

Exploring the Depths of Human Consciousness: An Aurobindonian Analysis of Integral Psychology in Tagore's 'Chandalika'

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Abstract:

Tagore's drama Chandalika appears intellectually stimulating. Examining the psychological dimensions within the framework of the Aurobindonian notion of integral life has the potential to offer a novel and enlightening viewpoint. To commence, initiating the discourse by introducing the Aurobindonian notion of integral life is advisable. This may entail an examination of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical framework, his conceptualizations of human awareness, and his vision for a comprehensive and interconnected approach to existence. Subsequently, it is important to thoroughly examine the intricacies of the drama Chandalika's intricacies to discern its manifestation of integral psychology. One can analyse the characters in the play, scrutinizing their motivations, conflicts, and personal development to accomplish this task. The present article pertains to how the individuals' psychological states conform to or diverge from the tenets of integral psychology, as elucidated by Sri Aurobindo.

One may consider analysing particular situations, dialogues, or character interactions that serve as prime examples of these psychological attributes. Moreover, it is important to analyse how Tagore depicts the characters and their internal conflicts since this significantly contributes to the broader themes and ideas conveyed in the play. Using textual evidence and direct citations from the play is imperative to substantiate and bolster your analysis. Utilizing this approach will substantiate one's ideas and showcase a meticulous material analysis. In conclusion, it is imperative to duly summarize the findings and expound upon the significance of the analysis in elucidating the play Chandalika and its broader implications within the realms of literature and psychology.

Keywords: *Human awareness, personal development, integral psychology, English literature, etc.,*

The convergence of the play *Chandalika*, Sri Aurobindo's concept of integrated existence, and Marcus Aurelius's philosophical principles highlight some ideas' enduring and universal nature. Despite encompassing various cultures and historical periods, these ideas converge in their desire for human dignity, unity, and internal equilibrium. (Meera 2010) The play *Chandalika* gains a significant historical dimension due to its association with the anti-untouchability campaign led by Mahatma Gandhi during its creation. By depicting love as a means to achieve harmony among individuals, the play surpasses its specific historical period and remains a source of timeless moral wisdom. Examining *Chandalika* from the perspective of integral life, as expounded by Sri Aurobindo, provides an opportunity to comprehend the interrelatedness of many dimensions of human existence, encompassing the physical, vital, mental, and spiritual aspects (Chakarvorty 1971). The notion above, albeit originating from a particular philosophical lineage, resonates with the profound contemplations of Marcus Aurelius, an ancient Roman ruler and philosopher whose profound insights continue to serve as a source of inspiration for individuals pursuing knowledge throughout successive eras. The phenomenon of shared resonance elicits a profound inclination to delve more into the intrinsic human pursuit of comprehensive comprehension and internal gratification.

All things are interwoven with one another; a sacred bond unites them; there is scarcely one thing that is isolated from another. Everything is coordinated, and everything works together in giving form to the one universe. The world order is a unity made up of multiplicity; God is one providing all things; all beings are one; all law is one; the common reason which all thinking creatures possess) and all truth is one, if, as we believe there can be but one path to perfection for beings that are alike and reason. (Aurelius 1995, p. 45)

Tagore's play *Chandalika* delves into the theme of completion, which resonates deeply with the ideals of holistic existence. The theatrical production explores the complexities of the human condition, demonstrating that genuine satisfaction can be attained by adopting a comprehensive psychological perspective. Tagore's deconstruction of the dominant caste, class, and creed structure reveals the constructed nature of these social

frameworks, emphasizing their hindrance to exploring profound truths. Both Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo espouse the promotion of a comprehensive worldview that surpasses the limitations of factionalism and sectarianism. Authors' creative works provoke readers to contemplate humanity's fundamental nature deeply. This paper examines the representation of Aurobindonian integral psychology in Tagore's emotional story *Chandalika* by examining the characters, their psychological journeys, and their relationships.

