

THE FUTURE COLLECTIVE

"Man, thou art of one nature and substance with God, one soul with thy fellow-men. Awake and progress then to thy utter divinity, live for God in thyself and in others."

Implicit in Nature's design is a mysterious affinity for aggregation. This is observable in mineral, plant, animal and human life alike. In fact this aggregation is an underlying mechanism for evolution across these domains. The birth of molecules from atoms, compounds from elements, multicellular from unicellular, systems from units and communities from individuals all point to a process in our existence of coming together. According to the Vedic philosophies, *Brahman*, the ultimate Consciousness in Unity brings forth this world of multiplicities by involution to experience the Delight, *Ananda*, of this phenomenal reality, only to merge back through evolution into the Unity it is. We are no doubt in a process of evolution, and our innate yearning for integration and for communion within this world and with something beyond could be explained by the workings of this higher Principle.

The construct of communities have served humanity since millennia by enriching its experience through culture, spirituality, skills, arts, food, occupation and so forth. These communities have been of diverse kinds defined by the era of human consciousness and the natural environment in which they flourished. Besides facilitating division of labor, sharing of skills and resources, in social units humans have found the cure for their longing to belong, to empathise, to be understood and to make sense of the mysterious life that we are born into. Like food nourishes the physical, social relationships nourish the emotional. But there also have been many who have found these interactions limiting and have tried, and it seems some have even succeeded, to establish these relationships directly with the Divine, often secluding themselves from the society, to get away from the distractions of the mundane in pursuit of the higher. But isn't the purpose of the Higher to experience the mundaneness of Life through us? If we rob ourselves from the Delight of this existence, aren't we, who are essentially parts of the *Brahman*, preventing him from the realization of His nature? Isn't oneness a result of the complete expression of the multiplicities through the individual, the objective of evolution in the first place? It is well established now by Yogis and Spiritual Masters from all over the world, the need for the Higher to be manifested in the Lower, for both are parts of the same *Brahman*. This gives an interesting perspective for humanity at odds with individual and collective life.

The birth of a community is inevitably based on a common principle of work, or ideas, or goals or all of them. Everybody at least in principle agrees to share certain values and frameworks that allow them to function harmoniously and co-exist. But, through time such frameworks have a tendency to develop inertia and not evolve with the dynamic human spirit. The frameworks which were designed to facilitate growth start curbing individual expression in the interest of the collective or rather an idea of the collective, for such cannot be a true collective that is not representative of its individuals. The individual, who is compelled by nature to strive continuously to transcend any boundaries, to grow physically, mentally and spiritually, thus finds her/himself in a state of rebellion. To such rebels we owe the growth

and continuous evolution of human culture and consciousness. But the transformation of human mind and spirit by the means of the mind alone are often superficial or ephemeral.

With the world rapidly globalizing, each of us have a myriad possibilities in front of us, possibilities of human experience, ways of living, thinking and working to choose from. To form a true collective and still allow *free* choice to every individual is seen not only as a difficult task but a practical impossibility. While Man becomes more and more interested in his being, seeking always, something the idea of which it cannot even grasp, to satiate an intense inner longing, the political and social systems that thrived on uniformity and conformity are slowly falling apart. The new systems that are emerging to replace these age old constructs also are designs of a mind that tries to engineer and create without unveiling the Truth that already exists, and thus, though they are helping humanity to ask more questions, are still limited and will find themselves irrelevant as humanity moves up further.

The emphasis on self-interest and self-realisation today is a natural step in our evolution, as more and more people seek and work for a divine reality in their lives. But a self-realisation, that excludes the collective, can only be material in its nature, because it excludes the totality which would be the basis of a spiritual realization, the evolution of the multiplicities into the Unity. The life of the individual thus becomes a difficult challenge, even a paradox, because s/he is constantly in conflict with its own kind blocking paths of progress, even pushing back, and while his freedom is indispensable for his growth, such a growth will always seem to be partial. But this is only true if conflict is seen as a diminishing process. On the contrary conflict in Nature is an enriching process often creating more than before, finding solutions for what has not yet existed, bringing harmony and order to the multiplicity and giving it an opportunity to be integrated. Here we always falter and try to find compromises to be able to live and deal with each other. But compromise is a reductive process that tries to balance the individualities by taking away the conflicting qualities. By this process, we arrive at something that is generally acceptable but takes away the opportunities to learn and transcend individual limitations.

