

Group-soul: Sociology in the Spiritual Age

By [paulette](#), 20 Jan 2016 / 02:34 am

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Some time ago I had a private exchange on the group-soul with C., an early Aurovilian; but I was caught in the vortex of the Aurovet violent quisquilia and could not elaborate further. I reproduce below an excerpt from a major text I had wished to submit to C., and which I feel imperative to bring to the general attention, at this particular junction where more than ever we seem floating away from the safe shell out of which Auroville was born.

From Ruud Lohman, "THE SADHANA OF THE GROUP-SOUL – TOWARDS A SPIRITUAL SOCIOLOGY AND PLANNING", written for The Auroville Planning Group and other interested persons, 10 February 1972:

2. SOCIOLOGY IN THE SPIRITUAL AGE

2.1. Sociology and Integral Yoga

2.1.1. The way to create Auroville is yoga, Integral Yoga. All other approaches should be integrated into this one major and central approach. Integral Yoga from its side does not exclude a sociological approach since by nature it is integral. Sociology, however, should grow towards the heights and integrality of the yoga.

After this primary statement, which seems to be an obvious one, all the following statements are tentative. Much thinking and experimenting will have to be done before we will be able to speak of a spiritual sociology which is a worthy partner in the Integral Yoga. This report therefore is a first attempt to bring out some ideas on the subject.

2.1.2. A central idea seems this one: spiritual sociology is the knowledge and the experience of the group-soul. If it is true that sociology in general is interested in groups and masses as far as they are determined by and determine the social realities on physical, vital and mental levels, then a spiritual sociology would have to go beyond this and search for the soul of communities and groups, and how the dialogue of influence between this soul and the social realities takes place on all the levels.

Is a group-soul a chimera or a reality? If we take the group-soul as the point of departure for our spiritual sociology we would have to be very sure about it. We quote, therefore, Sri Aurobindo: "The nation or society, like the individual, has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these signs and powers for the sake of which they exist. One may say even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than has one: it is a group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctiveness must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life."

2.1.3. With the parallel between the individual and the group drawn so smoothly, the suggestion of a parallel between the individual sadhana and the sadhana of the group presents itself. Here we would reach right into the heart of the matter of spiritual sociology and planning. Only, the group-soul

sadhana would even be more difficult than the individual one: “The parallel is just at every turn, because it is more than a parallel; it is a real identity of nature. There is only this difference that the group-soul is more complex because it has a greater number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being instead of an association of merely vital subconscious cells.

A small in-between summary:

1. Spiritual sociology is part of the Integral Yoga.
2. Spiritual sociology deals with the group-soul.
3. The group-soul is identical in nature with the individual soul, only more complex.
4. Spiritual sociology is the (collective) sadhana of this group-soul.

2.1.4. Who builds Auroville? It is done through the group-soul, which, by coming to the front, surrenders its being to the Mother. The first thing to be attained, then, is the awareness of the group-soul. As in the individual sadhana, the first phase of the effort should be directed towards this emergence of the group-soul. The group-soul will take over our mental workings and develop its own way. The development of Auroville must go from inside towards the outside, from the inner to the outer. Things must first get an inner awareness, then they will translate themselves according to their own truth into the outer.

It seems that even here we can draw the parallel with the individual sadhana: first the group itself, the population of Auroville must reach a stage of love, of devotion in the heart, of mental quietude, of being open for the deeper truth, in order to get a collective awareness of the collective psychic being – which again is identical in nature with the individual psychic being – and to bring it to the front.

What a sociology and planning can do in this context, having reached a silence and devotion themselves, is to become conscious instruments for the experiments and the other means of bringing about and strengthening the awareness of the group-soul. The creating of an environment – in architecture, agriculture, horticulture, etc. – should accompany this growth of the group-soul from stage to stage of consciousness, which can “plan” its next step and the physical environment fitted for its embodiment in matter. Sociology, planning, the sciences, art and architecture then become integrated parts of the development and the outer expression of the group-soul.

2.1.5. What this amounts to is to realise a collective awareness of the Truth itself behind the superficial levels, the Truth that wants to realise itself among and in the collectivity. Not even a “search for the truth” must be aimed at, not a nervous going hither and thither to experiment on particles of the Truth, but simply an openness in which Truth can work according to its own nature: “Mind is on the surface existence. Men work along the surface and try to find the Truth behind it by more thorough study. The true method is: to enter into direct contact with inner truth and (...) make an outer creation which is not a search for the Truth, but rather Truth’s own creation, that is to say, the power of Truth to realise itself by way of human instruments in an external manifestation”.

Planning and action are then seen as an outflow of the process in which the group-soul grows into awareness of its own being. The external environment will fall in line with the inner development. “The first thing that all must accept and recognise is that the invisible and higher power (that is to say, which belongs to a plane of consciousness that can be called anyway, under any name, it does not matter, veiled for most people, yet one can have it...) this power is capable of governing material things in a way much more truer much more happy, much more salutary for all, than any material power.”

The point of Truth can hardly be overstressed. One more quotation, from Satprem: “These builders of the new world will understand, and that quickly, that this City of Truth will not be and cannot be so long as they are not themselves and totally in the Truth, and that this earth to be built is first and before

all the field of their own transmutation. One does not cheat Truth. One can cheat men, give speeches and make declarations of principles, but Truth doesn't care it catches you red-handed and at every step throws your lie back in your face (...). It is a Truth of matter (...). There are never any 'material problems', there are only inner problems".

The small in-between summary continued:

1. In spiritual sociology the direction is from the inner to the outer.
2. The group-soul will, at every step of its growth, create its own environment.
3. Not only the group itself, but spiritual sociology and planning as functions of the group-soul should first realise the collective mind's silence and the heart's love and devotion.
4. The basic attitude of the sociology and planning must be surrender to the Truth, so they can work from its standpoint, in its process and as instruments of its infallibility.

