

August 2013 Special Issue Introduction

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The articles included in this special issue of Integral Review represent a wide range of integral scholarship at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), founded in 1968 in San Francisco by Dr. Haridas and Bina Chaudhuri. Haridas Chaudhuri arrived in the United States in 1951 upon an invitation by professor Frederick Spiegelberg of Stanford University who was charged with directing a newly founded independent graduate school (American Academy of Asian Studies) devoted to introducing Asian studies to American higher education. Spiegelberg had traveled to India in the late 1940s to research the contemporary practices of the ancient spiritual traditions of India. His visit culminated in an encounter with the great spiritual figure of modern India, Sri Aurobindo, whose writings represented a grand synthesis of evolutionary spirituality with ancient Indian spiritual traditions.

Haridas Chaudhuri, one of the first to study and write about Sri Aurobindo, brought a creative and dynamic integral vision to the west which he articulated in terms of an educational framework based on integration of the highest eastern and western spiritual and cultural values aimed at educating the whole person. Later in 1968, he founded a new graduate school, the California Institute of Asian Studies (later renamed CIIS), implementing a triune approach to higher education comprising didactic, experiential and applied dimensions. The experiential dimension included the pioneering introduction of meditation, yoga and other eastern mind-body practices into American higher education.

The first article by CIIS president Joseph Subbiondo, *Integrating Meditation into Higher Education: The Founding Mission of CIIS as an Education for the Whole Person*, provides an overview of the introduction of meditation practice into higher education as part of an integral approach to education. The importance and relevance of mindfulness meditation in daily life is outlined and Haridas Chaudhuri's philosophy of meditation and its connection to action are explored.

We continue with several articles on integral ecology and its visionary extensions to new areas such as integral ecofeminism and integral ecopsychology. *The Quest for Integral Ecology* co-authored by Sam Mickey, Adam Robbert, and Laura Reddick, presents an exploration of the different approaches to integral ecology, including a historical overview and an exposition of some of the philosophical and religious visions that are shared by a variety of integral ecologies. A common aim of integral ecologies is to cross the boundaries between disciplines in order to develop comprehensive understandings of the intertwining of nature, culture, and consciousness in ecological issues.

In *Toward an Integral Ecopsychology: In Service of Earth, Psyche, and Spirit*, Adrian Villaseñor-Galarza presents a framework for the nascent field of integral ecopsychology, defining it as the study of the multileveled connections between humans and the Earth. After introducing different ecological schools, he focuses on ecopsychology as a unifying lens from

which to assess our planetary challenges by exploring three avenues in which the project of ecopsychology enters into dialogue with spiritual and religious wisdom.

Next, Chandra Alexandre offers an introduction to integral ecofeminism as a spiritually grounded philosophy and movement seeking to catalyze, transform and nurture the rising tensions of the entire planet. In *Integral Ecofeminism: An Introduction*, she articulates an approach toward healing and offering a possibility for creating and sustaining the emergent growth of individuals, institutions and our world systems through acknowledging the wisdom of creation in its multiplicity, specificity, and profound manifestation.

Loving Water: In Service of a New Water Ethic explores how a new water ethic could gain much from the Hindu concept *seva* (loving service) that arises from the traditions of *bhakti yoga* (loving devotion) and *karma yoga* (altruistic service). Elizabeth McAnally who visited India to participate in an interdisciplinary conference co-sponsored by Yale University and TERI University in Delhi, draws on David Haberman's work with the Yamuna River of Northern India, inviting the reader to consider a new water ethic that responds to contemporary global water issues and crises.

Next we turn to a unique application of integral thinking to our current economic crises in *An Integral Perspective on Current Economic Challenges* by Pravir Malik who presents a holistic model that draws inspiration from the journey a seed makes in becoming a flower in more fully understanding the nature of the crises we may be facing. After providing a brief overview of major economic crises of the last several decades, he argues that each economic crisis must be understood as a unique phenomenon requiring different and unique responses.

The next three articles explore integral spirituality, first in connection to western esoteric traditions, and finally with respect to traditional Indian spirituality. In *The Path of Initiation: The Integration of Psychological and Spiritual Development in Western Esoteric Thought*, Gary Raucher examines a strand of Western esoteric wisdom through the writings of Alice A. Bailey and Lucille Cedercrans that offers a particular integral perspective on psychospiritual development in relation to spiritual emergence and the mutually interdependent evolution of consciousness and matter. This view, influenced by theosophy, and thus in part by Asian spiritual traditions, considers human life to be a vital and necessary phase within the larger cosmic evolution of consciousness and matter. Emphasis is given to "The Path of Initiation," a phase of psychological and spiritual expansion into deepening levels of transcendent, supramental consciousness and functioning.

A New Creation on Earth: Death and Transformation in the Yoga of Mother Mirra Alfassa, by Stephen Julich is a Jungian cross-cultural hermeneutic exploration and analysis of symbols of death and transformation found in Mother Mirra Alfassa's conversations and writings. Focused mainly on her discussions of the psychic being (evolving soul) and death, it is argued that the Mother maintained her connections to her original western occult training throughout her later years of collaboration with Sri Aurobindo.

Debashish Banerji traces the Indian yogic and spiritual foundations of Sri Aurobindo's yoga in his article titled the *Traditional Roots of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga* through a psycho-

biographical approach to his life and work. He traces Sri Aurobindo's personal spiritual evolution, starting with the early years of his political activity and his introduction to yogic practices, and leading to his four major realizations. Sri Aurobindo came into contact with a number of Indian traditions of yoga and absorbed symbolisms, practices and lexicons from all of these—from Tantra and Vaishnavism and their synthesis with the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedantic traditions—to shape his integral yoga, the ultimate goal of which became the acceleration of the evolution of human consciousness toward integrality and establishment of divine life on earth.

*Lastly, in *Metaphysical Instincts & Spiritual Bypassing in Integral Psychology*, I introduce the term *metaphysical instincts* in connection with Assagioli's *higher-unconscious* in the context of integral psychology. In traditional spiritual practices awakening the metaphysical instincts has often been done at the expense of suppressing the biological instincts—a process referred to as spiritual bypassing. In some western psychotherapies, the main focus has been the integration of the *lower-unconscious* into the conscious personality; whereas, in traditional yogic practices the focus has been on the integration of the higher-unconscious into the conscious realm, leaving out the subconscious and unconscious areas. This essay discusses how the metaphysical instincts, initially expressed as the religious impulse with associated beliefs and behaviors, may be transformed and made fully conscious, and integrated with the biological instincts in integral yoga and psychology in order to achieve wholeness of personality.*

It is hoped that these essays will provide inspiration and stimulation for those interested in integral consciousness and the diverse array of streams that feed into it.

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