

The Blossoming of the Truth Consciousness

What Auroville, Bill Gates and Daniel Barenboim have in common

After retiring, in 1910, from direct involvement in India's freedom struggle, Sri Aurobindo worked tirelessly the remaining four decades of his life for the descent of a new Truth Consciousness, already foreseen in the Vedas and the Upanishads. He envisioned that the full descent of this consciousness would mean the evolution of humans from the predominantly mental beings they currently are to supramental beings who will "attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence." "And if that could be achieved" he wrote, "we could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a *heaven on earth* common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers."¹

In a famous article broadcast on the momentous day on which India became Independent from British rule (August 15, 1947, which was significantly the 75th anniversary of his birth), Sri Aurobindo narrated how all the major "dreams" of his life had come to fruition, and stated that the manifestation of the Truth Consciousness was his "final dream, and personal hope." He noted that this consciousness "has begun to take hold on *forward looking minds* both in India and in the West." Sri Aurobindo foresaw that this manifestation "would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men [sic] began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society." Though he was fully aware that "the difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavor," he heartened us by saying that "difficulties were made to be overcome, and assured that "if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome."²



Sri Aurobindo has given this all-pervading Truth Consciousness, which he considered the necessary foundation for lasting peace and happiness on earth, a modern interpretation and dedicated his life to establishing it in the global human consciousness. This article wants to celebrate and call to mind three remarkable achievements that have been realized in the decades since Sri Aurobindo wrote the lines quoted above. These three examples distinguish themselves by the fact that they do not stop short at solving one particular conflict, but go further to shake the very foundations of this conflict, thus *changing the nature of the conflict itself*.

Conflicts will never be solved when the parties involved cling religiously to the premises upholding them, because either the conflict affords them short-term gains or complies with beliefs they consider sacrosanct. Instead, what is needed to solve conflicts is to consider them from the widest perspective taking into consideration both the new realities of the present and the conditions that have to be fulfilled to secure Peace and Happiness for all humanity in the future.

The three examples discussed below strikingly demonstrate how fresh and creative approaches can reduce a conflict that seems intractable and unsolvable, to an objective dilemma of limited scope that can be dealt with soberly and rationally.

For the sake of brevity, I will touch lightly upon the topics discussed by including only the bare minimum of details. My hope is that readers would not mind using an internet search engine to fill in the gaps and find more about the subject matter that interests them. Suggested links are provided in the References listed at the end of the article.

Auroville

When Mirra Alfassa³, Sri Aurobindo's⁴ co-worker and the realizer of his visions, inaugurated the international township of Auroville in 1968 she was already ninety years old. From the material point of view, she had little that would qualify anyone to build an international city. But she had a Vision and the Knowledge that only spiritual figures of her rank can have. She aspired to build the city as a model of *lived human unity*, an ideal which had always been at the core of her and Sri Aurobindo's spiritual aspirations. Fifty years earlier, during World War I, Sri Aurobindo had written *The Ideal of Human Unity*, a book considered far ahead of its time then.

When Auroville started, it wasn't more than a lonely banyan tree on an arid plateau near the Coromandel Coast of southern India. The soil was so cracked that almost all of the monsoon rains drenching it were lost to the nearby ocean. The humid heat in summer is unbearable for almost anyone other than the indigenous Tamil population of the area.

The Mother announced her project and simply invited to it "all people of good will." Slowly some of the Western hippies roaming India in the sixties, in their search for a meaning in their lives, chanced upon the area and heard of Auroville. They decided, out of curiosity, to visit the Mother everyone was speaking about. Reports of their short visits with her were later collected in a moving booklet titled *Turning Points*.⁶ Following is what one of the early Aurovilians had to say. He had participated, at the age of 17, in the Basques' fight against Franco, and after turbulent years of vacillation between esoteric interests and drugs, ended up in Auroville. He reported:

"I was only reading Sri Aurobindo, not Mother. The photo of Mother everywhere bothered me. But I thought, 'Okay, let us see this old lady, she may be nice, she may be wise. After all she lived a long time with Sri Aurobindo.' I went without expecting anything, casually. The door opened, and . . . I had never been so astonished in my life, because I didn't see a human being there. There was a sari, there were two eyes, a smile, but it was like a window on the infinite. The first impression was infinity, infinite space. I couldn't believe it. I had the impression I had lived in a match box. And then, wave after wave of love, like a tsunami of love. I had a very low opinion of myself — not so much for having killed people (the world was much better without the Spanish fascists) — but because I was very selfish and I didn't know what love was. So I thought, 'How can you possibly love me?' I felt ashamed, 'Forgive me for having brought this piece of garbage in your room, I didn't know who You were!' She was loving me. I

was feeling forever safe, safe, forever safe in your arms... and then suddenly she was not there anymore!

