

# INTEGRAL YOGA

MAJOR AIMS, METHODS,  
PROCESSES AND RESULTS

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KIREET JOSHI

THE MOTHER'S INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH

# INTEGRAL YOGA

*An outline of Major Aims  
Processes, Methods and Results*

*This book is addressed to all young people who,  
I urge will study and respond to the following  
message of Sri Aurobindo:*

***“It is the young who must be the builders of the new world, —  
not those who accept the competitive individualism, the  
capitalism or the materialistic communism of the West as  
India’s future ideal, nor those who are enslaved to old  
religious formulas and cannot believe in the acceptance and  
transformation of life by the spirit, but all those who are free  
in mind and heart to accept a completer truth and labour for  
a greater ideal. They must be men who will dedicate  
themselves not to the past or the present but to the future.  
They will need to consecrate their lives to an acceding of their  
lower self, to the realisation of God in themselves and in all  
human beings and to a whole-minded and indefatigable  
labour for the nation and for humanity.”***

*(Sri Aurobindo, ‘The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth’  
Vol. 16, SABCL, p.331)*

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*Supermind in the Integral Yoga*

*Integral Yoga, Evolution and the Next Species*

*Integral Yoga and Evolutionary Mutation*

*Dedicated to*

*Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*

# **INTEGRAL YOGA**

## **AN OUTLINE OF MAJOR AIMS, PROCESSES, METHODS AND RESULTS**

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## Preface

Yoga is the methodized effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the cosmos. An important question regarding Integral Yoga is as to what are its specific methods that distinguish it from the other systems of yoga.

In history of yoga, you find the first synthesis of yoga in the Veda, which was followed by the synthesis in the Upanishads; the third synthesis is to be found in the Gita and the fourth synthesis is to be found in the Tantric Yoga. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is a new synthesis, and a question is often asked as to what is new in this synthesis. This book aims at answering these questions, and it can be regarded as an introduction to the original works of Sri Aurobindo on yoga and to the Mother's books on the same subject.

It is being increasingly acknowledged that Sri Aurobindo's concept of Supermind and of the descent of Supermind in matter is momentarily relevant to the problems that humanity is facing today. All of us who are keen to contribute our best to the advancement of humanity towards its next step of progress need to study the theme of Integral Yoga, – its aims, processes, methods and results, so that we may be able to link ourselves with this yoga and prepare ourselves for the journey ahead. It is hoped that this book will provide some

useful material to seekers of the highest modes of action and who wish to clarify to themselves and reflect at deeper and deeper levels on Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Kireet Joshi

## PART ONE

### **Systems of Yoga and their Synthesis<sup>1</sup>**

Sri Aurobindo defines Yoga as the methodized effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos. The commencement of yoga is characterized by the point of contact of the human individual consciousness with the higher and profounder states of consciousness that can ultimately lead to the universal and transcendent Existence. That contact normally takes the form of concentration, and concentration implies a process of purification and a process of renunciation. For it is impurities and mixtures in our consciousness that are the causes of distractions in our consciousness, which prevent concentration; again, it is attachment to one ordinary object or the other on account of preference or attraction that causes distraction and deviation from the central object on which we need to concentrate. It is by the process of concentration that our complex and intricately organized consciousness can be led to the contact with the integral Divine Object. The contact may be effected in the physical through the body as in the Hatha Yoga;<sup>2</sup> it may be effected in the vital and in the mind through the action of those functionings which determine the states and experiences of our nervous being, as in Raja Yoga;<sup>3</sup> again, it may be effected through the mentality, by means of the emotional heart, as in Bhakti Yoga, or through the active will, as in Karma Yoga, or through the understanding mind, as in

Jnana Yoga.<sup>4</sup> But the contact can also be established by a general conversion of the mental consciousness in all its activities. Or it may equally be accomplished through a direct awakening to the universal or transcendent Truth and Bliss by the conversion of the central ego in the mind. In the synthesis of yoga, one can begin with any one of these processes, but in the course of the development, it can be seen that in the integral view of things all these processes tend to unify and the total conscious being comes to be concentrated on the integral object of synthesis. This method of all-receiving concentration consists of a natural organization of the highest processes and movements of which the nature is capable. Every individual offers helpful materials, which are all to be used for gradually intensive and purposeful working, and every individual offers the obstacles which are to be overcome by process of purification, renunciation and perfection. In a sense, therefore, each man in this path has his own method of yoga, even though there are certain broad lines of working common to all which favour the construction of scientific method of this synthetic yoga.

## **What is Synthesis?**

The idea of a synthesis may present an image of an indiscriminating combination of all the principal yogic schools. But this would be confusion. Sometimes, there is an image of juxtaposition of the principal yogic schools and their methods; but this also would be confusion and an impracticable and an unintelligent bundling of disparate elements without any principle of integration or centrality of any common principle. Even the successive practice of the aims and methods of each of the principal yogic schools would imply a great deal of waste of labour and the resulting process would be cumbrous and would be even injurious. Sri

Aurobindo's and the Mother's synthesis of yoga or integral yoga is an organic synthesis that seizes on the central principle of concentration which is common to all systems of yoga and which will include and utilize in the right place and proportion their particular principles, and on the central dynamic force which is the common secret of their divergent methods and capable, therefore, of organizing a natural selection and combination of their varied energies and different utilities. As a result, this synthesis is able to neglect the forms and outsides of the specific systems of yoga. Apart from the utilization of the central principle of concentration which is common to all, the synthesis consists of the flexible utilization of the methods of the awakening of the Soul and Purusha-consciousness as in the Vedanta and the methods of purification and perfection of the body, life and mind, which are the products of the working of the Shakti or Prakriti as in Tantra.

In the Vedantic systems of yoga, the central place is assigned to the Purusha, the Conscious Soul that knows, observes, attracts, and governs. In Tantra, the method is led by Prakriti, the Nature-Soul, the Energy, the Will-in-Power, executive in the universe. In the Vedantic methods of yoga, the emphasis is on the method of knowledge in which discernment is made between the essential and phenomenal; this discernment may be made by the intellect or by the heart expressed in love and faith or by the will working out through action. In the Vedantic methods, the attempt is to draw back from manifested Nature (Prakriti) so as to awaken the Conscious Soul (Purusha), and then, the Purusha can uplift the individual who is entangled in bondage to the manifestations of Prakriti in the mind, life and body. This method is the opposite of the method of the Tantra, where

one does not draw back from manifested Nature and its difficulties, but one confronts them, seizes them, purifies them, perfects them, and conquers them. It is true that in the course of the development of the Tantric yoga, its principle was largely lost in its machinery and became a thing of formulae of occult mechanisms, which are indeed powerful when rightly used, but which can fall more easily from the clarity of their original intention. In the synthesis of the Vedanta and Tantra, both Purusha and Prakriti are admitted. As a result, the integrating method that is developed is to put our whole conscious being (soul and Prakriti) into relation and contact with the Divine and to call Him in to transform our entire being into His, so that in a sense, God Himself, the real Person in us, becomes the Yogin who practises the discipline by which perfection, siddhi, is attained. In psychological terms, this method translates itself into the progressive surrender of the ego with its whole field and all its apparatus to the One who is beyond the ego, who is vast and incalculable and yet inevitable in His workings.

As Sri Aurobindo points out, the synthesis of his yoga starts from the method of Vedanta to arrive at the aim of the Tantra.<sup>5</sup> The Tantra accepts that there are two poles of being whose essential unity is a secret of existence. These two poles are Purusha and Prakriti or Brahman and Shakti. Shakti is the power of Brahman or rather Brahman is Shakti. It is Shakti that has manifested and, at the human level, we experience it as Nature that is seen to be active in body, life and mind. The method of the Tantra is to raise nature (Prakriti or Shakti) in man into manifest power of the spirit, and the important point of the synthesis of the Tantra is that it is the whole nature that the Tantra gathers up for the spiritual conversion. It includes, therefore, in its system the

yoga of the body, the Hatha Yoga, and it pursues the forceful Hathayogic process and especially the opening up of the nervous centers and the passage through them of the awakened Shakti on her way to her union with the Brahman. It also includes in its system the operations of the subtle body and subtle elements of consciousness, and purifies them and leads them by the processes of meditation and concentration by the methods of Raja Yoga to their highest point available in the state of Samadhi. It also aims at purification and development and perfection of the intellect, will-force, and the motive power of devotion by resorting to the processes of Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. Tantra goes even farther and it subjects the main springs of human quality, desire and action to an intensive discipline; as a result, it seeks to attain the soul's mastery over human motives, and it also aims at the elevation of these motives to a diviner spiritual level as its final utility. Finally, it does not aim merely at liberation (mukti) but also cosmic enjoyment of the power of the Spirit (bhukti); thus the Tantric system is rendered much bolder and larger than the Vedantic schools of yoga.

Sri Aurobindo's synthesis of yoga, even though it includes the aims of the Tantra, lays its initial stress upon the method of Vedanta, where the raising of human consciousness towards its heights is sought to be effected by the operation of the Purusha consciousness or Brahman consciousness; and with the progression of the yoga, the principle of progressive surrender to the Shakti which is so central in the Tantra, also becomes central, — but with full recognition that the Shakti is the power of and is herself Purushottama. In the Tantra, the initial stress is laid on starting from the bottom, and there is a rise on the ladder



through grades of ascent upward to the summit; therefore, the Tantra begins with the action of the awakened Shakti in the nervous system of the body and its centers, and it strives to open up the six lotuses located in the grades of the ladder of the ranges of the power of the Spirit. In Sri Aurobindo's synthesis of yoga, the emphasis is upon man as a spirit in mind much more than a spirit in body and assumes in him the capacity to begin on that level, to spiritualise his being by the power of the soul in mind opening itself directly to a higher spiritual force and being and to perfect by that higher force so possessed and brought into action the whole of his nature.

In order to work out this process, this yoga utilizes the powers of soul in mind and turns the triple key of knowledge, works and love in the locks of the spirit. And here, too, the natural principles of the harmony of this triple key are recognized and utilized for the organic synthesis. These principles include knowledge as the foundation, love as the crown, and action as the inevitable expression of the unity of the foundational knowledge and crowning mystery of love. The Hatha yogic methods can be dispensed with, although there would be no objection to their partial use. The methods of Raja Yoga also would enter in only as an informal element. The methods of this yoga aim at arriving by the shortest way at the largest development of spiritual power and being and divinize by it a liberated nature in the whole range of human living.

In Sri Aurobindo's synthesis of yoga, the spirit in man is regarded not as solely an individual being traveling to a transcendent unity with the Divine, but a universal being capable of oneness with the divine in all souls and all-Nature with all its practical consequences.

As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“The human soul’s individual liberation and enjoyment of union with the Divine in spiritual being, consciousness and delight must always be the first object of the yoga; its free enjoyment of the cosmic unity of the Divine becomes a second object; but out of that a third appears, the effectuation of the meaning of the divine unity with all beings by a sympathy and participation in the spiritual purpose of the Divine in humanity. The individual Yoga then turns from its separateness and becomes a part of the collective Yoga of the divine Nature in the human race. The liberated individual being, united with the Divine in self and spirit, becomes in his natural being a self-perfecting instrument for the perfect outflowing of the Divine in humanity.”<sup>6</sup>

As has been noted, each of the three methods of Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga and Bhakti Yoga plays a major role, and it is emphasized in this new synthesis of yoga that each of these three methods is pursued with a certain largeness, can take into itself the powers of the others and lead to methods of evolution that have been at work at various stages of evolution, and which are particularly related to human evolution and to what Sri Aurobindo puts forward as the supramental evolution of the divine body by a process of triple transformation. In the development of this method, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother found it necessary to work out something that was colossally important and indispensable but which was not found in any earlier systems of the synthesis of yoga, and it is to that aspect of the work that we may turn.

## **Evolution of the Next Species**

The divine life in the divine body, the eventual advent of

the supramental supermanhood, and the evolution of the next species, is the goal that has been envisaged for the integral yoga, and since this yoga is not only the yoga for the individual but also for the collectivity and for the advancement of the evolutionary process, its goal includes radical consequences for the collective life of humanity and even for the solution of the contemporary problems of humanity.