Sri Aurobindo and Tagore have a common perspective that the complete spectrum of life is essential for unlocking spiritual enlightenment and achieving ultimate satisfaction. Sri Aurobindo's comprehensive examination of human consciousness, based on the fundamental principles of the Upanishads, serves as evidence of the complex interplay between our existence's internal and external dimensions. Within his conceptualization of integrated existence, the author calls for a comprehensive and inclusive acceptance of all facets, encompassing the lower and higher domains, the internal realm, and the external environment. At the core of this philosophical framework is achieving harmony across all aspects of an individual's being, establishing a cohesive integration among the different dimensions of the self. According to Sri Aurobindo (1997) life functions as a hallowed domain where the manifestation of the Ultimate Truth-Consciousness occurs, initiating a process that originates from the fundamental aspects of being and progresses towards its highest summits. In the pursuit of comprehensiveness, it is imperative to consider every facet of life, as each one plays an essential role in achieving one's maximum capabilities. Tagore's writings reflect a similar attitude, although he does not explicitly use the word 'integral existence.' The author's texts are replete with phrases that celebrate a comprehensive existence, a balanced coexistence, and an all-encompassing acceptance of all facets of existence. (Kachroo 2001)The philosophical views of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore are illuminated by their similar sentiments, highlighting the great universality of their ideas. This affirms that pursuing a complete life transcends linguistic and cultural differences.

... our education should be in full touch with our complete life, economical, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual; and our educational institutions should be in the heart of our society, connected with it by the living bonds of varied co-operations. For true education is to realize at every step how our training and knowledge have organic connections with our surroundings. (Tagore 1962, p. 469)

Tagore's persistent examination of life's entirety is a fundamental aspect of his philosophical perspective. The author's notion of integral living surpasses the limitations of pure spirituality, broadening its scope to include the ordinary aspects that influence our everyday lives. This inclusion encompasses many human experiences, from the most abstract and elevated realms to the more tangible and practical aspects of life. In his articles "Sadhana," "The Creative Unity," and "The Centre of Indian Culture," Tagore provides a detailed analysis of the amalgamation of existence, presenting evidence of the interconnectedness that exists within various human endeavours. Using personal experiences and a substantial repertoire, Tagore presents compelling examples that underscore the inherent interconnectedness of many facets of existence. In conjunction with Sri Aurobindo, Tagore emphasizes the profound importance of all aspects of existence in the quest for ultimate truth. Therefore, the persistent motif of life's entirety in his subsequent treatises arises as evidence of this belief's lasting significance and fundamental nature in Tagore's philosophical collection.

The sentence elucidates Tagore's worldview, demonstrating a deep comprehension of the harmonious amalgamation of spiritual and pragmatic dimensions within human existence. The author emphasizes education's comprehensive and interconnected nature, envisioning educational institutions as integral elements within the broader societal structure rather than isolated entities. Within this particular setting, the author emphasizes the historical importance of ancient tapovanas, wherein masters and pupils actively engaged in the practical aspects of maintaining their community. The methodology above, grounded in the principles of self-reliance and a profound affiliation with the environment, cultivated a collective consciousness of interdependence and cohesion among all constituents.

Tagore's proposition for establishing a cultural centre that serves as an intellectual hub and an economic anchor exemplifies visionary thinking. The individual envisions a synergistic integration of education, industry, and agriculture, wherein knowledge is effectively utilized to augment the tangible prosperity of the community. This sentiment reflects his overarching ideology that the quest for knowledge and spiritual development should be harmoniously intertwined with the pragmatic necessities of existence. A fundamental tenet of Tagore's vision is prioritizing collaboration over rivalry for financial gain. The cooperative approach aims to establish robust connections between educators, learners, and the local community, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship in which each party contributes to the overall achievement and sustainability of the collective entity. This viewpoint is consistent with Tagore's fundamental conviction regarding the interdependence of all living beings and the imperative of achieving harmonious cohabitation.

Tagore's perspective ultimately espouses the importance of an education that enhances cognitive abilities, cultivates practical aptitudes, and fosters a profound sense of communal belonging. This statement highlights that genuine knowledge and wisdom must be utilized to advance society, emphasizing the interconnectedness of intellect, work, and spirituality in the quest for a comprehensive and gratifying existence. Through his early theatrical works, Tagore established the groundwork for his subsequent belief in the

interconnectedness of existence and the quest for ultimate truth. Literary works such as *The Genius of Valmiki*, *Chitra*, *The King and the Queen*, *Malini*, *The Ascetic*, and *The Sacrifice* offer ample opportunities for delving into the progression of awareness. In these pieces, Tagore explores the complex phenomenon of inward metamorphosis, alluding to the profound interaction between human encounters and spiritual illumination. The author's early works contain thematic undercurrents that anticipate and foretell his subsequent, more explicit exploration of the concepts of completeness and integrality in life. These works indicate Tagore's persistent concern with the interdependence of human existence and the pursuit of a comprehensive, all-encompassing truth.

