

Our life is a paradox with God for key.

Savitri, Book I, Canto IV



*It is not by books that
Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied
but by subjects—what he has said
on the Divine, on Unity,
on religion, on evolution,
on education, on self-perfection,
on supermind, etc., etc.
The Mother*

Editor's Note: This special issue of MĀSA presents a brief report, selected photographs and participant impressions from the Symposium conducted at SACAR in October 2010.

SACAR-IGNOU Symposium on Sri Aurobindo Studies

**Integral Philosophy, Yoga-Psychology
& Management**
October 4-10, 2010

SACAR has recently launched a series of symposia on Sri Aurobindo Studies in partnership with IGNOU, and successfully conducted the first symposium which focused on the subject areas of Integral Philosophy, Yoga Psychology and Integral Management. Seventeen participants attended the symposium, some of them were relatively new to the thought and vision of Sri Aurobindo. The group also included some current students enrolled in various programmes offered by SACAR.



Some of the key themes explored in the seminar included: Man and the Evolution, Integration of Matter and Spirit in Integral Philosophy, Our Manifold Being, Integral Yoga in Daily Life, Management of Man and Matter in the light of Sri Aurobindo.

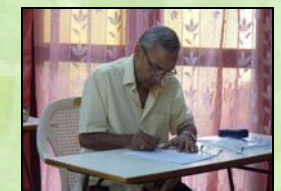


In one of the sessions Deepali Gupta, one of SACAR-IGNOU PhD students, presented ideas for her doctoral research project.



Participants were given specific questions on different topics, upon which they deliberated in small groups and later presented to the larger group. This allowed them to delve deeper into the topics being covered in the symposium.

On the last day of the symposium, participants were also asked to write reflective essays on a topic of their choice, as long as it was inspired by some theme discussed during the symposium. This exercise further deepened their overall learning experience.



The symposium provided an intensive learning opportunity to the participants through in-depth, rich and constructive deliberations on selected topics. Programme included lecture-discussions, interactive question-answer sessions, group reflections and discussions. Other activities included group visits to Ashram and Auroville, film shows, and open sessions for informal conversations.

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Some Comments Expressed by the Participants:

“Only request is to continue many more such symposia in the future on different aspects.”

“I really enjoyed interacting with such a diverse group of participants and learned from all of them. All of us were very enthusiastic and shared our thoughts candidly.”

“Expressing ideas and sharing thoughts with peers helped me to make ideas more concrete...”

“The general intellectual feel & quality of SACAR is inspiring and refreshing.”

“The cultural evening was the most thrilling experience.”

“Time discipline is the hallmark of this symposium.”

“Good hospitality, I felt totally at home.”

“We got a mixed approach to the presentations with some of them being informative, some being more interactive, some aided by the use of technology. All of them were able to inspire us and lead us towards the essence of the ideas they intended to put across.”

“The symposium provided to us a very amiable and participative collective experience. The spirit to take things in positive light was remarkable. The questions that the participants were inquisitive about were patiently and carefully handled by the presenters.”

“This seminar incorporated the right amount of academic rigour for participants from various fields and age groups.”

“The experience is rejuvenating and helpful to approach life’s problems with a different perspective.”

As per the practice in all SACAR residential programmes, one evening was dedicated to a cultural programme in which the participants shared their various talents. We all enjoyed singing, flute playing, poetry recitation, and even a head massage demonstration. The relaxed and warm atmosphere made the evening memorable for all.



Lunch and tea breaks during the symposium provided many opportunities for informal conversations, socializations and prolonged discussions.



On the last day of the symposium participants shared their heart-felt impressions about their learning experience and the key insights they gained. Certificates of completion were also awarded to all the participants.