Integral yoga has for its aim the generalization of yoga in humanity and this aim envisages three preparatory movements. There is, first, the movement towards spiritual fulfilment of the urge to individual perfection and an inner completeness of being; secondly, there has to develop the perfection of the spiritual and pragmatic relation of the individual with all around him; and thirdly there has to be a movement towards a new world, a change in the total life of humanity. These three preparations and perfections have been briefly summarized by Sri Aurobindo in the following words:

“It is, then, this spiritual fulfilment of the urge to individual perfection and an inner completeness of being that we mean first when we speak of a divine life. It is the first essential condition of a perfected life on earth, and we are therefore right in making the utmost possible individual perfection our first supreme business. The perfection of the spiritual and pragmatic relation of the individual with all around him is our second preoccupation; the solution of this second desideratum lies in a complete universality and oneness with all life upon earth which is the other concomitant result of an evolution into the gnostic consciousness and nature. But there still remains the third desideratum, a new world, a change in the total life of

humanity or, at the least, a new perfected collective life in the earth-nature. This calls for the appearance not only of isolated evolved individuals acting in the unevolved mass, but of many gnostic individuals forming a new kind of beings and a new common life superior to the present individual and common existence.”<sup>7</sup>

## Six Elements of Perfection

The programme of the individual perfection and an inner completeness of being is itself a difficult programme, and the other two preparations of perfection will also need to be undertaken in varying degrees along with the first programme of perfection. In this yoga of self-perfection, as described in his *‘The Synthesis of Yoga’*, Sri Aurobindo analyses perfection as consisting of six elements. The first consists of the perfection of equality (*samatā*) and of the action of equality. The next element consists of raising all the active parts of the human nature to that highest condition and working pitch of that power and capacity, *śakti*, at which they become capable of being divinized into the true instruments of the free, perfect, spiritual and divine action. This second element includes four things: the full powers of the instrumental nature, the perfected dynamism of the fourfold soul-nature, the ascension of the powers of the instrumental nature and of the soul-nature into the action of the divine Power, and a perfect faith in all our members to call and support that ascension, — *śakti, vīrya, daivī prakṛti, śraddhā*. The third perfection will consist of the evolution of the mental into the Gnostic being. The fourth element of perfection will consist of the accomplishment of the Gnostic perfection in the body, and this will imply the bringing in the law of the Gnostic Purusha, *vijñānamaya puruṣa*, as also of

the *ānadamaya puruṣa* (bliss-puruṣa), into the physical consciousness and its members. The fifth element of perfection will consist of the perfect action and enjoyment of being on the Gnostic basis. Finally, the sixth element of perfection will consist of Gnostic evolution opening up into the divine principle of ananda, so that the perfected individual will experience “all the universe as the manifestation of the One, all quality and action as the play of his universal and infinite energy, all knowledge and conscious experience as the outflowing of that consciousness, and all in the terms of that one Ananda. ....For in this spiritual bliss and being he will be one with That which is the origin and continent and inhabitant and spirit and constituting power of all existence. This will be the highest reach of self-perfection.”<sup>8</sup>

It is not possible for man to have the strength to take a large immediate plunge straight into the integral method to pursue the integral yoga. Indeed, rare individuals may have the strength to plunge straight into the sea of the Divine Infinity. But normally, since our present nature is limited, divided, and unequal, it is easiest for us to concentrate in the strongest part of our being and fuse the methods of Jnana Yoga as a starting point or the methods of Bhakti Yoga or the methods of Karma Yoga as a starting point and follow definite lines of progress proper to our individual nature. But the path, whatever its point of commencement, must proceed in the end through a totality of integrated knowledge, emotion, will of dynamic action, perfection of the being and the entire nature. There must come about ultimately an ascent into the supramental Truth, which can bring about a descent of that Light and Truth into the entire being and all parts of our nature.

## **A Dilemma<sup>9</sup> that confronts the Integral Yoga: Importance of Life-Force**

There is, however, a dilemma that confronts the pursuit of the integral yoga. On the one hand, one cannot reach the supramental light as long as one continues to be burdened by the Life-Force which remains unregenerated. On the other hand, that Life-Force cannot be regenerated radically without the descent of the infallible light of the supermind. Even if one can succeed in arriving at purity of the states of knowledge and of divine love by the pursuit of Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga, the demands of the Life-Force will oblige the seeker to deal with the impurities and dualities of the ego-consciousness which seem to be inextricably tied up with the works of Life-Force. It is possible in systems of exclusive yoga to renounce the works of Life-Force (i.e. works that are related to acquisition, possession, relationship, enjoyment, influence, etc.) and to be content with the works of knowledge and works of love, but the integral yoga must find a remedy to redress and transform the troubled vital nature and activities of Life-Force. These activities of Life-Force are normally centered on desire and egoism, and the effort to eliminate these two obstructing limitations and perversities and to transform the nature and motive of these activities so as to divinize them presents such obstinate difficulties that one is led to avoid them and banish them from the life of yoga. But the integral yoga cannot accept this banishment. As Sri Aurobindo points out, even though there is a saving light in Knowledge, a redeeming and transforming force in Love, these cannot be effective in earth-life unless they secure the consent of Life and can use the instrumentation of some delivered energy at its centre for a sublimation of the erring human into a divine Life-Force. As Sri Aurobindo

states:

“The Life-Force is an indispensable intermediary, the effectuating element in Nature here; mind needs its alliance if the works of mind are not to remain shining inner formations without a body; the spirit needs it to give an outer force and form to its manifested possibilities and arrive at a complete self-expression incarnated in Matter. ...Life is indispensable to the completeness of the creative spiritual realization, but life released, transformed, uplifted, not the ordinary mentalised human-animal life, nor the demoniac or Titanic, not even the divine and the undivine mixed together. Whatever may be done by other world-shunning or heaven-seeking disciplines, this is the difficult but unavoidable task of the integral Yoga; it cannot afford to leave unsolved the problem of the outward works of life, it must find in them their native Divinity and ally it firmly and for ever to the divinities of Love and Knowledge.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Solution of the Difficulties of the Dilemma: Three Conditions for Transformation of Life-Force**

Integral yoga aims at the transformation of life in its very principle, and it underlines three conditions which are indispensable for the achievement of this central inner revolution and new formation. The first condition is to insist upon the abolition of desire and replacement of desire by a purer and firmer motive-power. The pursuit of this condition aims at the dissolution of desire and the emergence of the calm, strength and happiness of a true vital being now concealed within us. This implies not only the development of spiritual equality so that one becomes equal-soul to all things, unmoved by joy and sorrow, the pleasant and unpleasant, success or failure, but also the emergence of the

true vital being which is within us behind the veil of ignorance. According to the yogic psychology, there is a vital being, *prāṇamaya puruṣa*, which is a projection of the Divine Purusha into life, in its true nature, — the vital being that is tranquil, strong, luminous, many-energied, obedient to the Divine Will, egoless, yet capable of all action, achievement, highest or largest enterprise.

But there is a second condition, which also needs to be fulfilled. The pure vital being provides us the instrumentation of a divine life, but the vital being always needs a power that can govern and that can provide divine initiative. The progression of divine life demands that the mind and the life impulse must cease to be anything but instruments and the inmost psychic being must take their place as the leader on the path and the indicator of a divine guidance. It is true that the psychic being does not provide the supreme government and direction, since, as Sri Aurobindo points out, that is not its function, but it supplies during the transition from ignorance to a divine Knowledge a progressive guidance for the inner and outer life and action. The guidance of the psychic being provides a progressive solution of the dilemma of the integral yoga, and during the transitional passage the unregenerated life-force can receive from that guidance that intermediate life and power which can unburden it of its vital perversions and uplift the being towards the higher heights of divine nature. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the psychic being indicates at each moment the method, the way, the steps that will lead to that fulfilled spiritual condition in which a supreme dynamic initiative will be always there directing the activities of a divinized Life-Force. Sri Aurobindo states:

“The light it sheds illuminates the other parts of the



nature which, for want of any better guidance than their own confused and groping powers, have been wandering in the rounds of the Ignorance; it gives to mind the intrinsic feeling of the thoughts and perceptions, to life the infallible sense of the movements that are misled or misleading and those that are well-inspired; something like a quiet oracle from within discloses the causes of our stumblings, warns in time against their repetition, extracts from experience and intuition the law, not rigid but plastic, of a just direction for our acts, a right step, an accurate impulse. A will is created that becomes more in consonance with evolving Truth rather than with the circling and dilatory mazes of a seeking error. A determined orientation towards the greater Light to be, a soul-instinct, a psychic tact and insight into the true substance, motion and intention of things, coming always nearer and nearer to a spiritual vision, to a knowledge by inner contact, inner sight and even identity, begin to replace the superficial keenness of mental judgment and the eager graspings of the Life-Force. The works of Life right themselves, escape from confusion, substitute for the artificial or legal order imposed by the intellect and for the arbitrary rule of desire the guidance of the soul's inner sight, enter into the profound paths of the Spirit. Above all, the psychic being imposes on life the law of the sacrifice of all its works as an offering to the Divine and Eternal. Life becomes a call to that which is beyond Life; its every smallest act enlarges with the sense of the Infinite."<sup>11</sup>

As the second condition grows into greater and greater effectivity, the last condition also begins to be underlined. As a part of this third condition life ceases to turn towards the satisfaction of the separative ego. Eventually, ego has to disappear, and it comes to be replaced by the true spiritual

person, the central being, and life is turned towards the fulfillment of the Divine in terrestrial existence. As a result, our spirit, our self rises not only into an inner identity with some wide cosmic Self but into some contact with that which is beyond, though aware of and dominant over the action of the universe. It is then that there comes about a real and effective and total integralisation. It will then be found that it is the supra-mental power, the divine shakti that descends within us, and it is that power that effects the accomplishment of the object of the integral yoga.

The unveiling of the psychic being and the bringing of the psychic entity into the front and giving it there the lead and rule is a capital movement of the integral yoga. It might even seem that this movement would result in the fulfillment of all our natural being and would also open the gates of the kingdom of the Spirit. But, as Sri Aurobindo points out, although the psychic transformation is one necessary condition of the total transformation of our existence, it is not all that is needed for the largest transformation that is envisaged by the integral yoga. The movement of ascent to the supermind and the descent of the supermind right up to the physical consciousness are indispensable. For it is the supermind in which there is perfect unity of Truth-Knowledge and Truth-Will, and it is only by that unity that the perfect harmony in the outer and inner existence can be established. The supermind is the power of integral completeness and a power which links the higher and lower hemispheres of the One Existence. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“In Supermind is the integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the supreme Ananda: the psychic being uplifted by that Light and Force

can unite itself with the original Delight of existence from which it came: overcoming the dualities of pain and pleasure, delivering from all fear and shrinking the mind, life and body, it can recast the contacts of existence in the world into terms of the Divine Ananda.”<sup>12</sup>

## **The Meaning of “Transformation”**

The word transformation has been used by Sri Aurobindo in a very special sense. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Sri Aurobindo has explained this word in a letter as follows:

“By transformation I do not mean some change of the nature – I do not mean, for instance, sainthood or ethical perfection or yogic siddhis (like the Tantrik’s) or a transcendental (*cinmaya*) body. I use transformation in a special sense, a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being of a greater and higher kind and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. If anything short of that takes place or at least if a real beginning is not made on that basis, a fundamental progress towards this fulfillment, then my object is not accomplished. A partial realization, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and yoga. ...

“Realization by itself does not necessarily transform the being as a whole; ... One may have some light of realisation at the spiritual summit of the consciousness but the parts below remain what they were. I have seen any number of instances of that. There must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down

to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilize the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough; it must be the descent of the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, transformation effected by the sadhana cannot be complete unless it is a supramentalisation of the being. Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning; spiritualization and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supramental Consciousness and Force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward it must take at one time or another. ....

