a more profound understanding of unity with the divine and the participation of humanity in conscious evolution.

Both Sri Aurobindo and Chaudhuri explained the reconciliation of inner spiritual truth with human outer action. Drawing on the knowledge from the Bhagavad-Gita and Vedanta, his own investigations into modern advances in science and psychology, and the sadhana union with the divine, Sri Aurobindo formulated the love-knowledge-action integration in a unique way and Chaudhuri found ways to apply it to late 20th century thought and action (Ghose, 1990a, 1990b, 1995b; Chaudhuri, 1965, 1974, 1977; McDermott, 1987). Combining the yogas of *jnana* (knowledge), *bhakti* (devotional love), and *karma* (work and action), Sri Aurobindo offered an amalgamation which far surpassed what had been taught in the East or West on the spirit of humanity, the nature of the absolute, and the evolution of consciousness.

The whole point of self-transcendence is not just seen for individual liberation but for the transformation of humanity through new consciousness and the use of divine love in evolution. This revolutionary worldview is about universalizing ourselves with divinity/being in order to bring forth more love, more knowledge and more action in the service of all. Integral yoga is an invitation for greater freedom and greater responsibility because we become co-creators with the divine. In this sense, the integral philosophy opens us not only to individual spiritual transition but also to species transformation.

The understandings which Sri Aurobindo articulated on evolution of the mind stand as examples of that very evolution as well as pathways for others to follow Chaudhuri's leadership

in both philosophy and education illustrate that collective progress and individual progress are interdependent in the field of love-action-knowledge.

Beginning Applications of Integral Yoga

Integral yoga may be defined as the art of harmonious and creative living. It stresses the need for the balanced growth of personality; for constructive development of the latent possibilities of one's nature; and for their employment in the service of mankind and such higher values as truth, justice, freedom, peace and progress. (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 37)

I teach at DePaul University which has as part of its mission the intention to educate urban, immigrant, and historically excluded populations. Many students are in the first generation of their families to attend college. While there are some economically privileged students, quite a few students come from war-torn countries and from the U.S. working class. Many older students have endured and/or resisted sexist and racist societal practices. Some students are recovering from addiction abuse and some are rebuilding lives after war service in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Two-thirds of students are women and several classes have been, in majority, people of color. They come from diverse faith traditions and many with no religious affiliation. All are weary from the present economic shocks and want to make sense of their life experiences. They hunger for spiritual sustenance. Integral yoga can feed this hunger: "... integrating body, mind, spirit for the greater participation of the Spirit in terrestrial life becomes an important objective of Integral Yoga. To manifest the Divine in humanity...is the whole point of Yoga (Singh, 2008, p. 52).

Since the course teaches both science and spirituality, we discuss how western culture has compartmentalized knowledge. Students also make distinctions on what is culturally learned and what is natural to humans. Talks in class bring forth the differentiation between religion and spirituality and the key unity underlying all spiritualities is explored.

Of all yogas, hatha is the most popular in the U.S., largely due to its appeal to the physical in a society so steeped in materialist aspects. Hatha yoga consists of a growing number of styles with varying use of meditation, and with teachers who span a wide spectrum from barely knowledgeable to very educated teachers imbued with a spiritually integral base. About sixteen million Americans have taken up yoga; its acceptance of its followers as a subculture in this country is a given. In the hundred years of its development within the U.S. and its increased availability in all sectors, yoga has served to break down some cultural barriers.

In Americans, well-schooled in ethnocentric and xenophobic ideologies, participation in hatha yoga proves that there are bodies of knowledge that come from other cultures and times. The limitations of this particular yoga, however, include: overemphasis on the physical; overemphasis on individual liberation; and separation from the other yogas and its spiritual base.

The *Body, Mind, Spirit* course consists of ten three-hour classes. The first hour takes place in a chapel with practice of yoga postures, breathing techniques, meditation methods, and journal writing. I read portions of the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* as students rest in *savasana* (relaxation)

(Shearer, 2002). In each class, our actions are offered up to the infinite — in whatever form that holds meaning for participants. Some people give their intentions to Jesus or to God, Buddha, Allah, Goddess, Yahweh, truth, healing, or peace. Throughout Chapel sessions, I remind students to: practice non-violence; unite with the Infinite; yoke together body, mind, spirit; breathe deeply; act in order to know; engage in self-healing; be present in the moment; hold an image of divine within; experience the unity of flexibility and strength, relaxation and tension, change and permanence; and open the heart.

After a break, students resume work in the classroom for group discussions and presentations. Course objectives include the development of proficiencies in: exploration of a model of spiritual development and its application; understanding the interrelationships among intellectual, psychological, spiritual, and physical health in one's life; descriptions, categorizations, and explanations of change within human biological systems; and assessment of health care practices based on an understanding of the biological and social factors that contribute to health.