Undoubtedly, Tagore's initial exploration of the concept of transformation in the human psyche, as demonstrated in his work *The Genius of Valmiki* (or *Valmiki Pratibha*, 1881), serves as a testament to his exceptional artistic development as a dramatist right from the commencement of his professional journey, despite his tender age of twenty-one. The decision to incorporate the renowned Valmiki mythology into his debut play demonstrates his skill in literature. It reflects his deep aspiration to emphasize the significance of human endeavours in facilitating the evolution of awareness. As demonstrated in his initial theatrical work, Tagore's dedication to emphasizing this thematic element persisted as a continuous motif across his whole body of dramatic works. The author's persistent emphasis on the development of human consciousness, its inherent variability, and its capacity for advancement and enlightenment reflects the broader philosophical notion of transformation essential to pursuing a comprehensive and integrated existence.

In the present context, it is noteworthy to observe the correlation between Tagore's examination of dramatic themes and Sri Aurobindo's emphasis on transformative processes within the framework of holistic existence. Both luminaries acknowledge the importance of internal transformation as a crucial component of spiritual and holistic growth. The importance of this issue is emphasized by the common perspective, as represented by Tagore in his plays, which has significantly contributed to the rich fabric of Indian literature and intellectual thinking.

First, the consciousness must be transformed, then life, then the forms. It is in this order that the new creation will happen. . . . we must live integrally with the truth, the beauty, the power and the perfection hidden in the depth of our being. It is then that all life will become the expression of sublime, eternal, divine Joy. (Manibhai 11)

Tagore's play *Chandalika* serves as a monument to his steadfast dedication to exploring the issue of human awareness and its capacity for significant metamorphosis. This theatrical production, which surfaced during the later stages of Tagore's dramatist career, exemplifies his continuing preoccupation with societal matters and his unwavering commitment to promoting transformative action. By drawing from the widely recognized Buddhist legend of Ananda, Tagore adeptly constructs a narrative that presents a thought-provoking critique of prevailing norms and customs. The portrayal of Ananda's interaction with a woman belonging to the untouchable caste and her first hesitance in providing him water serves as a poignant reflection on the pervasive phenomenon of untouchability within the socio-cultural fabric of pre-independence Indian culture.

Tagore's aptitude as a writer is evident in his capacity to imbue this well-known narrative with a forward-thinking and revolutionary message. By employing this occurrence as the central element of his theatrical work, the author not only condemns the terrible custom of untouchability but also presents a resolution firmly grounded in the notion of holistic existence. The outcome of *Chandalika* serves as a symbol of optimism, presenting a distinct viewpoint that was uncommon within the dominant societal context. Tagore's steadfast conviction in the possibility of internal transformation and the ability of individuals to surpass societal limitations highlights his lasting impact as a visionary intellectual and proponent of a more comprehensive and harmonious community. In "Chandalika," Tagore invites the listener to contemplate the profound potential of compassion, empathy, and acknowledging our collective human being.

Prakriti's vocal expression exhibited signs of quivering as she commenced the process of divulging the profound intricacies of her innermost being to her maternal figure. The profound magnitude of global injustices, characterized by glaring discrepancies that permeated the existence of numerous individuals, had evolved into an overwhelming and unconquerable weight. The individual expressed a deep-seated need to discover significance amid disorder, embarking on a journey for comfort that ultimately resulted in this act of atonement. The Mother attentively listened to Prakriti's statements, deeply concerned and moved by the power and conviction expressed. Collectively, they would embark on this voyage of self-reflection in pursuit of solutions that could revolutionize Prakriti's realm and extend their impact to the broader global community.

PRAKRITI. It was the other day. The palace gong had just struck noon, and it was blazing hot. . . . Then a Buddhist monk came and . . . said, 'Give me water.' . . . I said, 'I am a Chandalini and the well water is unclean.' He said, 'As I am a human being, so are you, and all water is clean and holy that cools our heat and satisfies our thirst.' For the first time in my life, I heard such words; for the first time, I poured water into his cupped hands—the hands of a man whose feet I would never have dared to touch. (Sykes 138)

Tagore's plays exhibit a recurring thematic element that manifests through portraying two distinct character archetypes. The initial category comprises individuals who possess the necessary information for truth-consciousness and demonstrate a profound understanding of integral life. The second type, however, is unaware of this essential presence, as their consciousness stays inactive yet holds significant potential to awaken alongside individuals in the first category. Characters who prioritize truth, on the other hand, are a scarce phenomenon. (Chakrabarti 2009)

In the play *Chandalika*, Prakriti and the Mother can be seen as representatives of the second type, as their comprehension of integral life is constrained. When the Mother admonishes Prakriti for her indiscretions, she underscores the significance of their lower caste position. However, the interaction between Prakriti and Ananda had a lasting impact on her. The experience represents a profound realization, a pivotal moment of self-discovery regarding her intrinsic value as an individual. The individual experiences a deep emotional response to Ananda and again desires his companionship. The protagonist exhibits a patient demeanour as she remains near the well, motivated by the recent acknowledgement she has garnered from the male character. Prakriti experiences a newfound sense of worth, which strongly attracts Ananda. The individual expresses a strong desire for the presence and companionship of another person while also considering the possibility of relinquishing their autonomy and submitting to the other individual. The deep and meaningful bond between them influences this contemplation.