“I know very well also that there have been seemingly allied ideals and anticipations – the perfectibility of the race, certain Tantric sadhanas, the effort after a complete physical siddhi by certain schools of yoga, etc., etc. I have alluded to these things myself and have put forth the view that the spiritual past of the race has been a preparation of Nature not merely for attaining the Divine beyond the world, but also for this very step forward which the evolution of the earth-consciousness has still to make. ... I laid emphasis on it as

new in a letter to certain sadhaks so as to explain to them that a repetition of the aim and idea of the old yogas was not enough in my eyes, that I was putting forward a thing to be achieved that has not yet been achieved, not yet clearly visualized, even though it is the natural but still secret outcome of all the past spiritual endeavour. ..."<sup>13</sup>

The aim of total transformation that this new synthesis of this yoga puts forward is a process that involves, first, psychic transformation, secondly, spiritual transformation, and thirdly, supramental transformation. This entire process is based on the discovery of the psychic being, of the spiritual being in its multisidedness and integrality, and of the supramental consciousness and power in its plenitude. The discoveries made by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in regard to these three realms of psychic consciousness, spiritual consciousness and supramental consciousness confirmed in many ways what was already discovered and applied in the past traditions of religion, occultism, philosophy and yoga, both specialized and synthetic. But what distinguishes the discoveries of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is not only the fullness of these discoveries and the evolutionary methods by which the principles and processes of these three domains are explored, developed to their fullness and integrated, but also the discoveries of those secrets which were never explored in the earlier systems of knowledge, including some which were never suspected or envisaged. An entirely new path had to be hewn for effecting ascent to the supermind and for the descent of the supermind right up to the earth-consciousness and even up to the Inconscience. The totality of the application of the methods of evolution and thoroughness with which these methods came to be applied right up to their minutest details for arriving at perfect

perfection and integration of Spirit and Matter through the transformation of the inconscience by the supramental consciousness is entirely new and unprecedented. The result of this vast and difficult endeavour is the effect it has produced in the evolutionary process itself and in breaking the limitations of the evolutionary boundaries of mental consciousness and in establishing and fixing the supramental consciousness as a new grade of evolution in the physical earth. Evolution itself has evolved; what has been accomplished is the penetration and breaking the hardest rock bottom of the most rigid, narrow and stifling layer of the inconscience; the secret of permeating the cellular consciousness in the human body has come to be discovered and applied, and thus a way has been created for the mutation and evolution of a new supramental species which, it is envisaged, will create on the earth the conditions of the highest fulfillment of the highest aspirations of humanity.

## PART TWO

### **Methods of Transition from the Intellect to Higher Principles of Consciousness**

The integral yoga has two important points of concentration, the concentration that is inward and which presses towards discovery and unveiling of the psychic being and its powers, and the concentration that is upward, which presses on the summits of the mind and which breaks the lid of the mind so as to liberate our consciousness into the domains of superconscience, the levels of the higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind and overmind, which ultimately leads to the Supermind. In the yogic terminology of the integral yoga these two concentrations are termed as concentrations on (i) the heart centre, since it is behind the heart centre, deep in the inmost depths, that the psychic being is located, and (ii) the head centre, since the superconscious levels of consciousness are above the head centre. While dealing with the problems of the life-force in the integral yoga we have seen, although very briefly, the role that the psychic being plays. But we may now briefly study the methods by which the intellectual being can come to make a transition to higher principles of consciousness.

As Sri Aurobindo points out, the human being is distinguished from all other terrestrial creatures by virtue of his limited mental intelligence enlightening the limiting mind of sense and the capacity, not always well used of a considerable extension of it, by the use of the reason. The

sense mind, intelligence, reason, — these are the instruments in which man has learned to put his trust and he has erected by their means certain foundations which he is not over-willing to disturb. When he attempts to trace beyond these foundations, he feels all to be confusion, uncertainty and a perilous adventure; but what the integral yoga proposes is the transition to a higher principle, and that principle means not only a difficult conversion of his whole mind and reason and intelligence, but in a certain sense a reversal of all their methods. Sri Aurobindo points out that if an animal mind were called upon to leave consciently the safe ground of sense-impulse, sense-understanding and instinct for the perilous adventure of a reasoning intelligence, it might well turn back alarmed and unwilling from the effort. Similarly, he observes that the human mind, when called upon to make a still greater change and, although self-conscious and adventurous in the circle of its possibility, might well hold this beyond the circle and reject the adventure. For this reason, Sri Aurobindo acknowledges that the concentration on the head centre must reach a very high level of development, and the required change is only possible if there is first a spiritual development on our present level of consciousness; it can only be undertaken securely when the mind has become aware of the greater self within enamoured of the Infinite and confident of the presence and guidance of the Divine and his shakti. This means that the seeker should have already made considerable advance on the triple path of knowledge, divine love and divine works as a result of which the seeker has become aware of the Object of divine knowledge and has developed love of the Divine Lover and has also become confident of the working of the Divine and his shakti in the difficult tangle of the world of our experience. In order to arrive at the starting-point of



converting the human mind into the working of higher levels of consciousness leading up to the supermind, Sri Aurobindo speaks of a passage through a mediatory status and of the help of the one power already at work in the human mind, namely, the faculty of intuition, a power of which we can feel the presence but the workings of which, even when found impressive, we cannot understand.

## **Reason and Intuitive Mind**

The Reason understands itself, but does not normally understand intuition that is beyond it. It is true that the power of intuition is recognized, but it is seen to be acting in a covert manner, and it is mostly veiled by the action of the reason and the normal intelligence. It is also true that intuition emerges sometimes as a clear and instructive action; but it is still occasional, partial and fragmentary. It is admitted that intuition does cast a sudden light, and it makes a luminous suggestion or it throws out a solitary brilliant clue or scatters a small number of isolated or related intuitions, lustrous discriminations, inspirations or revelations. But even then, this action of intuition leaves the Reason, will, mental sense or intelligence to do what each can or pleases with what has been brought to it by the act of intuition.

The word intuition connotes the power of consciousness which is difficult for the mind to understand. The one operation in which intuition manifests in our lower levels of consciousness more clearly is the operation of the instinct. The instinct which works in the subconscious may be regarded as consciousness that is involved in action; in the superconscious, intuition is no longer involved in action, but operates as manifest light. Basically, intuitional knowledge

is common between the sub-conscious and the super-conscious, and in both it is marked by effective identity between that which knows and that which is known. While elucidating the action of intuition in the sub-conscious and the super-conscious, Sri Aurobindo states as follows:

“In the subconscious knowledge or consciousness is involved in action, for action is the essence of Life. In the superconscious action re-enters into Light and no longer contains involved knowledge but is itself contained in a supreme consciousness. Intuitional knowledge is that which is common between them and the foundation of intuitional knowledge is conscious or effective identity between that which knows and that which is known; it is that state of common self-existence in which the knower and the known are one through knowledge. But in the subconscious the intuition manifests itself in the action, in effectivity, and the knowledge or conscious identity is either entirely or more or less concealed in the action. In the superconscious, on the contrary, Light being the law and the principle, the intuition manifests itself in its true nature as knowledge emerging out of conscious identity, and effectivity of action is rather the accompaniment or necessary consequent and no longer masks as the primary fact. Between these two states reason and mind act as intermediaries which enable the being to liberate knowledge out of its imprisonment in the act and prepare it to resume its essential primacy.”<sup>14</sup>

According to Sri Aurobindo, intuition always stands veiled behind our mental operations. Intuition gives us that idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be which pursues man always in contradiction of his lower reason. It is intuition that formulates itself in the ideas of Eternity and Infinity, and the ideas of God and Freedom

and Immortality. Intuition springs from the inmost soul of the being and insists upon these ideas despite the contradictions of reason or the denials of experience. Intuition knows what is because it is, because itself it is of that and has come from that, and will not yield it to the judgment of what merely becomes and appears.

In man, on account of the preponderance of Reason, intuition works from behind the veil, and hence the light that comes from intuition becomes scattered, and intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which our nature demands. It is only when the lid between the conscient and the superconscient is rent, and it is only when reason is able to stand out in stillness that intuition can operate without interference of the mental methods of operation and can give us ordered and articulated form for the truths that are seen directly, without the operations of mediate reasoning. For understanding the true nature of intuition, we need to transcend the limitations of the mental consciousness and begin to accustom ourselves to looking in through the gates of the being's secret universal self-vision and knowledge. And even then intuition is still a transitional stage that has still to open up to the operations of the supermind.

## **Power and Limitations of the Intuitive Mind**

As compared to the plenary light of the supermind, intuition is a first imperfect organization of superconscient light. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“The intuitive mind is an immediate translation of truth into mental terms half transformed by a radiant supramental substance, a translation of some infinite self-knowledge that

acts above mind in the superconscient spirit.”<sup>15</sup>

There are, according to Sri Aurobindo, certain movements of the ordinary mental intelligence that look analogous and are easily mistaken for the true intuition in our first inexperience. There is something in the intellectual operations which can be called the intellectual insight of a quick intelligence; there is something like rapid judgment of reasoning intellect; there is also what can be called the inspired action of the imaginative intelligence; and there is also something like purely mental seizing of the truth and experience. All these mental operations may appear to be intuitive, but they are, according to Sri Aurobindo, mental representations of the higher movements of the intuition. The true intuitions differ from these effective but insufficient counterfeits in their substance of light, their operation, their method of knowledge. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“The intellectual rapidities are dependent on awakenings of the basic mental ignorance to mental figures and representations of truth that may be quite valid in their own field and for their own purpose but are not necessarily and by their very nature reliable. They are dependent for their emergence on the suggestions given by mental and sense data or on the accumulation of past mental knowledge. They search for the truth as a thing outside, an object to be found and looked at and stored as an acquisition and, when found, scrutinize its surfaces, suggestions or aspects. This scrutiny can never give a quite complete and adequate truth idea. However positive they may seem at the time, they may at any moment have to be passed over, rejected and found inconsistent with fresh knowledge.”<sup>16</sup>

A true mark of intuitive knowledge, even when it is

limited in its field of application, is that (within the given scope), it is sure with an immediate, and specially self-existent certitude. It is, as Sri Aurobindo points out, the disclosing of a knowledge that is secret but already existent in the being: it is not an acquisition, but something that was always there and revealable. "It sees the truth from within and illumines with that inner vision the outsides and it harmonises, too, readily — provided we keep intuitively awake — with whatever fresh truth has yet to arrive."<sup>17</sup>

## **Mind and Higher Mind**

Between the Mind and the Intuitive Mind, there are two layers, — those of the Higher Mind and Illumined Mind. The ordinary human mind is conceptual in character, and even at its highest levels, when it conceives of comprehensiveness and of a highest possible synthesis, it is so much occupied with multiplicity that it can cover in its grasp of conceptuality only a small portion of the totality. When one is able to step out of the lower mentality, one can ascend into what Sri Aurobindo calls a Higher Mind, a mind no longer made of mingled light or obscurity or half-light, but a large clarity of the Spirit. Sri Aurobindo points out that although it is still conceptual, it is a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit — born conceptual knowledge. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"An all-awareness emerging from the original identity, carrying the truths the identity held in itself, conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudinously, formulating and by self-power of the Idea effectually realizing its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge. ...Large aspects of truth come into view in which the ascending Mind, if it chooses, can dwell with satisfaction and, after its former

manner, live in them as in a structure; but if progress is to be made, these structures can constantly expand into a larger structure or several of them combine themselves into a provisional greater whole on the way to a yet unachieved integrality.”<sup>18</sup>

## **Illumined Mind**

At a still higher level, there is, according to Sri Aurobindo, the Illumined Mind, a Mind no longer of higher Thought but of spiritual light. The downpour of inwardly visible Light very usually envelops the action of this Mind. The illumined Mind does not work primarily by thought, but by vision; thought is here only a subordinate movement expressive of sight. The illumined mind can effect a more powerful and dynamic integration; “it illumines the thought-mind with a direct inner vision and inspiration, brings a spiritual sight into the heart and a spiritual light and energy into its feeling and emotion, imparts to the life-force a spiritual urge, a truth inspiration that dynamises the action and exalts the life-movements; it infuses into the sense a direct and total power of spiritual sensation so that our vital and physical being can contact and meet concretely, quite as intensely as the mind and emotion can conceive and perceive and feel, the Divine in all things; it throws on the physical mind a transforming light that breaks its limitations, its conservative inertia, replaces its narrow thought-power and its doubts by sight and pours luminosity and consciousness into the very cells of the body.”<sup>19</sup>

The intuitive mind is still at a higher level. When consciousness meets the Supreme Reality or the spiritual reality of things and beings and has a contactual union with it, then the spark, the flash or the blaze of intimate truth-

perception is lit in its depth. "This close perception is more than sight, more than conception: it is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in it sight and conception as part of itself or as its natural consequence."<sup>20</sup>

## **Four Methods of arriving at the Intuitive Mind**

To arrive at the Intuitive Mind, Sri Aurobindo finds, in the actual process and experience of the Integral yoga, four methods, none of which would be regarded as exclusively adequate.

The first method is to silence the mind altogether,—to silence the intellect, the mental and personal will, the desire-mind and the mind of emotion and sensation, and to allow in the perfect silence the Self, the Spirit, the Divine to disclose himself and leave him to illuminate the being. As Sri Aurobindo points out, it is the calm and still mind much more readily and with a much greater purity than the mind in agitation and action that opens to the Infinite, reflects the Spirit, becomes full of the Self and awaits like a consecrated and purified temple the unveiling of the Lord of all our being and nature. This method aims at acquiring the capacity of always being able at will to command an absolute tranquility and silence of the mind free from any necessity of mental thought or movement or disturbance. But this is not enough because, as Sri Aurobindo points out, when the inner action proceeds after the silence, even if it be then a more predominantly intuitive in thought and movement, the old powers of mentality will yet interfere, if not from within, then from without. Therefore, the necessity of process of elimination or transformation of the inferior mentality remains always imperative.