To view more photographs from the symposium and a flash photo gallery, click:

sacar.in/SeminarOct10/SeminarOct10.html

SACAR now offers several online certificate programmes

1. Spiritual Foundations of Indian Culture (C-SFIC)
2. Creative Expression in India (C-CEI)
3. Contemporary Indian Society & Polity (C-CISP)
4. Essentials of the Gita
5. Integral Education
6. Integral Yoga Psychology

Learners interested in Indian Cultural Studies, please note that successful completion of C-SFIC is a pre-requisite in order to enroll for C-CEI or C-CISP.

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A SACAR Certificate of Completion will be awarded at the successful completion of the 16-week online study programme.

To learn about the degree programmes SACAR offers in partnership with IGNOU, see: sacar.in/ignou/mainpage.html

START DATE:

February 21, 2011

To apply, email:

suhasmehra@gmail.com

Or, download the application form at www.sacar.in

Last date to apply: Jan 15, 2011

MĀSA is a bimonthly electronic newsletter published by SACAR and provides updates and information about various activities at SACAR. We invoke the blessings and grace of our beloved Mother and Sri Aurobindo through our reference to MĀ and SA.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

Deepali Gupta writes:

The Symposium was a platform for a perfect convergence of seemingly diverse fields of knowledge and practice being pursued by man. In light of Sri Aurobindo's thought, one was able to view Management as a psychological perspective for dealing with man, matter and money; Yoga Psychology as an endeavor for perfection of both the inner and outer self and Integral Philosophy as the rationale for working towards achieving harmony both within and without.

Just as it is important to become conscious of the various parts of one's being so as to be able to work towards refinement and development of each, it is worthwhile to adopt a yogic approach to handling matter and money which does not mean renouncing them altogether but putting them to proper use without wasting and considering money as a moving force, not a personal possession. Integral Management will aid in bringing about growth of the collectivity and a conscious utilization of matter through a consciousness approach. The four select attitudes towards humanity viz. goodness, generosity, equality and peace are harbingers of collective progress in real terms. Sri Aurobindo writes of the individual and the collective aiding one another in their progress. As a personal reflection I feel that the synergism that results in any group work is a result of the group collectively being able to realize these attitudes which may not be realizable in an individual until and unless he consciously exceeds his own lower nature through a persistent yoga.

The presentations and participations in the Symposium revealed the fact that our specialized fields of knowledge need to know the fundamental truths of existence and harmony as a true foundation to be able to make a real and future relevant contribution to humanity. As a personal insight I feel that if we would like to align our best practices - personal, professional or organizational towards betterment of the self and society, we need to get back to the basics of existence and it is Sri Aurobindo who has very caringly taken to a variety of modes of communication and expression and made through the most difficult endeavors; simply to acquaint us with the basics of existence, harmony and growth which will keep us going towards our ultimate destiny and in the absence or in ignorance of which our prized discoveries and inventions are self capable of failing us by pulling us downwards.

Arundhati Chatterjee writes:

The symposium at SACAR (Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research) held at Pondicherry from 4th to 10th October, 2010 was a breakthrough in my normal course of life. Academic seminars or /symposia that I have attended earlier related to topics on language and literature. But this symposium on Sri Aurobindo Studies was not simply academic enrichment but it was a process of purification of our heart and soul, stirring our minds out of a stupor of years and making us conscious of the masters, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother who have been beckoning us upward towards realisation of our greater consciousness. In this present age of debased values and terror threats, we inhaled a fresh breath of optimism and vibrant life.

The interactive sessions urged us to widen our mental horizons and see, feel and somewhat realize that there is much more to life than eat, drink and be merry. While probing into the inner consciousness we felt an urge to delve into Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy, Yoga and feel the pulse of our Psychic Being. Other than the material strivings of which we are normally aware there is a path of meditation leading to Sadhana which can be adopted not only by the 'sadhaks' but persons like you and me, the common lot. The divine light and grace of the Master might make our lives worth living!

I do hope to practice in my life at least a little of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It seems to me that after coming back from the Symposium in some remote corner of my mind, a door has opened up which probably was closed all this time.