PRAKRITI. You won't understand, Mother, you won't!

I feel that in all these days, he is the first who ever really recognized me. That is a marvellous thing. I want him, Mother; I want him beyond all measure. I want to take this life of mine and lay it like a basket of flowers at his feet. (Sykes 141)

Prakriti's yearning for Ananda arises from a deep-seated feeling of appreciation. He is the initial individual to perceive her as a conscious entity genuinely, so she greatly admires him. In the interim, Prakriti's Mother, with a deep sense of apprehension, cautions her daughter against nurturing such aspirations, imploring her to relinquish thoughts of Ananda. However, Prakriti's restlessness continues, with her persistent longing remaining steadfast. As the duration of the waiting period extends from days to weeks, Prakriti eventually summons the bravery to beseech her Mother to utilize her supernatural abilities to summon Ananda promptly. The mere notion elicits a strong emotional response from the Mother, causing her to feel unsettled. Consequently, she makes concerted efforts to discourage her daughter through various strategies. Confronted with Prakriti's unwavering determination, the Mother invokes religious discourse as a last-ditch effort to influence her.

Prakriti, you must contemplate the sacredness inherent in our religious beliefs. This intense attraction has the potential to steer you towards a course of action that contradicts our established principles and values. Ananda is a monastic deeply committed to a lifestyle centred around the quest for spiritual enlightenment. The genuine aspirations you possess have the potential to disturb the spiritual balance associated with your vocation. We must uphold the limitations established by our religious beliefs and cultural customs. For the sake of personal welfare, dear Prakriti, and the safeguarding of our cultural practices, it is imperative.

MOTHER. Have you no respect for religion?

PRAKRITI. How can I say? I respect him, who respects me. A religion that insults is a false religion. Everyone united to make me conform to a creed that blinds and gags. But since that day, something forbids me to conform any longer. I'm afraid of nothing now. (Sykes 143)

At this point, Prakriti's response demonstrates an emerging level of maturity and a heightened comprehension of religious matters. The individual acknowledges that any authentic religious belief system should not enforce limitations on the recognition of the inherent value of individuals, irrespective of their societal status. At its core, authentic religious belief promotes treating all individuals with reverence, irrespective of their social status, hereditary social group, or religious affiliation. Promoting separation and sectarianism within society is mostly driven by a misguided faction, frequently motivated by self-interest.

Sri Aurobindo strongly expresses this concept in his literary piece, *The Human Cycle*. The individual criticizes these misrepresentations of religion, categorizing them as "religionism," a terminology distinguishing them from genuine and legitimate religious convictions. The author sheds light on the negative parts of these ideologies, underscoring the significance of acknowledging and surpassing them to cultivate a more encompassing and unified society. This work presented adeptly captures the fundamental distinction between authentic religious practice and religionism.

Authentic religion can be characterized as a spiritual pursuit that endeavours to exist in the realm of the spirit, transcending the realms of intellect, aesthetics, ethics, and practicality. It aims to enlighten and regulate these aspects of human existence under the guidance of a higher spiritual illumination and moral code. In contrast, religionism manifests itself by firmly adhering to a limited and sincere devotion to the less significant

aspects of religious practice or by excessively emphasizing intellectual doctrines, rituals, creeds, or organized belief systems. (p.78)

As expounded upon in this context, the concept of true religion surpasses the limitations imposed by intellectual, artistic, ethical, and practical considerations. The objective is to establish a presence within the domain of the spiritual realm, exerting influence and moulding our complete essence using elevated wisdom and principles inherent to the spiritual realm. In contrast, religionism tends to adopt a more limited scope. It tends to focus on lower elements, frequently giving disproportionate importance to intellectual theories, particular forms of worship, rituals, creeds, or organized belief systems. This extract highlights the significance of distinguishing between these two aspects of religious practice and comprehending their significant influence on individuals and society.