The second method is to turn inward which comes naturally to the way of Divine Love. In this method, one rejects the intellect and its action, one listens for the voice, waits for the impulsion or the command, obeys only the idea and the will and power of the Lord within, the divine Self and Purusha in the heart of the creature. The movement of this method tends to become more and more intuitive and aims at making the whole nature intuitive; ideas, volitions, impulsions, feelings which come from the secret Purusha in the heart are of the direct intuitive character. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“It is possible then by referring back all the initiation of our action to this secret intuitive Self and Spirit, the ever-present Godhead within us, and replacing by its influences the initiations of our personal and mental nature to get back from the inferior external thought and action to another, internal and intuitive, of a highly spiritualized character.”<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo points out that the result of this movement cannot be complete, since the intuitive thought and action detected from the heart (as distinguished from the highest centre of the being) may be very luminous and intense, but they are likely to be limited, even narrow in their intensity, mixed with a lower emotional action and at best excited and troubled, rendered unbalanced or exaggerated by a miraculous or abnormal character in their action or at least in many of their accompaniments which are injurious to the harmonized perfection of the being.

Therefore, there is a need to take recourse to the third method which turns to the highest centre of our being. Sri Aurobindo points out that the highest organized centre of our embodied being and of its action in the body is a supreme



mental centre figured by the yogic symbol of the thousand-petalled lotus, *sahasradala*, and it is at its top and summit that there is the direct communication with the superior superconscious levels. Here the method is to refer all our thought and action to the veiled truth of the Divinity above the mind and to receive all by a sort of descent from above, a descent of which we become not only spiritually but physically conscious. The fullness of the result of this method can only come, according to Sri Aurobindo, when we are able to lift the centre of thought and conscious action above the physical brain and feel it going on in the subtle body. Sri Aurobindo states:

“If we can feel ourselves thinking no longer with the brain but from above and outside the head in the subtle body, that is a sure physical sign of a release from the limitations of the physical mind, and though this will not be complete at once nor of itself bring a supramental action, for the subtle body is mental and not supramental, still it is a subtle and pure mentality and makes an easier communication with the supramental centres. ... This opening up of a higher level and of higher and higher planes of it and the consequent reformation of our whole consciousness and its action into their mould and into the substance of their power and luminous capacity is found in practice to be the greater part of the natural method used by the divine Shakti.”<sup>22</sup>

A fourth method consists of developing intellect instead of eliminating it; but the development is aimed at heightening the capacity right up to its utmost borders where the objects on which concentration is laid transcend the capacities of the intellect; the care is taken not to cherish the limitations but to increase the intensity, light and degree and force of activity; the time comes when the higher faculty of

consciousness takes up the activities of the intellect and intellect itself and transforms it into the movement of the higher faculty. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the reason and intelligent will, the Buddhi, is the greatest of our natural power and instrument; the intellectual being is raised up to a point where it is taken up by the Shakti in the yoga and raised to its fullest and its most heightened powers. The subsequent transformation of the intellect is possible because all the action of the intellect derives secretly from the higher level of consciousness, — from the intuitive mind and from the supermind. The limitations of the intellect are then removed by the intervention of the higher intuitive and supramental energy.

The intuitive mentality has a four-fold power. There is the power of suggestive intuition, the power of revelation, the power of inspiration and the power of discrimination. All these powers are inherent in the intellect but they are latent and act through the obstructions of the Ignorance. Because they are inherent in the intellect they can be easily taken up by the higher and conscious action of intuition, and intuition can perform all the actions of reason. As Sri Aurobindo states:

“A power of revelatory truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervention in our mental intelligence, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth, — these are the fourfold potencies of Intuition. Intuition can therefore perform all the action of reason, — including the function of logical intelligence, which is to work out the right relation of things and the right relation of idea with idea, — but by its own

superior process and with steps that do not fail or falter. It takes up also and transforms into its own substance not only the mind of thought, but the heart and life and the sense and physical consciousness: ...A certain integration can thus take place, but whether it is a total integration must depend on the extent to which the new light is able to take up the subconscious and penetrate the fundamental Inconscience. Here the intuitive light and power may be hampered in its task because it is the edge of a delegated and modified Supermind, but does not bring in the whole mass or body of the identity-knowledge.”<sup>23</sup>

Indeed intuitive mentality is not the supermind or even overmind. The process of ascent from the mind, in order to be complete, has to pass not only through the higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind and also arrive at the overmind before arriving at the supermind. Nonetheless, the four methods for arriving at the intuitive mind are extremely important, and the practice of these methods, when they are combined, creates the organization of a predominantly or even a completely intuitive mentality sufficiently developed to take the place of the ordinary mentality and of the logical reasoning intellect of the developed human being. How these four methods can be combined cannot be fixed in any mechanical invariable order; the process has to be free and flexible according to the needs of the work and the demand of the nature. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

“The widest natural action of the Shakti combines all these methods. It creates, sometimes at first, sometimes at some later, perhaps latest stage, the freedom of the spiritual silence. It opens the secret intuitive being within the mind itself and accustoms us to refer all our thought and our feeling and will and action to the initiation of the Divine, the

Splendour and Power who is now concealed in the heart of its recesses. It raises, when we are ready, the centre of its operations to the mental summit and opens up the supramental levels and proceeds doubly by an action from above downward filling and transforming the lower nature and an action from below upwards raising all the energies to that which is above them till the transcendence is completed and the change of the whole system integrally effected. It takes and develops the intelligence and will and other natural powers, but brings in constantly the intuitive mind and afterwards the true supramental energy to change and enlarge their action. These things it does in no fixed and mechanically invariable order, such as the rigidity of the logical intellect might demand, but freely and flexibly according to the needs of its work and the demand of the nature.”<sup>24</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has constantly underlined the need to keep in mind that the supramental change is difficult, distinct and ultimate stage. He has insisted that the supramental change must be regarded as the end of a far-off vista, and cannot be and must not be turned into a first aim, a constantly envisaged goal or immediate objective. He has clearly stated that the supramental change can only come into the view of possibility after much arduous self-conquest and self-exceeding, at the end of many long and trying stages of a difficult self-evolution of the nature. Describing the many stages that one has to cross to arrive at the view of possibility of the supramental change, Sri Aurobindo has stated:

“One must first acquire an inner Yogic consciousness and replace by it our ordinary view of things, natural movements, motives of life; one must revolutionize the whole present build of our being. Next, we have to go still deeper, discover

our veiled psychic entity and in its light and under its government psychicise our inner and outer parts, turn mind-nature, life-nature, body-nature and all our mental, vital, physical action and states and movements into a conscious instrumentation of the soul. Afterwards or concurrently we have to spiritualise the being in its entirety by a descent of a divine Light, Force, Purity, Knowledge, freedom and wideness. It is necessary to break down the limits of the personal mind, life and physicality, dissolve the ego, enter into the cosmic consciousness, realize the self, acquire a spiritualized and universalised mind and heart, life-force, physical consciousness. Then only the passage into the supramental consciousness begins to become possible, and even then there is a difficult ascent to make each stage of which is a separate arduous achievement.”<sup>25</sup>

## Overmind

The ascent to the supermind, even after achieving the intuitive mind, has to pass through a difficult process of opening and developing the overmental consciousness. At the source of the intuitive mind, there is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a superconscient Mind, in direct contact with the Supermind. This cosmic Mind is not a mind as we know it, but, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, “an Overmind that covers as with the wide wings of some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of Knowledge-Ignorance, links it with that greater Truth-Consciousness while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden Lid it veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with its flood of infinite possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual law of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality.”<sup>26</sup>

The overmind is the occult link. It is the Power that at once connects and divides the supreme Knowledge and the cosmic Ignorance. According to Sri Aurobindo, Supermind transmits to Overmind all its realities but leaves it to formulate them in a movement. But this formulation is done by the Overmind by an awareness of things which, according to Sri Aurobindo, is still a vision of Truth and yet at the same time a first parent of the ignorance.

### **Overmind and Supermind**

Comparing the action of the Supermind and the Overmind, Sri Aurobindo states:

“The integrality of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together; it maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close interpenetration and a free and full consciousness of each other: but in Overmind this integrality is no longer there. And yet the Overmind is well aware of the essential Truth of things; it embraces the totality; it uses the individual self-determinations without being limited by them: but although it knows their oneness, can realize it in a spiritual cognition, yet its dynamic movement, even while relying on that for its security, is not directly determined by it. Overmind Energy proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending Unity. It takes each Aspect or Power and gives to it an independent action in which it acquires a full separate importance and is able to work out, we might say, its own world of creation. ... At the same time in Overmind this separateness is still founded on the basis of an implicit underlying unity; all possibilities of combination

and relation between the separated Powers and Aspects, all interchanges and mutualities of their energies are freely organized and their actuality always possible.”<sup>27</sup>

Beyond the Overmind is the plenary supramental consciousness. If Overmental consciousness is global in character, the supramental consciousness is integral. The Overmental consciousness is compared by Sri Aurobindo to a Sun and its system shining out in an original darkness of Space and illumining everything as far as its rays could reach so that all that dwelt in the light would feel as if no darkness was there at all in their experience of existence. But outside that sphere or expanse of experience the original darkness would still be there. In the supramental consciousness, there is, on the other hand, a plenitude of light, and if it so wills, it can illumine everything integrally. The supramental consciousness is Truth-Consciousness, since it is at once the self-awareness of the Infinite and Eternal and a power of self-determination inherent in that self-awareness. As Sri Aurobindo states:

“In Supermind being, consciousness of knowledge and consciousness of will are not divided as they seem to be in our mental operations; they are trinity, one movement with three effective aspects. Each has its own effect. Being gives the effect of substance, consciousness the effect of knowledge, of the self-guiding and shaping idea, of comprehension and apprehension; will gives the effect of self-fulfilling force. But the idea is only the light of the reality illumining itself; it is not mental thought nor imagination, but effective self-awareness. It is Real-Idea.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Ascent to the Supermind<sup>29</sup>**

The process of ascent to the supermind is complex, and

in the integral yoga, the ascent to the supermind has the eventual aim that implies transformation of material life into divine life, carrying with it eventually the appearance of a new physical vehicle of divine life by means of the descent of the supermind on all planes of consciousness right up to the physical, subconscious and the inconscient. Hence, even when ascent to the supermind is pursued, there are processes of descents of higher levels of consciousness into the levels of consciousness which are sought to be uplifted. Moreover, in the process of the integral yoga, it is the psychic being which is considered to be the inmost leader of evolution, and this leader is the individual soul in its process of growth, *caitya puruṣa*, who has descended into the obscurities of Matter, Life and Mind and acts upon the individual body, life and mind, the three evolutionary products of lower nature (Apara Prakriti) so as to lift them upwards. The aim is to transform the Apara Prakriti into Para Prakriti. The *caitya puruṣa* leads the lower nature, but its leading power, light and wisdom is to be constantly received from the supreme Self whose self-awareness and self-determining power is the supermind. The entire process of integral yoga is thus a complex web in which the evolutionary urge of the lower nature is uplifted by the psychic being, who, in turn, receives through its instrumentality the guidance of the supreme Self or Purushottama (to use the language of the Gita), who acts through the supramental Para Prakriti. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, in the integral yoga, the accomplishment is sought to be effected by the process of progressive self-surrender so that it is the Purushottama and his Para Prakriti that can work out the supreme transmutation that is envisaged.



