

AUROBINDO GHOSE

International conference

Sesquicentennial of a transcultural thinker



Amphithéâtre Jaurès (ENS, 29 rue d'Ulm, 75005)
Salle des Actes (ENS, 45 rue d'Ulm, 75005)

by
Benedetta Zaccarelo

November 22, 23 & 24, 2022



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Aurobindo Ghose was born in Calcutta in 1872 and from the age of seven studied in England. When he returned to his own country, having completed his university education thanks to the scholarships he won for his translations from Greek to Latin, he could speak several European languages and had received a first training in Sanskrit.

Equipped with his Western training and influenced by the national independence movements that had shaped recent European history, he devoted himself to a revaluation of Indian culture which would profoundly impact the concept of «Indian renaissance» and eventually transform the country.

From the same spirit, which aims at reinterpreting the relations between civilizations through the lens of evolutionary and transnational interdependence, emerged an extensive theoretical output as well as a political career that would lead him to become the most prominent figure of the so-called «extremist» party of the Congress, until his arrest by the English police.

As the first freedom fighter to demand complete independence for his country, the first principal of the first national university under English rule, Aurobindo Ghose would leave his mark on the political history of his country as well as on the history of Indian philosophy written in English during the twentieth century. In his major philosophical work, *The Life Divine*, the Hegelian and Darwinian tendencies acquired during his years at Cambridge University remoulded the metaphysical perspective with an Indian matrix that was inspired particularly by his «revolutionary» reinterpretation of the Isha Upanishad.

In turn his political, philological or anthropological essays would beget in the prism of various disciplinary approaches the idea of a single dialectical movement (between Europe and India, between historical

and «transcendent» meaning of texts, between materialism and mysticism...) that would express the existence of a consciousness seeking to realise its own unity by crystallizing in time and through cultural spaces, successively coherent but nonetheless partial as manifestations.

The legacy of Aurobindo Ghose's atypical and pioneering thought, inherently transcultural and multidisciplinary, remains to this day, largely unexplored by academic critics, in India as well as in Europe. However, the links that exist between this thinker and France in particular, are very intimate: having found political refuge in the then French territories of Pondicherry, Aurobindo would remain there for more than 40 years until the end of his life, he would found his ashram and entrust it to the French artist, writer and yogini Mirra Alfassa (known as «Mother»), who would accept several French disciples and go on to found Auroville there.

At 150 years of his birth, this international conference aims to make the personality of Aurobindo Ghose better known, to discover the history of his French reception and illustrate some of the notions of his philosophy that are still nowadays politically and philosophically very relevant (integrality, human unity, supramental...) in a comparative approach to the European tradition. To this end, the presentations made by the main specialists working on Aurobindo in Europe, India, Israel and the United States will be followed by a cross-cultural dialogue with European colleagues who have worked on the themes addressed subsequently and who will serve as the first cultural «mediators» to the French public. Thanks to the readings of the texts of the Indian thinker and his French disciples by former students of the *Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* in Pondicherry, we will also have the opportunity to directly hear these voices that come to us from elsewhere and from a past which is at once so near and yet so far away.

NOVEMBER 22, 2022

Amphithéâtre Jaurès (ENS, 29 Rue d'Ulm, 75005)

09:30 | Conference opening in presence of **Frédéric Worms**, director at Ecole normale supérieure de Paris-PSL and **K M Praphullachandra Sharma**, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of India in France

10:00 | Readings of excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's works by **Priyanka Bardhan** and **Anshul Sinha**, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education's former students (SAICE, Pondicherry), with the participation of **Richard Hartz** (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives, Pondicherry)

Coffee break

MORNING

"Life, revolutionary action and political work"


11:30 | **Ted Ulrich** (University of Saint Thomas, Saint Paul, Minnesota) , **"The Early Aurobindo: An Indian Freedom Fighter"**, followed by an interaction with the audience


12:15 | **Alex Wolfers** (King's College, University of Cambridge) , **"A Subject Race has No Politics': The Revolutionary Sannyasi and Aurobindo's Doctrine of Passive Resistance"**, followed by an interaction with the audience