Reconciliation, or the Aurobindonian Integration, on the other hand, is a creative process of assimilating the opposites into a single unified truth, a principle higher than any individual embracing all individualities into a collective richness. It can be the only process that allows individuals to progress towards perfection, a way to find and merge their multiplicities, inching with every attempt closer to the Source, a true Unity, a harmonious whole that is not just the sum but much greater than that.

We often choose compromise over reconciliation for it is far easier to subtract from what already exists than to create what does not. In the interest of time and efficiency we lose the nuances that conflict brings forth and declare the most practical as the winner over the more meaningful. And what gives meaning to something is what remains to be discovered or unveiled. The difficulty often is not arriving at the meaning but the failing to work with each other. Modern mental processes may allow our minds to recognize the strength and practicality in harmony, but till this conscious unity is not an experience from within, it will not be manifested outside.

Besides opening our hearts to the collective quest of Knowledge, Power, Love and Delight, we perhaps need to make efforts to understand the other, just as we still try to understand ourselves. The Vedic *Rishi's* qualities of vision, listening and discernment could be of aid to our struggle in this process. We must learn that a compromise doesn't serve us for long. It gives the illusion of integration but in fact

differentiates even more, leaving unfulfilled desires and potentials that can even turn into blockages for future processes, proving counterproductive, only to come back to the same problem after much has passed and resented.

In the 21st century, many intentional communities have come up across the world challenging the prevalent social orders and in pursuit of finding a harmonious collective to build healthy relationships between humans and human and nature. According to studies, 95% of such communities failed within five years of their inception. The reasons all come down to human challenges, the knots in the invisible fabric of human relationships that prevent even the greatest ideas to manifest. But let's not focus on the quantity at the expense of the quality. In the existence of the communities that failed and the few that continue their work, are invaluable learnings for the experimentation of humanity of the future. Could learning and true Knowledge be a valid goal for humanity as individuals and in collectives? To be able to be in the Truth and aspire to be the Truth, we will need to see and listen to each other, ourselves and that *Brahman*, in us. And to do this clearly is a learning process, which, if, is the source of Delight for the individual soul, *Jivatman* and the universal soul, *Atman*, must also be a Delightful experience for the collective soul, which could we call *Samatman*?

The path of such a pursuit of collective Delight will be the path of a warrior, who must at times slay and at times reshape his own ego which drives him on this path.

While this can serve as a philosophical and even real basis for work in a group, the practicalities which are still necessary for our minds to grasp these ideas, like how can we work together while giving each other the space to grow individually and sharing, not curbing, opportunities for learning, or how can we explore our individualities while serving our communities will also be revealed not only by our mind but the new active principle of the collective. It may seem frivolous that such real details could be furnished by an abstract *Samatman*, which may or may not be in harmony in the first place. Here we invoke the three conditions for Yoga as described by Sri Aurobindo- Aspiration, Rejection and Surrender. For without Aspiration none of this would really matter, without Rejection of the falsehood we may never be open to truth and without Surrender we may never be guided by our own Higher selves. Just as an individual must discover the path of Yoga sooner or later, in one lifetime or the other, to help her/him advance on the path of her/his seeking, the individuals comprising of the group must recognize the need for the collective Yoga required to bring wisdom, strength, harmony and perfection to the group. This call will be intentional, to create a culture based on the active and constant pursuit of Truth, to create a vision and yet be guided by a sense of enquiry, the vision not limiting the human spirit to the tangibles but embodying values which themselves will be dynamic and may change as new learnings emerge along the way, every action bringing more light and illuminating the path of the individual to find himself in others and for others to find themselves in him and find the Delight that man continues to seek after in each other and their work .

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