## **A Brief Analysis of the Process of Ascent from Mind to Supermind**

In fact, as soon as we begin to concentrate on the centre of the heart and the psychic, and on the centre of the head, we begin to connect our self with the Divine Consciousness and invite that consciousness to direct us and to govern us. In the process of the ascent, as soon as the plane of the mind is crossed, whether by the Jnana Yoga or by Bhakti Yoga, or else, by the Karma Yoga, whether by silence or self-offering, by devotion or by sacrifice of personal and egoistic will, — the Self brings to us a sense of unity or a sense of oneness. One is uplifted into self-consciousness that is free from the bondage to the instruments of the mind, life and body. As Sri Aurobindo explains very briefly in one of his letters how the Self governs the diversity by means of unity as one ascends from the higher mind upwards, where the realization of the one is the natural basis of consciousness. That sense of unity and oneness is common on all the planes from higher mind upwards, but what is new at every level of higher consciousness is the degree and kind of power of consciousness and the degree and kind of intensity and potency of the Light. Sri Aurobindo states:

“The Self governs the diversity of its creation by its unity on all the planes from the Higher Mind upwards on which the realization of the One is the natural basis of consciousness. But as one goes upward, the view changes, the power of consciousness changes, the Light becomes ever more intense and potent. Although the static realization of Infinity and Eternity and the Timeless One remains the same, the vision of the workings of the One becomes ever wider and is attended with a greater instrumentality of Force and a

more comprehensive grasp of what has to be known and done. All possible forms and constructions of things become more and more visible, put in their proper place, utilizable. Moreover, what is thought-knowledge in the Higher Mind becomes illumination in the Illumined Mind and direct intimate vision in the Intuition. But the Intuition sees in flashes and combines through a constant play of light — through revelations, inspirations, intuitions, swift discriminations. The overmind sees calmly, steadily, in great masses and large extensions of space and time and relation, globally; it creates and acts in the same way — it is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators. Only, each creates in his own way; he sees all but sees all from his own viewpoint. There is not the absolute supramental harmony and certitude. These, inadequately expressed, are some of the differences. I speak, of course, of these planes in themselves — when acting in the human consciousness they are necessarily much diminished in their working by having to depend on the human instrumentation of mind, vital and physical. Only when these are quieted, they get a fuller force and reveal more their character.”<sup>30</sup>

## **Supramental Comprehensive Consciousness**

According to Sri Aurobindo, Supermind starts from unity, not division. It is primarily comprehensive, differentiation is only its secondary act. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo points out, whatever be the truth of being expressed, the idea corresponds to it exactly, the will-force to the idea, and the result to the will. In the Supermind, the idea does not clash with other ideas, the will or force with other will or force as in man and his world. The Supermind is, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, “one vast Consciousness

which contains and relates all ideas in itself as its own ideas, one vast Will which contains and relates all energies in itself as its own energies. It holds back this, advances that other, but according to its own preconceiving Idea-Will.”<sup>31</sup>

The supramental consciousness is founded, according to Sri Aurobindo, upon the supreme consciousness of the timeless Infinite but has too the secret of the deployment of the Infinite Energy in time. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“It can either take its station in the time consciousness and keep the timeless infinite as its background of supreme and original being from which it receives all its organizing knowledge, will and action, or it can, centred in its essential being, live in the timeless but live too in a manifestation in time which it feels and sees as infinite and as the same Infinite, and can bring out, sustain and develop in the one what it holds supernally in the other. Its time consciousness therefore will be different from that of the mental being, not swept helplessly on the stream of the moments and clutching at each moment as a stay and a swiftly disappearing standpoint, but founded first on its eternal identity beyond the changes of time, secondly on a simultaneous eternity of Time in which past, present and future exist together for ever in the self-knowledge and self-power of the Eternal, thirdly, in a total view of the three times as one movement singly and indivisibly seen even in their succession of stages, periods, cycles, last — and that only in the instrumental consciousness — in the step-by-step evolution of the moments. It will therefore have the knowledge of the three times, *trikāladṛṣṭi*, — held of old to be a supreme sign of the seer and the Rishi, — not as an abnormal power, but as its normal way of time knowledge.”<sup>32</sup>

## PART THREE

### **Spiritual Experiences on the way to the Supermind**

On the way from the Quiet Mind and Silent Mind or Purified Mind, and while crossing from Higher Mind to the Supermind, several higher and penultimate spiritual experiences are attained. In the specialized systems of yoga these or some of them are felt to be so overwhelming that they seem to sublate all the others and they can be felt to be the ultimate experiences of the Reality. In the integral yoga, however, the push is towards the supramental realization of the Ultimate Reality, and it is found that the Supermind, being itself the self-awareness of this infinite and the power of the self-determinations of the infinite, provides the direct and living experience of the supreme Infinite. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“Supermind has quite another, a positive and direct and living experience of the supreme Infinite. The Absolute is beyond personality and beyond impersonality, and yet it is both the Impersonal and the supreme Person and all persons. The Absolute is beyond the distinction of unity and multiplicity, and yet it is the One and the innumerable Many in all the universes. It is beyond all limitation by quality and yet it is not limited by a qualityless void but is too all infinite qualities. It is the individual soul and all souls and more of them; it is the formless Brahman and the universe. It is the cosmic and the supracosmic spirit, the supreme Lord, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha and supreme Shakti, the

Ever Unborn who is endlessly born, the Infinite who is innumerable finite, the multitudinous One, the complex Simple, the many-sided Single, the Word of the Silence Ineffable, the impersonal omnipresent Person, the Mystery, translucent in highest consciousness to its own spirit, but to a lesser consciousness veiled in its own exceeding light and impenetrable for ever. These things are to the dimensional mind irreconcilable opposites, but to the constant vision and experience of the supramental Truth-Consciousness they are so simply and inevitably the intrinsic nature of each other that even to think of them as contraries is an unimaginable violence.”<sup>33</sup>

## **Cosmic Consciousness**

One of the major experiences on the way to the supramental experience and realization is the experience of the Cosmic Consciousness. Indeed, the Cosmic Consciousness can be had at various levels of the mind, overmind and supermind. The essence of the passage over to the goal of the Cosmic Consciousness is the exceeding of the limits imposed on us by the ego-sense and at least a partaking, at most identification with a self-knowledge which broods secret in all life and in all that seems to us inanimate. Describing the experience of the cosmic consciousness, Sri Aurobindo states:

“Entering into that Consciousness, we may continue to dwell, like It, upon universal existence. Then we become aware — for all our terms of consciousness and even our sensational experience begin to change, — of Matter as one existence and of bodies as its formations in which the one existence separates itself physically in the single body from itself in all others and again by physical means establishes

communication between these multitudinous points of its being. Mind we experience similarly, and Life also, as the same existence one in its multiplicity, separating and reuniting itself in each domain by means appropriate to that movement. And, if we choose, we can proceed farther and, after passing through many linking stages, become aware of a supermind whose universal operation is the key to all lesser activities. Nor do we become merely conscious of this cosmic existence, but likewise conscious in it, receiving it in sensation, but also entering into it in awareness. In it we live as we lived before in the ego-sense, active, more and more in contact, even unified more and more with other minds, other lives, other bodies than the organism we call ourselves, producing effects not only on our own moral and mental being and on the subjective being of others, but even on the physical world and its events by means nearer to the divine than those possible to our egoistic capacity.”<sup>34</sup>

According to Sri Aurobindo, this cosmic consciousness is real to the seeker who has had contact with it or lives in it; this consciousness is real with a greater than the physical reality; real in itself, real in its effects and works. In the higher experience of the supramental cosmic consciousness, it is perceived that consciousness and being are not different from each other, but all being is a supreme consciousness, all consciousness is self-existent, eternal in itself. One can go one step farther. The Conscious Energy is seen to be one with the Being that creates the universe, but at the same time it is seen that the conscious Being which is the truth of the infinite supermind, is more than the universe and lives independently in Its own inexpressible infinity as well as in the cosmic harmonies. It is found that the world lives by That; That does not live by the world.

## **That Beyond — at the gates of the Transcendent**

It is in connection with That that one can enter with the world-transcending consciousness and become superior to all cosmic existence. And in regard to that consciousness, a major experience and realization can be obtained. That experience is described by Sri Aurobindo as the experience that one obtains “at the gates of the Transcendent”.

Sri Aurobindo describes it as follows:

“For at the gates of the Transcendent stands that mere and perfect Spirit described in the Upanishads, luminous, pure, sustaining the world but inactive in it, without sinews of energy, without flaw of duality, without scar of division, unique, identical, free from all appearance of relation and of multiplicity, — the pure Self of the Adwaitins, the inactive Brahman, the transcendent Silence. And the mind when it passes those gates suddenly, without intermediate transitions, receives a sense of the unreality of the world and the sole reality of the Silence which is one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable.”<sup>35</sup>

## **There is still a Beyond: Experience of the Non-Being**

According to Sri Aurobindo, this Silence is a status of the withdrawal from the activity, but there is still a possibility of a greater withdrawal, an experience not only of the Being but something that is beyond the being which is spoken of as an experience of the Non-Being. Sri Aurobindo states:

“But, still, there is the absolute withdrawal, there is the Non-Being. Out of the Non-Being, says the ancient Scripture, Being appeared. In the beginning all this was the

Non-Being. It was thence that Being was born. Then into the Non-Being it must surely sink again. If the infinite indiscriminate Existence permits all possibilities of discrimination and multiple realization, does not the Non-Being at least, as primal state and sole constant reality, negate and reject all possibility of a real universe?"<sup>36</sup>

Sri Aurobindo points out that another Upanishad rejects the birth of Being out of Non-Being as an impossibility; Being, it is said in the Chhandogya Upanishad, can only be born from Being. But the word Non-Being can be taken in the sense, not of an inexistent Nihil, but of an *x* which exceeds our idea or experience of existence; then the impossibility disappears. For Sri Aurobindo admits the truth of the experience of the Being as also of the experience that is even more transcendental which can be applicable to the Absolute Brahman of the Adwaita as well as to the Void or Zero of the Buddhists. In fact, the Mundaka Upanishad speaks of the Supreme beyond the immutable (*akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ*).<sup>37</sup> That which is beyond the mutable and the immutable, the Unknowable and the Ineffable, the ultimate *x* is so real that even the word real, even the word being or the word non-being cannot be applicable to it. Or else, it can be spoken of as pure Being and Non-Being and yet neither but beyond. Sri Aurobindo speaks of this Reality as follows:

“Pure Being is the affirmation by the Unknowable of Itself as the free base of all cosmic existence. We give the name of Non-Being to a contrary affirmation of Its freedom from all cosmic existence, — freedom, that is to say, from all positive terms of actual existence which consciousness in the universe can formulate to itself, even from the most abstract, even from the most transcendent. It does not deny them as a real expression of Itself, but It denies Its limitation



by all expression or any expression whatsoever. The Non-Being permits the Being, even as the Silence permits the Activity. By this simultaneous negation and affirmation, not mutually destructive, but complementary to each other like all contraries, the simultaneous awareness of conscious Self-being as a reality and the Unknowable beyond as the same Reality becomes realizable to the awakened human soul. Thus was it possible for the Buddha to attain the state of Nirvana and yet act puissantly in the world, impersonal in his inner consciousness, in his action the most powerful personality that we know of as having lived and produced results upon earth.

“...It is possible to pass into a Silence beyond the Silence. But this is not the whole of our ultimate experience, nor the single and all-excluding truth. For we find that this Nirvana, this self-extinction, while it gives an absolute peace and freedom to the soul within is yet consistent in practice with a desireless but effective action without. This possibility of an entire motionless impersonality and void Calm within doing outwardly the works of the eternal verities, Love, Truth and Righteousness, was perhaps the real gist of the Buddha’s teaching, — this superiority to ego and to the chain of personal workings and to the identification with mutable form and idea, not the petty ideal of an escape from the trouble and suffering of the physical birth. In any case, as the perfect man would combine in himself the silence and the activity, so also would the completely conscious soul reach back to the absolute freedom of the Non-Being without therefore losing its hold on Existence and the universe.”<sup>38</sup>

All spiritual experience is experience of the Infinite and it takes a multitude of directions; some of them like the

experience of the Silence or of the Being or of the experience of Silence beyond Silence or of the Non-Being are so close to the Divine and the Absolute, so penetrated with the reality of Its presence or with the ineffable peace and power of the liberation from all that is less than It, that they carry with them an overwhelming sense of finality, complete and decisive. As Sri Aurobindo points out, there are a hundred ways of approaching the Supreme Reality and, as is the nature of the way taken, so will be the nature of the ultimate experience by which one passes into That which is ineffable, That of which no report can be given to the mind or expressed by any utterance. Sri Aurobindo terms all these definitive culminations as penultimates of the one Ultimate. A supreme experience is the one which affirms and includes the truth of all spiritual experiences, gives to each its own absolute, integralises all knowledge and experience in a supreme reality. In this light, it may be said that all spiritual experiences are true, but they point towards some highest and widest reality which admits that truth and exceeds it. According to Sri Aurobindo, in the passage from mental to overmind cognition, one realizes many-sided unity, and the whole manifestation assumes the appearance of a singular and mighty harmony which reaches its greatest completeness when the soul stands on the border between Overmind and Supermind and looks back with a total view upon existence.