Lunch break



AFTERNOON

"Philology, hermeneutics, philosophy"

15:00 | **Daniel Raveh** (Tel Aviv University) , **"Sri Aurobindo and the Task of the Translator"**, discussed by **Cezary Galewicz** (Jagellonian University, Cracow) 

15:45 | **Benedetta Zaccarello** (ITEM, CNRS/ENS, Paris) , **"À la recherche d'un 'futur antérieur' : philologie et évolution de l'humanité dans The Secret of the Veda et La Naissance de la Tragédie de Friedrich Nietzsche"**, discussed by **Paolo D'Iorio** (ITEM, CNRS/ENS, Paris) 

Tea time

17:00 | **Stephen Phillips** (University of Texas) , **"Divine Light versus Divine Action: Sri Aurobindo and Ādi Śaṅkara on the Īśā Upaniṣad"**, discussed by **Silvia D'Intino** (ANHIMA, CNRS/EHESS, Paris) 



17:45 | Round table, crossed exchanges with the audience at ENS and online



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MORNING

“From the anthropological vision to a socio-political theory”

09:30 | **Patrick Beldio** (The George Washington University, Washington DC et Marymount University, Arlington, Virginia) , “**Bodies Made Beautiful by the Spirit's Light': Sri Aurobindo's Aesthetic Vision of a Posthumanity**“, discussed by **David Breme** (Université Laval, Québec City, Canada) 

10:15 | **Devdip Ganguli** (Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry) , “**Inverser le triangle' : Sri Aurobindo et sa vision spirituelle de l'unité humaine en temps de crise mondiale**“, discussed by **Gauri Parasher** (Trier University, Allemagne) 

Coffee break



11:30 | **Richard Hartz** (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives, Pondicherry) , “**Relier les continents : L'Europe, l'Asie et l'humanité dans la pensée de Sri Aurobindo**“, discussed by **Jean-Eric Aubert** (president of the Société française de Prospective, Paris) 


12:15 | Round table, crossed exchanges with the audience at ENS and online

Lunch break

AFTERNOON

“Philosophy, metaphysics, evolutionism”

15:00 | **Debashish Banerji** (California Institute for Integral Studies, San Francisco) , “**The Inward Turn and the Radically Creative Posthuman: Bergson, Deleuze and Sri Aurobindo**“, discussed by **John Bagby** (California Institute for Integral Studies, San Francisco) 

15:45 | **Nalini Bhushan** (Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts) , “**The many faces of maya in Life Divine**“, discussed by **Pawel Odyniec** (Karlstad University, Sweden) 

Tea time

17:00 | Swami Medhananda (Vedanta Society of Southern California and University of Southern California) 🖥️ **“Evolutionary Cosmopsychism: Sri Aurobindo’s Solution to the Hard Problem of Consciousness”**, discussed by **Madhucchanda Sen** (Jadavpur University, Calcuta) 👁️

17:45 | Round table, crossed exchanges with the audience at ENS and online

Readings of a choice of Sri Aurobindo’s poems by **Anshul Sinha, Vignesh Krishnan** and **Priyanka Bardhan** danced by **Madhumita Patnaik** and **Priyanka Bardhan**

24 NOVEMBRE 2022

Salle des Actes (45 rue d’Ulm, 75005)

MORNING

“The French intellectual reception of Sri Aurobindo’s work”

09:30 | A short walk through the historic campus of the École Normale Supérieure de Paris

Coffee break

10:30 | Peter Heehs (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives, Pondicherry) 👁️ on the French intellectual reception of Sri Aurobindo, with the participation of **Jyoti Garin** (INALCO, ancienne élève de SAICE) 👁️ on Alexandra David Néel and Mirra Alfassa

12:25 | Round table, crossed exchanges with the audience at ENS and online

Conference closing session | Readings of texts by **Priyanka Bardhan, Madhumita Patnaik** and **Anshul Sinha**



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Acces to booklet:

