Zech – Auroville’s First Newcomer from Hong Kong

Yucca Newcomer Group 2019 – Zech is in the top row, right side

We are pleased to share this offering by Zech, a Newcomer from Hong Kong - and the Philippines - showing again Auroville’s internationalism. Zech comes with a variety of professional skills and a rich life path, as he describes below. Many of us have profited from Zech’s inspired poems and insights on yoga that have uplifted the community’s sharings, and we include some of his spiritual poetry at the end of this article.

Manilla, Philippines

I was born in Manila, Philippines with mixed Malay-Chinese-Spanish blood. I moved to the dynamic and amazing Hong Kong in 1990, seeking greener pastures and a new way of life. After almost twenty-three years, relatively successful and financially independent but still searching for deeper meaning and purpose and further life application of spiritual realisations, in 2013 I adventured back to the Philippines in the beautiful island paradise of Palawan. Six years later with a more integral perspective and heeding the irresistible call of the Mother: "I invite you to the Great Adventure.", I ventured to Auroville in 2019, and since then have been living full time here and consciously participating, in an ever-deepening surrender to The One we call The Divine, as one of many receptive instruments, in unique roles and capabilities, for the hastening of the collective evolution of consciousness and life on Earth.
Going back to my life story in Hong Kong, my initial work was in the service sector combining my skills in Information and Communications Technology (ICT - software/hardware) in the manufacturing/business sector. Thereafter I was integrating ICT in the business/education sector. I had a couple of years of experience in the insurance/financial sector and many other sectors in the consumer and service industries in between full time jobs. In busy Hong Kong with its high-cost of living, one cannot remain out-of-job for long. Survival by working for money in an “urban jungle” such as Hong Kong is the basic law. It’s fairly easy to earn a decent living in vibrant Hong Kong though, if one is not choosy. Being adaptable, multi-tasking and flexible are the best ways to survive, evolve and fully experience life on Earth.
In 1998 I started teaching extra-curricular classes at the YMCA in ICT, basic small-business accounting and the art of silkscreen printing based on my varied work and life experiences. In 2000 I worked full time for around five years with a preschool Montessori Group integrating computer lessons with the children/students and setting up computer software/hardware and networking systems for the business side of the company. After which I moved to and progressed in teaching, research and preparing curricula in Math, Science, ICT Computers (hardware and software and Game-based Learning) and Arts & Crafts in primary and secondary schools. Additionally, I trained adults in Dynamic Learning of English developing creative and interesting workshop modules that are more applicable in daily life. By the end of 2013, with a home mortgage almost done and assured, life events prompted me to stop working in the Education sector and launch a new life adventure. During these wonderfully dynamic times I was also living the complex householder stage with my spouse and life partner whom I met while in my first job in Hong Kong.

Palawan, Philippines

At the beginning of 2014, with my life partner still pursuing her career until retirement and shocked by my decision to live this permaculture lifestyle in an “actual jungle”, alone I ventured to our family-owned 4-hectare forested property in Palawan, Philippines, named it One Earth Ecovillage, stayed there alone building my little house, living a minimalist, paradise-island lifestyle, with a view to establishing a permaculture food forest. I even had Mocha the cow and Kream, Latte and Yogurt the Swiss goats as forest companions to help keep the forest growth in check, or so I mistakenly thought. Eventually after a few years’ living with my “pets”, to make a long story short, the realisation from that experience was “they became my prisoners and I their slave”. So I had to let them go. What wonderful eye-opening life experiences… transitioning from a posh, modern, tecnologically-advanced first-world city to a naturally beautiful but chaotic forest setting living like Tarzan... oohlala. My wife visited me once in a while, and I to Hong Kong whenever the calling came. In essence, those joyful yet complex multi-layered life events taught me a different lesson. An intense preparation for the next stage of my existential quest. In hindsight, I realised that this life event was a spiritual cleansing, a shadow work, to address and let go of the subconscious cultural and life programmings and baggage that I accumulated being born and growing up in a complex lifestyle of a well-to-do, intricately extended family and social structure in the Philippines, with a particular Catholic culture brought by the Spanish who ruled the country for more than 300 years. (Those life experiences eventually led me to Hong Kong, and then onwards and beyond). In just this present life I have lived many different and contrasting lives, which is still unfolding to this very moment.
As you can see, I was already in an existential quest early in life due to my complex life experiences in the Philippines. So with an integrated intellectual and spiritual background and as a formalised school educator in Hong Kong, with a scientific and logical approach I was constantly searching, researching, trying out and synthesising many traditional and modern philosophical and spiritual teachings and practices from many cultures all over the world, and also experiencing life to the fullest. Hong Kong is a dynamic mix of Taoist and Buddhist, Eastern Chinese and Western British influence, and eventually all sorts of global influences being an open-port, first-world Asian city. My spouse and life partner is also a full-blood local Hong Kong Chinese. And so I was immersed fully with the local Hong Kong Chinese culture living a dynamic married life. In my varied spiritual endeavours I was engrossed with the excellent logic and occult knowledge behind the Buddhist multi-layered spiritual philosophies and practices that have morphed through the ages spreading to different countries, from India to China to Japan and beyond. I eventually progressed to Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism, of the Madhyamika-Prasangika philosophical system. In 2003 I received the pre-requisite initiation of tantric empowerment and instructions from the Venerable Geshe Kelsang Gyatso Rinpoche of the New Kadampa Tradition for the Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala. The collective initiation was performed and granted in Toronto, Canada.

An existential quest is a progressive process and differs from one unique individual to the next. I eventually integrated my complex spiritual practice and life experiences with the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, which have been ongoing for more than 10 years now. Hong Kong as a first-world city with a modern and advanced library system, with the internet already well-established, and with my aforementioned background, at some point I came across Sri Aurobindo’s quote “Man is a transitional being.” somehow somewhere I don’t fully remember. But that turned on something major inside, “Yes!”, and the next level of my spiritual adventure was set. Massive documentation, as any true researcher and practitioner of Integral Yoga is aware… revelations came one after the other, happening concurrently with intense life experiences. During the intensely felt and experienced progress of the research and practice of Integral Yoga, of which almost all of the books of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and their disciples, followers and exegates were already available free online (www.aurobindo.ru was one source), I came to know of Auroville. But the irresistible and definitive call to move here came many years later.

I arrived in Auroville in early March of 2019 with a two-month tourist visa, with the specific intention of becoming an Aurovilian. The YUCCA Programme was to be completed in 6-8 weeks. In full surrender to the Divine and the loving assistance of many Aurovilians, I finished YUCCA in record-time of 6 weeks and flew back to Hong Kong with the Secretary's Recommendation Letter on hand. It took me, with the help and guidance of the Divine, another six plus three months though to sort out the complexities in Palawan and Hong Kong. I am now in my Newcomer period which started this January 2020. My main reason and purpose in joining Auroville is to continue the progressive Integral Yoga here, as Auroville is the cradle for the continuation of the Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

Now I work with the Savitri Bhavan Community in tandem with the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Crew, also helping Gangalakshmi of HOMA for articles published on News and Notes and Auro-Traductions, and assisting with other projects as and when required within the Savitri Bhavan Community. As a communicator, educator and life-lover and joyful experiencer, I socialise with, converse and meet with many of our unique brothers and sisters coming from all walks of life from within and outside of Auroville. I find that many do not fully know what Auroville is, who are Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and what the essence of their Vision and Work is, much more the intricacies of Integral Yoga. So I help with the understanding as best as I can. Life for me is always a multi-tasking, multi-dimensional, multi-player, dynamic endeavour which makes it extremely interesting. The Great Adventure continues in Auroville…
I am also a writer and have authored a book, with insights expressed as poems and writings, and sharings from other writers, which I received while either in Hong Kong or Palawan, entitled 'One Earth: The Divine Field of Our Evolving Consciousness and Life: Poems, Sharings & Yoga'. The First Edition of the book is available online in digital and paperback formats at www.amazon.com/author/zech.joya.panganiban, while the Second Edition Paperback which I printed here with Auroville Press is available at Savitri Bhavan, and for free reading in the Auroville Library.