In that total view, two other major but penultimate experiences can be specially underlined, because one of them belongs to the path of the divine works and the other belongs to the path of the divine love, just as the penultimate experiences of the silent Being and the silent Non-Being are, as we have seen above, the culminating points of the exclusive path of Divine Knowledge.

## Master of the Work

At the height of the path of the divine works, one realizes more and more the supreme Divine as the Master and Mover of our works. It is discovered that He is the Cosmic Spirit of all this creative Energy around us; he is the Immanent within us. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the Master of the work does not reveal himself at once to the seeker. Always it is his Power that acts behind the veil, but He becomes manifest only when we renounce the egoism of the worker. This Master of the work and his divine Shakti not only preside over the works of the universe but they originate these works, inhabit these works, control them and override all the happenings in the world. But it is the veil of our desire and it is the veil of the ego that prevent us from coming into contact with them, and it is only when our surrender to the Divine Shakti is absolute that we are able to live in the absolute presence of the Master of the Work. Only then, says Sri Aurobindo, can we see our work throwing itself naturally, completely and simply into the mould of the Divine Will.

In the integral Karma Yoga, Sri Aurobindo points out, it is not enough to know the Divine Shakti as the one Cosmic Force that moves us and all creatures on the planes of Mind, Life and Matter. For at the level of Mind, Life and Matter, the cosmic force acts as the lower Nature, *Apara Prakriti*, and, although the Divine Knowledge, Light, Power are concealed there and at work in the ignorance and can break partly its veil and manifest something of the true character or descend from above and uplift these inferior workings, yet, imperfection remains in the dynamic parts. Even if we realize the Master of Works in a spiritualized mind, a spiritualized life-movement, a spiritualized body-consciousness, there is a stumbling response to the Supreme Power.

This stumbling response can be remedied, according to Sri Aurobindo, when we open to the Divine Shakti in the truth of a force, as the supramental Para Prakriti, which transcends the lower Prakriti of the mind, life and body. As in other paths which are integrated in the integral yoga, even so, in the path of karma yoga, the path of divine works, the aim is not merely liberation from the lower nature but also the liberation of the lower nature from its own limitations. For then only the work of the karma yogin is not only the work of the liberated soul but the work of accomplished supramentalised nature. As Sri Aurobindo states, not only liberation but perfection must be the aim of the Integral Karma Yoga. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

“If ours were not an integral Yoga, if we sought only the liberation of the self within us, or the motionless existence of Purusha separated from Prakriti, ...dynamic imperfection might not matter. ...But in an integral realization this can only be a step on the way, not our last resting-place. For we aim at the divine realization not only in the immobility of the Spirit, but also in the movement of Nature. And this cannot be altogether until we can feel the presence and power of the Divine in every step, motion, figure of our activities, in every turn of our will, in every thought, feeling and impulse. No doubt, we can feel that in a sense even in the nature of the Ignorance, but it is the divine Power and Presence in a disguise, a diminution, an inferior figure. Ours is a greater demand, that our nature shall be a power of the Divine in the Truth of the Divine, in the Light, in the force of the eternal self-conscious Will, in the wideness of the sempiternal Knowledge.”<sup>39</sup>

The supreme Master of the Work can be integrally realized, according to Sri Aurobindo, only when we cross the

border of the highest Mind into a larger supramental consciousness, where the divine Truth is the nature and not a stranger. The Master of the Work is revealed there in the imperishable integral truth of his being and his powers and his workings. Only there, too, his works in us assume the flawless movement of his unfailing supramental purpose. But even then, a farther step remains to be taken. It is realized that the truest reason why one must seek liberation is not to be delivered, individually, from the sorrow of the world, though that deliverance too will be given to us, but that we may be dynamically one with the Divine, the Supreme, the Eternal. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“The truest reason why we must seek perfection, a supreme status, purity, knowledge, strength, love, capacity, is not that personally we may enjoy the divine Nature or be even as the gods, though that enjoyment too will be ours, but because this liberation and perfection are the divine Will in us, the highest truth of our self in Nature, the always intended goal of a progressive manifestation in the universe. The divine Nature, free and perfect and blissful, must be manifested in the individual in order that it may manifest in the world.”<sup>40</sup>

But this aim cannot be achieved merely by ascent to the Supermind; there has to be, according to Sri Aurobindo, a descent of the supermind; for then only can the lower nature be transformed; then only can the action in the world be the manifestation of the dynamic nature of the Master of the Work, and then only can our law of action be one with the law of action of the Divine. Perfection of the divine action through the transformed and supramentalised mind, life and body would deliver us into liberation and perfection of what is called *sādharmya mukti*.

## **Ananda Brahman (Blissful Divine)**

Another major penultimate experience in the integral yoga is that of Ananda Brahman (Blissful Divine), which is the principal contribution of the path of the Divine Love. Will, knowledge and love are the three divine powers in human nature and in the life of man, and they point to the three paths by which the human soul rises to the Divine. When these three paths are united and when the union of the individual with the Supreme is attained through all the three paths, then the integrality that is achieved becomes the foundation of the integral yoga. These three paths are interrelated and the three powers, — will, knowledge and love also get interrelated. In that inter-relationship, love is found to be the crown of all being, and its way of fulfillment is marked by the increasing intensity that results in fullness and the ecstasy of utter self-finding. Love is the power and passion of the divine self-delight and without love, as Sri Aurobindo points out, we may get the rapt peace of its infinity, the absorbed silence of the Ananda, but not its absolute depth of richness and fullness. The path of the divine love is, therefore, indispensable for the integral realization of the Supreme.

It is true that there is a movement of love where the human lover and the Divine loved can live in the enjoyment of their exclusive oneness away from the world and from all others. Sometimes this exclusiveness may prove to be an inevitable movement of the path of bhakti. But love can be fulfilled in knowledge and works; the widest love fulfilled in knowledge sees the world not as something other and hostile to this joy, but as the being of the Beloved and all creatures as his being, and in that vision divine works find their joy and their justification. According to Sri Aurobindo,

this is the knowledge in which the integral Yoga must live.

Yoga is not philosophy, nor is it a religion; it is not a matter of theory or speculation, nor is it a matter of revelation turned into dogma; it is a matter of experience, which can be renewed by fresh experience and which can be matured into abiding realization. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“Its experience is that of a conscient universal and supracosmic Being with whom it brings us into union, and this conscious experience of union with the Invisible, always renewable and verifiable, is as valid as our conscious experience of a physical world and of visible bodies with whose invisible minds we daily communicate.”<sup>41</sup>

It is this character of yoga which has to be emphasized, particularly with reference to the Bhakti Yoga, because certain aspects of this yoga seem to be so allied to the practices of popular religion that there could be genuine confusion between Bhakti Yoga and popular religion. Adoration and worship which are connected with popular religion change their character when they are practised in Bhakti Yoga; the path of the yogic love for the divine aims at transforming the character of adoration and worship into a means by which one can be led towards a closer union of the soul with the Divine. Prayer in the path of yoga is a means of preparing the relationship between the individual soul and the Divine. In the end, prayer either ceases or remains only for the joy of the relationship. The relations which arise out of the attitude towards the divine are those of the divine Father and the Mother with the child and of the divine Friend; or else these relations mature into the individual as a pupil and the Divine as living Guide, Teacher, giver of light. Closer and more intimate still is the relation of the Mother

and the child. The soul turns to the Mother-Soul because of the self-existent nature of this love and because that points us to the home towards which we turn from our wanderings in the world into the bosom in which we find our rest. But the highest and the greatest relation springs from the very nature of love itself; it is the passion of the Lover and the Beloved. For love is a passion and seeks for two things, eternity and intensity, and in the relation of the Lover and the Beloved, the seeking for eternity and for intensity is instinctive and self-born. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“Therefore it is here most that the turning of human emotion Godwards finds its full meaning and discovers all the truth of which love is the human symbol, all its essential instincts divinized, raised, satisfied in the bliss from which our life was born and towards which by oneness it returns in the Ananda of the divine existence where love is absolute, eternal and unalloyed.”<sup>42</sup>

The path of divine love passes through many moods of love that is turned to the Divine; there is in these moods the joy of musing and absorption; moods turn from the delight of the meeting and fulfillment and embrace to the pain of separation, the wrath of love, the tears of longing, the increased delight of union. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“The heart is the scene of this supreme idyll of the inner consciousness, but a heart which undergoes increasingly an intense spiritual change and becomes the radiantly unfolding lotus of the spirit. And as the intensity of its seeking is beyond the highest power of the normal human emotions, so also the delight and the final ecstasy are beyond the reach of the imagination and beyond expression by speech. For this is the delight of the Godhead that passes human



understanding.”<sup>43</sup>

It may be acknowledged that the way of the Divine Love is impossible, if the personality of the Divine cannot be taken as a reality, — a real reality — and not a hypostasis of the illusion. There can be no love without a lover and beloved. In the integral yoga, personality and impersonality, as our mind understand them, are only aspects of the Divine and both are contained in his being; they are one thing which we see from two opposite sides and into which we enter by two gates. It is true that when one crosses the border of the mind, and one develops the realization that comes through the path of knowledge, a penultimate experience of the ultimate reality is that of the Nirguna, the pure Impersonal. On the other hand, when one crosses the borders of the mind, and develops the realization that comes through the path of divine love, one experiences the reality as Saguna, the divine Person. But if one crosses into the realm of the Intuitive Mind, one finds there the reconciling power. And one can even rise into the native supramental home of the infinite and illimitable Truth, where all existence discovers its unity. Sri Aurobindo, while describing this experience of unity points out:

“That is what the ancient Veda meant when it cried, “There is a firm truth hidden by truth (the eternal truth concealed by this other of which we have here these lower intuitions); there the ten hundred rays of light stand together; that is One.” “*ṛtena ṛtam api hitam dhruvam...daśa śatā saha tasthus tad ekam.*”<sup>44</sup>

## **Integral and Supramental Realisation of the Infinite**

Sri Aurobindo points out that the impersonal is a truth; the personal too, is a truth; they are the same truth seen from

two sides of our psychological activity; neither by itself gives a total account of its reality, and yet by either we can approach it. Both views are true, and each must be given its proper validity. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“The integral seeker has to see in this light that he can reach one and the same Reality on both lines, either successively or simultaneously, as if on two connected wheels traveling on parallel lines, but parallel lines which in defiance of intellectual logic but in obedience to their own inner truth of unity do meet in infinity.”<sup>45</sup>

The realization of the divine personality and the realization of the absolute impersonality are two of the great major but penultimate realizations. Even in respect of divine personality, there are found to be various forms, since the divine personality has various formulations of quality; it is found that the divine Person is Anantaguna, and is able to express himself through infinite quality. We can adore the divine Person through different forms of His nature, a God of righteousness, a God of love and mercy, a God of peace and purity; none of these are all the Divinity; yet these forms of his personality are real truths of himself. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“He is each separately and all together. He is Vishnu, Krishna, Kali; he reveals himself to us in humanity as the Christ personality or the Buddha personality. When we look beyond our first exclusively concentrated vision, we see behind Vishnu all the personality of Shiva and behind Shiva all the personality of Vishnu. He is the Ananta-guna, infinite quality and the infinite divine Personality which manifests itself through it. Again he seems to withdraw into a pure spiritual impersonality or beyond all idea even of impersonal Self and to justify a spiritualised atheism or agnosticism; he

becomes to the mind of man an indefinable, *anirdeśyam*. But out of this unknowable the conscious Being, the divine Person, who has manifested himself here, still speaks, "This too is I; even here beyond the view of mind, I am He, the Puruṣhottama."<sup>46</sup>

The path of the Divine Love leads the seeker to the outflowings of the Ananda Brahman, — to joy, beauty, love, peace, and delight. In the supramental consciousness, however, the Ananda Brahman reveals its integrality and Brahman is realized as the integral Supreme, where the Supreme Inactive Brahman, the Divine Master of Work and the Ananda Brahman stand together in the highest unity and oneness. As one reaches the integral experience and realization of the integral Supreme, Brahman is revealed in three ways, within ourselves, above our plane, around us in the universe. Describing the integral realization, Sri Aurobindo states:

"When we possess firmly this consciousness of the Ananda Brahman in all of these three manifestations, above, within, around, we have the full oneness of it and embrace all existences in its delight, peace, joy and love; then all the worlds become the body of this self. But we have not the richest knowledge of this Ananda if it is only an impersonal presence, largeness or immanence that we feel, if our adoration has not been intimate enough for this Being to reveal to us out of its wide-extended joy the face and body and make us feel the hands of the Friend and Lover. Its impersonality is the blissful greatness of the Brahman, but from that can look out upon us the sweetness and intimate control of the divine Personality. For Ananda is the presence of the Self and Master of our being and the stream of its outflowing can be the pure joy of his Lila."<sup>47</sup>

## **Effects of Spiritual Experiences on Evolutionary Human Nature**

The experiences of the Spirit can be acquired through the mind or the heart or life-sense or even through the physical consciousness; as Sri Aurobindo points out, if the inner doors are flung sufficiently open, the light from the sanctuary can suffuse the nearest and the farthest chambers of the outer being. A consciousness so touched may be so much uplifted that the being turns to an immediate union with the Self or with the Divine by departure from the evolution and, if that is sanctioned, no question of individuality or steps or method intervenes, the rupture with Nature can be decisive. But even if this happens or can happen in regard to the development of certain individuals, the evolutionary process of the earth, when examined, seems to imply an intention of the transformation of the earth-life, and therefore, the law of the departure is not or need not be the same as the law of the evolutionary transformation or perfection. Hence, the experiences of the spirit or even the experiences of the penultimate heights or profundities of the Spirit result in increasing spiritualization of Nature. And the process of spiritual change of nature must go step by step, till the stair of the ascension is transcended and there is an emergence of the greatest wide-open spaces or a consciousness which is supremely and supramentally luminous and infinite.