Each student reads a short inspirational passage or prayer of peace to open and close the classroom portions. These “inspirations” demonstrate the vast diversity of human insights and cultural meaning-making which can open the heart to fuller embrace of the Divine and serve to concretize what Haridas Chaudhuri expressed:

The different peoples of the world do indeed exist by being closely related to one another...essentially interdependent. They are inseparably associated members of the cosmic whole. They live, move and have their being in one indivisible cosmic medium. An active realization of this truth produces cosmic integration. (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 87)

Small groups work on presentations which educate on the systems of the body/mind/spirit complex and the ways yoga can contribute to health and connect to the Infinite. Final papers serve to consolidate the learning in both reflection and research.

“There are three essential ingredients in the realization of complete self-integration: psychic integration, cosmic integration, and existential integration” (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 83). Psychic integration includes recognition of the vastness of the unconscious and discovering ways to bring the unexamined shadow sides of ourselves forth in order to integrate the human personality (Shirazi, 2010). To that end, journal writing is encouraged (both in specific time periods within class and also at home on a regular basis) to draw out observations of the self after the experience of yoga postures, breathing, meditations, studying, and participating in group projects.

For those who are just beginning to come to some understanding of integral knowledge, the discovery of unconscious limitations and biases is of utmost importance. Most Americans do not understand how their ideas and behaviors have been shaped in social construction by cultural models. Experiential yoga learning and self-study reflections reveal unconscious patterns and uncover what has been covered. I collect the journals to read and meditate upon each one before providing a reflective commentary. The unconscious is addressed by providing a sacred space for the beginning half of the class in the Chapel where the practices of yogic postures, breathing, and meditation take place. In particular, there are certain practices which appeal to the unconscious.

For example, *The Healing Journey*, has proven to be very effective as an experiential exploration (Shraddhananda, 2003).

The classroom portion includes a circle of chairs. The environmental structure of the learning venue can have a powerful impact on the unconscious, as well as the consciousness in individuals, as Chaudhuri pointed out: “The truth is that consciousness is a much wider category than rational thinking” (Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 37).

Cosmic consciousness, which links the individual with all of nature and the divine, is a difficult concept for those so ingrained by American individualism. Therefore, partnership exercises are of utmost importance, an essential component to get a feel for unity of all and beginning notions of our essential interdependence. Incorporation of yoga partner poses allows students to embody trust and negotiation skills necessary for partnering on projects in class. In a society where distrust is rampant under the domination model, the creation of partner poses gives the opportunity for a completely different experience of “the other.”

Cooperative work in research assignments for presentations also underscores the necessary reliance on each other for knowledge creation. Interdependence is necessary for balance in body/mind/spirit. The course work provides constant reminders of interconnectedness within systems: tying together love for oneself, others, devotion to the infinite; individual intellectual pursuits in research combined with cooperative sharing of knowledge; and importance of taking action and seeing how one’s actions have impact on others through partnership poses, small group work, and community involvement.

Cosmic recognitions also come in the form of two particular healing meditations. One is the chakra meditation done in pairs where one person gently places fingers on the spine of another person. The person sitting in back slowly, gently moves the fingers up the spine through the seven major chakras (energy centers) while meditating on healing energy. The person in front meditates on receiving healing energies. It takes about 10-15 minutes and then the students switch places.

Another healing meditation is the “Sound Bath” where one person is situated comfortably in savasana in the middle of a close circle of other students. The person in the center meditates on receiving the group’s healing energies. The group chants vowel sounds in a continual flow of *aaah*, *eee*, *iii*, *oo*, *uu* which grows in strength, diversity, and fluidity. Members of the circle meditate on sending healing energies through sound to the person in the center.

While these particular meditation techniques are designed to enhance partnership practice and cosmic realization, they also serve to cultivate individual mindfulness and loving attention.

Given the dominant culture’s recursively reinforced attitudes and behaviors of individualism, competition, disjunctive learning, reductionist thought, these practices provide embodiment of alternative views. The strength of the dominator paradigm, with its accompanying Eurocentric focus, in American society requires intense opportunities for immersion in partnership skill-building.

Without adequate stillness of mind, unity with the ground of existence remains elusive. This existential reality cannot be approached through the intellect or the senses but requires a transcendent experience. First, there must be a desire to unite with that larger beingness and then there must be the conditions set for this unity. Spiritual practices come in many shapes and forms to allow for this opening. Chaudhuri outlined several methods of meditation (Chaudhuri, 1965, pp. 117-155).

Integral philosophers point to what has to be healed: “Consequently, the divide that exists between spirit and matter, between spirituality and science, between arts and spirituality, between philosophical and practical life, between religious and mundane, between sacred and profane, needs to be healed” (Singh, p. 74). The first steps in the spiritualization process are not only possible but in evidence from many of the over 600 students engaged in this learning thus far and hatha yoga proves to be a good entranceway. As Dr. Chaudhuri pointed out body consciousness is the foundation for our evolving spiritual life (Chaudhuri, 1974, p. 188).