There was a face next to me. Later I learnt it was C [Mother's attendant]. I could hear words but I was not able to put them together. Only the next day they explained to me what had happened, which is that they had shaken me again and again to tell me it was over, and I had not noticed, so they had to lift me and carry me out of the room. Then I knew I would never leave."

These short meetings were enough to convince these seekers, mostly from Europe and America, to stay and do the hard work of building the city. They braved the environmental challenges: heat, insects, scarcity of food, tropical diseases, intermittent electricity, difficult communications, and scanty health care. Together with the Tamil natives, they dug the hard soil and planted thousands of trees, watering them by well water carried on bullock carts.

Today, half a century later, Auroville, after a slow growth due to the difficulties of the start, is now a rapidly growing township of over 2700 residents from 57 countries (according to the 2017 census). Lush green is visible everywhere. More than a hundred animal and bird species have returned to the area. The township has become a prime attraction for Indians and visitors from all over the world. In winter, when the weather is at its best, all sorts of conferences, and also cultural and art performances are offered by the residents and by renowned visitors from abroad. Auroville has received international awards for reforestation, sustainable and green building techniques, energy conservation, eradication of malaria, raising the awareness of village women, architecture, and the list goes on.

In addition to the achievements enumerated above, the crowning contribution of Auroville, according to the Mother, is its message of World Peace. The Mother explained in 1966 her main motivation for building Auroville:

"I was looking at the sorry state in which all countries find themselves, the truly painful and dangerous conditions of the earth, and there was a sort of an all-embracing vision showing how nations have acted, and are increasingly acting, in a growing falsehood, and how they have used all their creative power to create such formidable means of destruction, with, at the back of their minds, the really childish notion that the destruction would be so terrible that no one would want to use these weapons. But they don't know (they ought to know, but they don't) that things have a consciousness and a force of manifestation, and that all those means of destruction are pressing to be used; and even though men may not want to use them, a force stronger than them will be pushing them to do so. I had the clear vision that Auroville is a center of force and creation, with a seed of truth, and that if this seed could sprout and develop, the very movement of its growth would be a reaction against the catastrophic consequences of the error of armament... [In my vision] it was the LAST HOPE to react against the imminent catastrophe."⁸

Auroville is an example of how a great ideal can motivate humans to bring out the best in themselves and surpass their ordinary nature. Despite many initial clashes of interest (which need not surprise considering the extreme disparity in ethnicity, language, beliefs, and

backgrounds among the Aurovilians), the Ideal is holding them together, and sincere efforts on multifarious levels are steadily ongoing to achieve a true and lived human unity the end.

All it took was a great idea that sparked their deepest aspirations, the generous hospitality of the host country India, and the willingness and determination of the newcomers to accept the challenge and staunchly continue with the necessary work.

Auroville's 50th anniversary will be on February 28th, 2018. Happy Anniversary, Auroville!



Daniel Barenboim

As a second example of the “forward looking minds” mentioned in the quotes above, I have chosen the internationally renowned conductor and pianist Daniel Barenboim. Of all his exceptional achievements, I would like to recognize the healing dialogue he has created with many Arabs. He did that in an ingenious way in collaboration with the late eminent literary critic Edward Said. A close friendship grew between both men which far transcended their national affiliations: Barenboim is an Argentinean-Israeli; Said was an American Palestinian of Christian background.

The most enduring legacy of the cooperation between Barenboim and Said will remain the “West–Eastern Divan Orchestra”⁹ which they initiated in 1999 and is still performing today fourteen years after Said’s passing away in 2003. The orchestra combines young musicians from Israel and several Arab and middle-Eastern countries: Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. During several months of rehearsing, performing and traveling together, the young musicians learned how to forget their opposing views and inclinations and maintain an amicable dialogue with each other. While performing together the sublime creations of the great composers, the orchestra members *as one unit* are quite naturally carried by the wish to perform as beautifully and perfectly as they possibly can. One can hardly imagine a better way for a group of people to transcend their personal differences than to play in the same orchestra rehearsing, improving and enjoying together.

The musicians also discovered that humans have the innate ability to feel the suffering of others and the aspiration to lessen this suffering. While performing in Germany, they had the opportunity to visit Weimar, the city of arts and culture where Bach, Goethe and other men of genius created their masterpieces and shortly afterwards to visit the nearby Buchenwald concentration camp, where the Nazis committed the worst atrocities against Jews and others. The discrepancy in the atmosphere of the two neighboring locations was overwhelming. The Arab musicians, Semites themselves, pondered the fact that they themselves could have easily shared a similar holocaust as their Jewish cousins if Hitler had won WWII.