The psychic and spiritual experiences result in the processes of psychic transformation and spiritual transformation of nature. The psychic transformation and spiritual transformation are fundamentally processes of evolution, and they follow the processes of heightening and widening of the consciousness, the processes of ascent to

higher levels of consciousness and the processes of taking up of the lower levels resulting in new integration of the lower by superior powers of higher levels of consciousness; as a result, the demand for integration becomes, according to Sri Aurobindo, a point of cardinal importance. The process of the ascent towards supermind, therefore, follows the process not only of ascent but also of integration. It is in this context, therefore, that the evolutionary process pushes the development upwards from the silence of the mind to higher levels of the mind, such as the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind and Overmind towards the Supermind. As Sri Aurobindo states:

“But when the spiritualization begins and, as its greater results manifest themselves, — silence of the mind, the admission of our being into the cosmic consciousness, the Nirvana of the little ego in the sense of universal self, the contact with the Divine Reality, — the interventions of the higher dynamis and our openness to them can increase, they can assume a fuller, more direct, more characteristic power of their working, and this progression continues until some complete and mature action of them is possible. It is then that the turning of the spiritual towards the supramental transformation commences; for the heightening of the consciousness to higher and higher planes builds in us the gradation of the ascent to Supermind, that difficult and supreme passage.”<sup>48</sup>

This difficult passage consists of heightening, widening, ascent and integration, and series of ascents and descents. The first decisive step out of the human intelligence is, as we have seen, an ascent into the Higher Mind; but this ascent becomes more and more established when the aspect of cognition and the aspect of will of the higher mind impose

themselves by a process of integration and descent on our substance of Mind, Life and Matter. In order to make this integration free from resistance or a revolt of the mind, life and body, a previously established control is very desirable as that creates a general responsiveness. Even then, although a first spiritual change is effected, the original basis of the Nescience proper to the Inconscience will still be there needing at every turn to be changed, enlightened, diminished in extent and in its force of reaction. Even when the illumined mind arrives, and even when there is the descent of the golden drive, and even when a luminous enthusiasm of its force and power effectuates the integration of the lower levels of consciousness and power, the resistance of the Inconscience is not overcome; and yet what is achieved is enormous. As Sri Aurobindo points out, in the transformation by the Higher Mind, the spiritual sage and thinker will find his total and dynamic fulfillment, and in the transformation by the Illumined Mind, there would be a similar fulfillment for the seer, the illumined mystic, those in whom the soul lives in vision and in a direct sense and experience. Even then, these two stages of the ascent enjoy their authority and can get their own united completeness only by a reference to a third level, the level of the Intuitive Mind. When the Intuitive Mind acts in its own plane, it can perform all the action of the Reason; it can replace the function of logical intelligence and work out their right relation of things and the right relation of idea with idea by its own superior process and with steps that do not fail or falter. The process of integration and transformation by the descent of the intuitive mind into the lower levels of consciousness also achieve greater effectivity. Speaking of the power of the transformation of the Intuitive Mind, Sri Aurobindo states:

“It takes up also and transforms into its own substance not only the mind of thought, but the heart and life and the sense and physical consciousness: already all these have their own peculiar powers of intuition derivative from the hidden Light; the pure power descending from above can assume them all into itself and impart to these deeper heart-perceptions and life-perceptions and the divinations of the body a greater integrality and perfection. It can thus change the whole consciousness into the stuff of Intuition; for it brings its own greater radiant movement into the will, into the feelings and emotions, the life-impulses, the action of sense and sensation, the very workings of the body-consciousness; it recasts them in the light and power of truth and illumines their knowledge and their ignorance.”<sup>49</sup>

But even then, the total integration is hampered, and the intuitive mind cannot sufficiently take up the subconscious and penetrate the fundamental Inconscience. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the basis of Inconscience in our nature is too vast, deep and solid to be altogether penetrated, turned into light, transformed by the intuitive mind or even by the still higher Overmind. It is not easy to bring about the ascent to the Overmind; the yogic experience shows that a high and intense individual opening upwards is not sufficient; to that vertical ascent, there must be added a vast horizontal expansion of the consciousness in some totality of Spirit. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is only by an opening into the cosmic consciousness that the Overmind ascent and descent can be made wholly possible. An important precondition is that the inner being must already have replaced by its deeper and wider awareness the surface mind and its limited outlook and learn to live in a large universality, but when one learns to live in overmental consciousness, one begins to have,

according to Sri Aurobindo, a very integral sense of governance, a complete supporting or over-ruling presence and direction of the cosmic Self or Ishwara. In the boundless largeness of the overmind, not only the separate ego but all sense of individuality, even of a subordinated or instrumental individuality, may entirely disappear. Some of the effects that Sri Aurobindo has described of the descent of the overmind can be seen in the following statement:

“When the Overmind descends, the predominance of the centralizing ego-sense is entirely subordinated, lost in largeness of being and finally abolished; a wide cosmic perception and feeling of a boundless universal self and movement replaces it: many motions that were formerly egocentric may still continue, but they occur as currents or ripples in the cosmic wideness. Thought, for the most part, no longer seems to originate individually in the body or the person but manifests from above or comes in upon the cosmic mind-waves: all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one’s separate self but in the universal knowledge; the feelings, emotions, sensations are similarly felt as waves from the same cosmic immensity breaking upon the subtle and the gross body and responded to in kind by the individual centre of the universality; for the body is only a small support or even less, a point of relation, for the action of a vast cosmic instrumentation.”<sup>50</sup>

## **Overmind and Consummation of Spiritual Transformation**

According to Sri Aurobindo, the overmind change is the



final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation; it is the highest possible status – dynamis of the Spirit in the spiritual-mind plane. The overmind carries the consciousness to the point of a vast illumined universality and an organized play of this wide and potent spiritual awareness of utter existence, force-consciousness and delight. But Sri Aurobindo points out that in the terrestrial evolution itself the overmind descent would not be able to transform wholly the Inconscience. It is true that the descent of the overmental consciousness would be able to transform in each man it touched the whole conscious being, the inner and outer, personal and universally impersonal, into its own stuff and impose That upon the Ignorance illumining it into cosmic truth and knowledge. But this transformation would not be able to provide security against the downward pull or gravitation of the inconscience which dissolves all the formations that life and mind build in it, swallows all things that arise out of it or are imposed upon it and disintegrates them into the original matter. It is this limitation of the overmental descent that necessitates ascent to the supermind and the descent of the supermind into the terrestrial formula. As Sri Aurobindo states:

“The liberation from this pull of the Inconscience and a secured basis for a continuous divine or gnostic evolution would only be achieved by a descent of the Supermind into the terrestrial formula, bringing into it the supreme law and light and dynamis of the Spirit and penetrating with it and transforming the inconscience of the material basis. A last transition from Overmind to Supermind and a descent of Supermind must therefore intervene at this stage of evolutionary Nature.”<sup>51</sup>

## PART FOUR

### **Ascent to the Supermind, Descent of the Supermind and Supramental Transformation**

The process of ascent to the supermind from the mind and the descent of the supermind, which would transform successively the Overmind, Intuitive mind, Illumined mind, Higher mind, mind and the rest cannot be a logical series of separate segments. Sri Aurobindo has stated that while a sufficient integration of one status has to be complete before an ascent to the next higher station will be entirely secure, it is a totality of ascending powers of being which interpenetrate and dovetail and exercise in their action on each other a power of mutual modification. As a result, when the higher descends into the lower consciousness, it alters the lower but is also modified and diminished by it; similarly, when the lower ascends, it is sublimated but at the same time qualifies the sublimating substance and power. Sri Aurobindo compares the evolution of the whole consciousness with the movement of an ascending ocean of Nature; the movement of a tide or a mounting flux, a leading fringe touches the higher degrees of a cliff or hill, but the rest is still below. At each stage the higher parts of the nature may be provisionally but incompletely organized in the new consciousness; but lower are in a state of flux or formation, partly moving in the old way though influenced and beginning to change, partly belonging to the new kind but still imperfectly achieved and not yet firm in the change. Sri Aurobindo also compares this movement with that of an

army. As he explains:

“Another image might be that of an army advancing in columns which annexes new ground, while the main body is still behind in a territory overrun but too large to be effectively occupied, so that there has to be frequent halt and partial return to the traversed areas for consolidation and assurance of the hold on the occupied country and assimilation of its people. A rapid conquest might be possible, but it would be of the nature of an encampment or domination established in a foreign country; it would not be the assumption, total assimilation, integration needed for the entire supramental change.”<sup>52</sup>

A capital problem of transformation is related to the fact that in the substance of the Inconscience, there is a self-protective law of blind imperative Necessity which limits the play of the possibilities that emerge from it or enter into it and prevents them from establishing their free action and result or realizing the intensity of their own absolute. The inconscience opposes the higher power and their intensities when they descend into it or enter into it. The inconscience has established an inexorable Law, and it meets always the claim of life with the law of death, the demand of Light with the need of a relief of shadow and a background of darkness, the sovereignty and freedom and dynamism of the Spirit with its own force of adjustment by limitation, demarcation by incapacity, foundation of energy on the repose of an original Inertia.

There is, of course, as Sri Aurobindo explains, an occult truth behind the negations of the inconscient; negations contain the power which sustains them, and that power can be manifested only when a higher power is able to penetrate

in the depth of the inconscience. That power has to be the highest power which can reconcile the truth behind the negation and the truth which is manifest in the operation of the higher power. As Sri Aurobindo points out, there is an occult truth behind the negations of the Inconscience which only the Supermind with its reconciliation of contraries in the original Reality can take up and so discover the pragmatic solution of the enigma. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“Only the supramental Force can entirely overcome this difficulty of the fundamental Nescience; for with it enters an opposite and luminous imperative Necessity which underlies all things and is the original and final self-determining truth-force of the self-existent Infinite. This greater luminous spiritual Necessity and its sovereign imperative alone can displace or entirely penetrate, transform into itself and so replace the blind Ananke of the Inconscience.”<sup>53</sup>

When the supermind descends, the whole substance of the being comes to be changed supramentally. At the lowest level of material nature, the involved Supermind emerges to meet and join with the supramental light and power descending from the superconscient. The consequence of the transformation of the Inconscient would mean the appearance in the evolution of a Gnostic being and a Gnostic nature, Gnostic Purusha and Gnostic Prakriti. Humanity today is, in respect to the higher possible evolution, much in the position of the original Ape of the Darwinian Theory. That ape, leading his instinctive arboreal life in primitive forests would have been utterly incapable of conceiving that there would be one day an animal on the earth who would use a new faculty called reason upon the materials of his inner and outer existence, who would dominate by that power his

instincts and habits, change the circumstances of his physical life; it would have been impossible for that Ape to conceive that a rational animal would build for himself houses of stone, manipulate Nature's forces, sail the seas, ride the air, develop codes of conduct, evolve conscious methods for his mental and spiritual development. Could he have imagined that by any progress of Nature or long effort of will and tendency he himself could develop into that animal? It is true that man, because he has acquired reason and still more because he has indulged his power of imagination and intuition, is able to conceive existence higher than his own and even to envisage his personal elevation beyond his present state into that existence. Sri Aurobindo points out that man's dream of God and Heaven is really a dream of his own perfection. But he finds the same difficulty in accepting its practical realization here for his ultimate aim as would the ancestor Ape, if called upon to believe in himself as the future Man. And yet, when we study the law of evolution in the light of the operations of spiritual consciousness, and if we compare the Darwinian Ape and the human animal that we call Man more intimately, and when we discover the soul in man and the intentions of that soul as also the intention that seems to be operating of the supermind that is above and the supermind that is in the inconscience, we shall be led to the conclusion that man is a transitional being and that he is a living and thinking laboratory in whom the nature, with the collaboration of the conscious will in man, is working out a new species, the supramental species.