Now that I am living in this special place with a special energy that is Auroville, the inspirations I receive are becoming quite frequent. The new poems and writings about yoga, evolution, psychological and physical transformations happening globally individually and collectively, which are insights from my integrated and continuing spiritual practice and life experiences, I share on Auronet and also on my Facebook page: www.facebook.com/zech.panganiban.

To all who share the same Supramental Quest and Calling, I invite you to read and share with me, or send me a private message or chat with me online if you have any queries, through my Facebook Page and Messenger, or through email at zechjoya@gmail.com. This can be an online version of informal and spontaneous discussions we have recently been conducting with friends and acquaintances within Auroville, while we are having our meals or drinks in different food venues, with the theme as follows:

**An Informal Gathering of Aspirants and Practitioners:**
**Integral Yoga – The Yoga of the Triple Transformation:**
Psychicisation – Spiritualisation – Supramentalisation

**A Dynamic Roundtable Engagement**, or an **Impromptu Satsang**, for the Synthesis and Application of the Evolving Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and their successors. Integral Yoga has three principal, inseparable paths of Jnana-Bhakti-Karma Yogas: the path of knowledge, the path of love and the path of works. Our discussions and shared understandings are unfolding from Jnana Yoga, the Yoga of Knowledge of The Great Cosmic Game of The One and Its Many. Digital online versions of all English manuscripts are used for ease of reference, including relevant historical, recent and current global developments on all fields of human endeavour in the continuing and hastening evolution of consciousness and life on Earth.

**Here are some selected poems from my book and from recent online sharings:**
Look.
Do you see?
A human jungle
Full of you and me.
You may have had your fill
But for many oh so empty.
A must they can only say
Tightly bonded in slavery.
Treading the catwalks
The dark corners lighted dimly.
With glazed eyes looking afar
Hoping "When can I be free?"
Hey you the compassionate
Unbound, wild and free.
When will you choose to be
A sanctuary?
(2017.04.03)

If asked "Who are you?"
How will you respond?
Can you see all that you are
And all that you are not?
Do you really have freewill
Or simply tossed about?
How much control have we
To consent or reject how free?
In the existential quest for identity
Who really are we?
To know that there is something else
More much more than this "me".
(2018.05.08)

Evolving from the Ignorance
The evolutionary imperative
Is to now consciously evolve.
(2018.08.19)

The Spiritual Age has come.
It is high time for the animal-human
To fully realise its Divine Origin.
To either profess hypocritically
That you believe in God
And pretend on with life, blindly,
Or to reason intellectually
That you do not believe in God
Yet go on devoid of Spirit, empty,
Is obviously, painfully, not enough.
To feign faith or deny your true origin
Is like sleeping in a coffin.

Man's self-destructive ignorance
Borne from the separative ego
Must now come to an end.

The Divine Source is in all things,
All things are in the Divine,
All things are the Divine.

For the physical transformation
Beyond mortality can only happen
In a Consciousness of Union.

So let go of your flimsy shields,
Blunt swords and rusting suits of armour;
It is high time for conscious surrender.

(2018.09.09)

Free?
We are not free.
To be free
Is not free.
It is yet.
To be
Free
Is to see
The absurdity
The apparent
Suffering
In the Harmony.
But to see
Is not truly.
Not yet.
Not really.
Must embody.
And so this
Is the Quest
Of the rEvolutionary.
For all.
For we.
Be.
Free.

(2019.10.11)

Unity Consciousness
There Is Only
One Body
From Which
Every Thing
Comes to Be.
The Becoming
That Is
We.
(2020.09.17)

Om Namo Bhagavate

Om... We, this whole bundle of us, pray to You, oh dear Lord the One and Only
Namo... In Total Surrender, Joy and Love we bow to You, oh Lord, our only Refuge
Bhagavate... Please make us as You, oh Lord: True, Conscious, Free! amongst the Infinite Diversity of
Your Unity... Your Divine We

Om Namo Bhagavate
(2020.09.26)