Several poignant testimonies by Arabic and Israeli musicians are recorded on films¹⁰, in which they profess that, before joining the orchestra, they were constantly told that Jews and Arabs had been deadly enemies since the days of their common ancestor Abraham. After

knowing each other and studying the historical facts, they discovered the fiction of their ancient enmity. They all admitted that the Palestine conflict was still there, but now they had learned to see its much reduced proportions without the irrational fear, hatred, contempt, demonization and the feelings of “either us or them.” For the first time they dared to think: “Maybe the conflict had been unnecessarily hyped up after all” and to hope that “Maybe a solution can still be found which replaces strife by a mutually beneficial cooperation and puts an end to the ongoing terrible waste of human lives and resources.”



Bill Gates

Traditional wisdom has always maintained that the three strongest drives and passions of humanity are *money, power and sex*: each of these drives has a formidable attraction of its own for the human ego, and when they feed into each other, their combined sovereignty over humans becomes complete.

Religion and spirituality have often shunned money because it enslaves the spirit and possesses its owners rather than being possessed by them. In this regard, we need only remember Christ’s admonishment of the camel and the eye of the needle, or else the numberless Indian sannyasins and bhikshas who choose to get rid of all their possessions and live the life of the wandering mendicant. Historical instances of rare individuals exist who have renounced enormous powers (e.g. the emperors Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka of India, and more recently the British King Edward VIII). As for sex, there are examples of Sultans and emperors who could have enjoyed unlimited sex with their harems but remained deeply in love with one woman (e.g. Suleiman the Magnificent of Turkey, and Shah Jahan, the Indian Moghul ruler).

The blossoming Truth Consciousness introduces a new paradigm: humanity *as a whole* has started to free itself from subjection to the *Money-Power-Sex* triplet and deal with it in creative ways which do not require living in extreme poverty or total seclusion. The new approach is to replace the accumulation of money by a judicious dedication of one’s wealth to serving others. Freedom from sex comes by becoming aware of the subtle pervading ecstasy and bliss in all creation which derives from the interplay of the male/female principles. More concretely, this means replacing sex by an all-encompassing divine Love which accommodates a great variety of relationships between the sexes that go beyond sexual intercourse. There is a growing awareness that every individual has his/her own attraction and beauty and thus deserves to be loved, whether or not he/she has sex appeal or fulfills conventional norms of physical appearance. And one day even the crowning awareness will dawn that even if one loves without one’s love being reciprocated, *loving* itself becomes a great joy and its own reward.

Lately, a group of billionaires, spearheaded by Bill Gates and Warren Buffet, demonstrated in a very appealing way the new approach towards money as sketched above. They have decided to keep half of their wealth for themselves and dedicate the other half to helping others and caring for the environment. Soon their example was followed by many

others. According to an article published recently by CNBC, the award winning American business news channel, the number of these billionaires had risen to 168 in May 2017. They are now not confined to the US but spread all over the world.¹²

Here are some declarations from these willing donors:

“We all have the moral obligation as the more affluent in society to give back as best we know how.” Mohammed Dewji, Tanzania

“As the lucky ones in life, we have been given much, sacrificed little, and gained a lot.” Anne Grete Eidswig and Kjell Inge Rokke, Norway

“Unconditional giving of ourselves, and what we have, reflects a nobility of spirit which reaches out and binds all of us.” Dean & Marianne Metropolis, US

“We will only grasp the staggering potential of our time if we create on ramps that empower all people to participate, regardless of background, country of origin, religious practice, gender or color of skin.” Robert Frederick Smith, US

These future-oriented generous souls have demonstrated that giving away need not be a painful sacrifice, and is in fact a source of great happiness and fulfilment.¹¹ They have broken the curse of accumulating money at all costs and only for the sake of accumulation.

I hope this article shows that signs of the spreading of the Truth Consciousness envisioned by Sri Aurobindo are steadily increasing. I have chosen three instances from among countless others. They all give us hope and encourage us to advance, more determined than ever, towards the luminous future awaiting us all.

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- (8) Mother’s Agenda, September 21, 1966
- (9) Named after a collection of poems by Goethe
- (10) The award winning film: Knowledge is the Beginning, <https://youtu.be/bgAWv5CptHK>, and the youtube film: The Ramallah Concert, <https://youtu.be/3X4blRHvvVs>
- (11) Watch, e.g. Bill and Melinda Gates: “Why giving away our wealth has been the most satisfying thing we’ve done.” https://www.ted.com/talks/bill_and_melinda_gates_why_giving_away_our_wealth_has_been_the_most_satisfying_thing_we_ve_done
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