The significance of comprehending the fundamental nature of religion and integrating it into one's life to achieve integral psychology is underscored by the insights imparted by the trailblazer of integral life. Prakriti goes on a profound transformational journey through her sincere embrace of religion. This particular moment signifies the commencement of a significant transformation in her state of awareness. Nevertheless, it is imperative to recognize that this is only the preliminary stage of a protracted and intricate procedure.

Prakriti is confronted with profound anguish in the absence of Ananda. In conjunction with her developing consciousness and yearning, the nonexistence of his being introduces a level of intricacy to her emotional and spiritual quest. Prakriti's character is expected to see additional development and evolution due to these hardships and tribulations.

In response to her daughter's unwavering determination, the Mother eventually approves and consents to perform a spell on Ananda to draw him closer to Prakriti. Upon the manifestation of Ananda in the enchanted mirror, Prakriti's exhilaration and euphoria reach their zenith. Nevertheless, the magical incantation forces Ananda to a tumultuous rainstorm and severe meteorological circumstances, straining Prakriti to her utmost capabilities. Observing the distress experienced by her daughter, the Mother implores her to reevaluate her decision, providing reassurance that there remains an opportunity to reverse the enchantment.

Prakriti experiences a temporary state of agreement as she finds herself caught between her desires and the anguish experienced by Ananda. However, in a sudden moment, she experiences a shift in her perspective just as she is about to grasp the realization of her most profound desire. The aforementioned internal conflict manifests the multifaceted aspects of her cognitive processes, poised at the precipice of reaching maturity, albeit not yet attaining complete fruition. The cultivation of truth-consciousness is initiated through the experience of mental struggle and indecisiveness.

As she anxiously awaits Ananda's arrival, her Mother inquires about her emotional state. The statement made by Prakriti, as described by Krishna (1962 p.150), conveys a deep and significant realization. Prakriti expresses a sense of indescribable satisfaction resulting from the immense detachment of creating something new, unburdened by concerns, fears, or emotions such as pity or sorrow. This amalgamation of emotions indicates a transformation in her worldview, suggesting the emergence of a fresh comprehension enlightened by the principles of integral psychology. The experience above, despite its intensity, is equipping Prakriti with the necessary foundation to attain a more profound and all-encompassing understanding of existence.

Prakriti experiences a sudden epiphany as Ananda approaches, signifying a significant transformation in her awareness. The female individual who had expressed a strong desire to submit herself to her heroic figure fully experiences a significant transformation in her understanding. The individual's perception of Ananda has shifted from that of a revered celestial being to that of a fallen hero who now seeks her magical abilities out of necessity rather than from a place of inherent purity.

This metamorphosis prompts Prakriti to recognize the presence of impurity that has now affected Ananda. The individual comprehends that the one approaching her does not possess the same luminous qualities she had previously imagined. The protagonist's revered figure, formerly embodying an exemplary state of moral integrity, has succumbed to an evil force that demands her attention. Upon attaining this novel awareness, she realizes she cannot regard a man who has fallen from grace as her exemplar.

Prakriti earnestly requests her Mother to reverse the enchantment placed upon Ananda. Nevertheless, the Mother, depleted by the physical strain of her earlier endeavours, lacks minimal remaining energy to engage in other magical activities. Prakriti finds herself in a condition of ambiguity and apprehension due to the unfolding sequence of events as she navigates the repercussions of her decision-making.

Upon Ananda's arrival, Prakriti, having recently acquired consciousness, extends a greeting that aptly mirrors her state of metamorphosis. The protagonist's perception of the male character has shifted from idolizing him as a hero to seeing him as a figure who absolves her transgressions, perceiving his moral purity as untainted by worldly corruption. The change in her perspective indicates her personal development and advancement in spirituality.

Concurrently, the Mother concludes her supplication to Ananda while drawing her final breath. Ananda, displaying unwavering resolve and composure, engages in the act of prayer to Lord Buddha through

the recitation of Buddhist slokas. The play's final scene serves as a culmination of a symbolic cycle wherein Ananda assumes a crucial role in facilitating the transition of Prakriti's awareness.

Chandalika holds great significance in Rabindranath Tagore's career as a dramatist. The work adeptly examines the concept of integral psychology with nuance and profoundness. Tagore's profound fascination with the play's thematic elements led him to reprint it as a dance drama in 1938. This literary work, by examining fundamental aspects of human existence and the development of awareness, not only functions as an exceptional example of socio-political writing in India but also as a compelling portrayal of psychological dynamics. Tagore's plays have a remarkable ability to interweave intricate topics, leaving a profound and enduring impact on the audience.

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