Each class can be roughly viewed in thirds of varying numbers. Perhaps, a third of the people have already made progress on spiritualizing their lives and seek refined teachings as they prepare for a leap in their own evolutionary progress. These students take hold of integral concepts and embrace participation in evolution through the unity of love, action, knowledge. They already embody a more integral approach to life with an understanding of the transcendental, immanent, and personal experience of the divine and see themselves as vehicles for dynamic creative energy.

A middle third have been conscious of their spiritual searches but not yet disciplined enough to make steady progress. Their work may lift them to the level of those who entered at a higher level. The combinations of learning styles through body work, intellectual research, reflective self-observation contribute to deep practice immersion. The final third begin with relatively closed minds/hearts but gain some benefits at the physical or intellectual levels. These students, depending on adherence to practices, may open their hearts.

For each student, the awakening experienced through meditative practices, intellectual research, and collaborative work is quite unique. For each, the seeds of an integral view take root in different ways and at an individualized pace. The duty of the teacher is to be attentive to the particular journey of each seeker. This includes dialogic discussions in class; guidance during the yoga portions; personalized feedback on journals, presentations, papers; individualized correspondence through emails and phone calls; and mindfulness of the teacher’s own practices as example and as instrument for transformation. As Sri Aurobindo said: “All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process” (quoted in McDermott, 1987, p. 142).

Students learn by placing their own subjective experiences into wider contexts, becoming their own experiments in evolutionary consciousness. The goals of integral yoga include integration and transformative experience within the context of an evolving “embodied consciousness” (Shirazi, 2010). It is not just new experience through yoga but also the reflexivity on the process which leads to learning. Action and reflection on action helps dissolve the constructed personality and illuminate the spirit (McDermott, 1987, p. 66).

The advent of unity in subjective/objective reality and the increasing accent on reflexivity in higher education sets the stage for greater changes. As Sri Aurobindo so aptly said:

...the most important element...is the unpreparedness, the unfitness of the society or of the common mind...which is always the chief stumbling block...for even if the condition of society and the principle and rule that govern society are opposed to the spiritual change, even if these belong almost wholly to the vital, to the external, the economic, the mechanical order...yet if the common human mind has begun to admit the ideas proper to the higher order...and the heart of man has begun to be stirred by aspirations born of these ideas, then there is hope of some advance in the not distant future. And here the first essential sign must be the growth of the subjective idea of life, - the idea of the soul, the inner being, its powers, its possibilities, its growth, its expression and the creation of a true, beautiful and helpful environment for it. (quoted in McDermott, 1987, p. 194)

The diverse cultural mix of the class and the varying levels illustrate the multiplicity inherent in our human condition and in our search for meaning. This helps call forth in each student a love for the multidimensional nature of our existence and promotes a way of seeing “both/and” rather than “either/or.” The course combines affective, cognitive, and physical approaches to learning because the intellectual level alone cannot grasp these deep concepts.

Conclusion

The aim of the yoga is to open consciousness to the divine and to live in the inner consciousness more and more while acting from it on the external life, to bring the inmost psychic into the front and by the power of the psychic to purify and change the being so that it may become ready for transformation and be in union with the Divine Knowledge, Will and Love. (McDermott, 1987, p.91)

The resolution to organize one’s life around spiritual values, spontaneous outpouring of freedom in acts that promote the evolution of humankind, cultivation of meditative practices, and embodiment of cosmic love form the core principles of integral work. This is a tall task but it is our road to freedom, as Chaudhuri explained: “Spiritual freedom in its fullness is neither an abstraction nor a transcendent flight...It is the unity of knowledge, love and fruitful action...Action, love, wisdom, and peace are equally important elements in such self-integration” (Chaudhuri, 1965, pp. 76-77). Combining meditation and action leads to compassion and illumination (Chaudhuri, 1965, p. 141).

The works of Sri Aurobindo and Haridas Chaudhuri stand as glowing advances in philosophical analysis and spiritual experience. With poetic phrasing Sri Aurobindo gave profound expositions of the integral view which provide a deep feeling-state with each reading. Each chapter can provoke intellectual challenge and spiritual awakening. Using excerpts from books such as *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine* can help inspire and guide teachers on the integral path. Chaudhuri’s works built on Sri Aurobindo’s integral views and are especially helpful to those schooled in western philosophical thought.

Sri Aurobindo did not want to promote dogmatic following; he knew diverse methods can lead to the goals of integral understanding. Both Sri Aurobindo and Haridas Chaudhuri wrote very explicitly on the benefits and limitations of the various yogas (Ghose, 1990a; Chaudhuri, 1965). My experiments with integral yoga are just one way to introduce integral concepts in a learning environment. We can charge ourselves with the task of contributing innovations and expansions in integral knowledge in accordance with Sri Aurobindo:

An integral...yoga needs especially not to be bound...for while it embraces the knowledge received from the past, it seeks to organize it anew for the present and the future. An absolute liberty of experience and of restatement of knowledge in new terms and new combinations is the condition of its self-formation. (McDermott, 1987, p.144)

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