## **Evolution and Establishment of the Supermind in Matter**

According to Sri Aurobindo, all problems of existence

are essentially problems of harmony; all Nature, he points out, seeks a harmony, life and matter in their own sphere as much as mind in the arrangement of its perceptions. It is that drive towards harmony that reconciles Life and Matter, and even when they are sufficiently not reconciled, the drive towards complete harmony is still at work to arrive at a complete harmony. It is that drive which has to some extent reconciled life and mind, and not satisfied with whatever harmony has so far been achieved, there is yet a continuous drive towards arrival of a perfect harmony. Similarly, there is upward impulse of man towards the harmony and perfect integration of the body, life and mind with the supermind. That perfect harmony is the logical completion of a fundamental method of Nature and the very sense of her universal strivings. Sri Aurobindo states:

“The accordance of active Life with a material of form in which the condition of activity itself seems to be inertia, is one problem of opposites that Nature has solved and seeks always to solve better with greater complexities; for its perfect solution would be the material immortality of a fully organized mind-supporting animal body. The accordance of a conscious mind and conscious will with a form and a life in themselves not overtly self-conscious and capable at best of a mechanical or sub-conscious will is another problem of opposites in which she has produced astonishing results and aims always at higher marvels; for there her ultimate miracle would be an animal consciousness no longer seeking but possessed of Truth and Light, with the practical omnipotence which would result from the possession of a direct and perfected knowledge. Not only, then, is the upward impulse of man towards the accordance of yet higher opposites rational in itself, but it is the only logical completion of a rule

and an effort that seem to be a fundamental method of Nature and the very sense of her universal strivings.”<sup>54</sup>

This method of nature is illustrated in the undeniable fact of evolution of Life in Matter and the evolution of Mind in Matter. What could be the driving force of evolution, unless it could be the presence of involved Life in Matter and of Mind in Matter? And considering that at the base of evolution is inconscience, that inconscience itself must be a state of involved Life and Mind. But considering that evolution is still continuing and man is striving upward towards higher manifestation of consciousness, we are obliged to fathom into the depths of the inconscience and observe that Inconscience is a state of involved Supermind. As Sri Aurobindo points out, there seems to be little objection to a farther step in the series and the admission that mental consciousness may itself be only a form and a veil of higher states which are beyond mind. There is, Sri Aurobindo affirms, the unconquerable impulse in man towards God, Light, Bliss, Freedom, Immortality, and this impulse can be seen in its right place in the chain as simply the imperative impulse by which Nature is seeking to evolve beyond mind. The impulse of life towards the mind bears a great analogical relationship with the impulse of the mind towards what can be called the higher, supramental and divine life. As Sri Aurobindo states:

“As the impulse towards Mind ranges from the more sensitive reactions of Life in the metal and the plant up to its full organization in man, so in man himself there is the same ascending series, the preparation, if nothing more, of a higher and divine life. The animal is a living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose

conscious co-operation she wills to work out the superman, the god. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God? For if evolution is the progressive manifestation by Nature of that which slept or worked in her, involved, it is also the overt realization of that which she secretly is. We cannot, then, bid her pause at a given stage of her evolution, nor have we the right to condemn with the religionist as perverse and presumptuous or with the rationalist as a disease or hallucination any intention she may evince or effort she may make to go beyond. .”<sup>55</sup>

## **Intention of the Supramental Evolution**

But apart from these indications which can be derived from the evolutionary movement, the intention of the supramental evolution on the earth is revealed by the supermind itself as also from the knowledge that can be gained of the purpose of the descent of the soul in the evolutionary movement on the earth. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the individual soul or the jivatman has possibility of entering into unity with the active nature of the Supreme and not only into a static essential oneness. And, the Supreme must surely know himself and also how the world process has come about and how, from the inconscience, evolution has proceeded and the role that the jivatman plays in respect of the evolutionary process. In the deepest experiences of the soul, the delegate of the Jivatman in evolution, it is discovered that the purpose for which the exclusive concentration of consciousness has resulted in ignorance is to trace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery. Sri Aurobindo points out that it is to find himself in the apparent opposites of his being and his nature that Sachchidananda descends into the material Nescience and



puts on its phenomenal ignorance as a superficial mask in which he hides himself from his own conscious energy, leaving itself forgetful and absorbed in its works and forms. He further points out that it is in those forms that the slowly awaking soul has to accept the phenomenal action of an ignorance which is really knowledge awaking progressively out of the original nescience, and it is in the new conditions created by these workings that it has to rediscover itself and divinely transform by that light the life which is thus labouring to fulfill the purpose of its descent into the Inconscience. The real purpose of the descent of Sachchidananda and the descent of the soul is stated by Sri Aurobindo as follows:

“Not to return as speedily as may be to heavens where perfect light and joy are eternal or to the supracosmic bliss is the object of this cosmic cycle, nor merely to repeat a purposeless round in a long unsatisfactory groove of ignorance seeking for knowledge and never finding it perfectly, — in that case the ignorance would be either an inexplicable blunder of the All-conscient or a painful and purposeless Necessity equally inexplicable, — but to realize the Ananda of the Self in other conditions than the supracosmic, in cosmic being, and to find its heaven of joy and light even in the oppositions offered by the terms of an embodied material existence, by struggle therefore towards the joy of self-discovery, would seem to be the true object of the birth of the soul in the human body and of the labour of the human race in the series of its cycles. The Ignorance is a necessary, though quite subordinate term which the universal Knowledge has imposed on itself that that movement might be possible, — not a blunder and a fall, but a purposeful descent, not a curse, but a divine opportunity. To find and

embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of Matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe.”<sup>56</sup>

## **Aim of Building Material Temple of Divinity on the Earth**

The manifestation of the supermind on the earth would be the fulfillment of the aim of building the material temple of divinity; in that condition, the soul would participate in the integrality of the supramental gnosis, and the descent of the Gnostic Light would effectuate a complete transformation of the Ignorance and even penetration into the Inconscience; even the supramental consciousness could come to be fixed in the physical consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo points out, a supramental change of the whole substance of the being can take place when the involved Supermind in Nature would emerge to meet and join with the supramental light and power descending from Super-nature. Sri Aurobindo goes farther and states that when the supramental principle is established permanently on the earth, the intervening powers of Overmind and Spiritual mind would be able to found themselves securely upon it and reach their own perfection. They would become, according to Sri Aurobindo, a hierarchy of states of consciousness in the earth-existence rising out of Mind and physical life to the supreme supramental level. In the context of this development, mind and mental humanity would remain as one step in the spiritual evolution; but other degrees above it would be there formed and accessible by which the embodied mental being,

as it became ready, could climb into the gnosis and change into an embodied supramental being.

## PART FIVE

### **Importance of the Individual**

In this entire process, the role of the individual, according to Sri Aurobindo, is of capital importance, since the individual must be the instrument and first field of the transformation. At the same time, Sri Aurobindo points out that an isolated individual transformation is not enough and may not be wholly feasible. He further points out that even when achieved, the individual change will have a permanent and cosmic significance only if the individual becomes a centre and a sign for the establishment of the supramental Consciousness-Force as an overtly operative power in the terrestrial workings of Nature. In other words, the evolution of the supermind will have a decisive bearing on humanity and even on the process of the solution of the problems that human life is confronted with and of the problems that humanity is passing through at the contemporary moment. Not only that, just as the evolution of the thinking mind has led the evolutionary process to develop a human body with special characteristics and structure that distinguish it from the body of the Darwinian Ape, similarly, there would come about, according to Sri Aurobindo, in the evolution of a supramental being the appearance also of a body, which would be appropriate to the operation of the supramental consciousness, having its own distinguishable capacities, form and structure. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“There must be an emergent supramental Consciousness-

Force liberated and active within the terrestrial whole and an organized supramental instrumentation of the Spirit in the life and the body, — for the body-consciousness also must become sufficiently awake to be a fit instrument of the workings of the new supramental Force and its new order. ...On this basis the principle of a divine life in terrestrial Nature would be manifested; even the world of ignorance and inconscience might discover its own submerged secret and begin to realize in each lower degree its divine significance.”<sup>57</sup>

## **The Divine Body**

The structure of the human body and the functioning of the human body indicate that the law of the body arises from the subconscient or inconscient. But as Sri Aurobindo points out, in the Gnostic or Supramentalised being the subconscient will have become conscious and subject to the supramental control, penetrated with its light and action; the basis of inconscient with its obscurity and ambiguity, its obstruction or tardy responses will have been transformed into supporting superconscience by the supramental emergence. The supermind, according to Sri Aurobindo, will not act as now, veiled in an apparent inconscience and self-limited by law of mechanism, but as a sovereign Reality in self-effectuating action. “It is this” Sri Aurobindo states, “that will rule the existence with an entire knowledge and power and include in its rule the functioning and action of the body. The body will be turned by the power of the spiritual consciousness into a true and fit and perfectly responsive instrument of the Spirit.”<sup>58</sup>

But apart from the emergence of the divine life in the divine body and apart from the integral yoga being a method

of future evolution and of the emergence of the next supramental species, this yoga will increasingly become the yoga of the perfection of the life of humanity on earth. The first essential condition will be, in the vision of Sri Aurobindo, the utmost possible individual perfection; the second condition will be the perfection of the spiritual and pragmatic relation of the individual with all around him. This will imply a complete universality and oneness with all life upon the earth. But there is also a third perfection to be attained. This will mean the development of a new world, a change in the total life of humanity, or, to begin with, a new perfected collective life in the earth-nature. Integral yoga is an evolving yoga, and in order to lead this yoga to its farthest possibilities, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have suggested a difficult programme of research.

### **Integral yoga and Method of Self-surrender**

The integral yoga involves research in various directions, and unlike religion, it is an open book; the object of this yoga involves a very long journey, and for conducting that journey as rapidly as possible, and as perfectly as possible, a synthesis of yoga has been proposed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; it is neither a combination *en masse* of different systems of yoga, whether connected with religions or independent of them, nor is it a process of successive practice of these systems of yoga. As noted earlier, the one central principle common to all the systems of yoga is concentration, and this principle is developed integrally and applied integrally to the integral object of realization; that central principle is so utilized that it becomes the basis of organizing a natural selection and combination of the various energies and different utilities or varieties of specialized and

synthetic systems of yoga. In this synthesis, the forms and outsides of the Yogic disciplines are neglected, and the central principle of concentration is enlarged so as to become a vehicle of the total concentrated utilization and offering or sacrifice of all the human energies to the all-integrating Supreme. The true essence of sacrifice is not self-immolation, it is self-giving; its object is not self-effacement, but self-fulfillment; its method is not that of self-mortification, but a greater light; not self-mutilation, but a transformation of our natural human parts into divine members, not self-torture but a passage from a lesser satisfaction to a greater Ananda, by purification and renunciation, — a passage in which all life is accepted but all life is offered as a sacrifice for total transformation. In this process, the only one thing which is painful in the beginning is the indispensable discipline that is demanded, — the discipline of the denial necessary for annihilation of the ego; that discipline leads to the discovery of real, greater or ultimate completeness in others, in all things, in cosmic oneness, in the freedom of the transcendental Self and Spirit, in the rapture of the touch of the Divine.

The secret of the sacrifice to the Lord of sacrifice was discovered by the Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita, as their texts testify. In the Gita, the truth and secret of sacrifice has been expounded more explicitly and, that too, in the language that is more easily understandable. Moreover, the Gita, by laying a special emphasis on Karma Yoga, brings out more clearly the dynamic side of yoga, which is indispensable for the perfection and total integration that is envisaged in the new synthesis of yoga. The Gita at its cryptic close sums up the method of sacrifice and of total sacrifice as the method of total surrender to the Supreme. This total

surrender is evocatively described as the sacrifice of all human standards of conduct by means of which the divine standard of all-harmonising divine action (*divyam karma*) is discovered and made operative. The Gita's insistence on the attainment of the state of *triguṇātīta* (attainment of transcendence of the three qualities or *gunas* of the lower nature) indicates the necessity of the method of total self-surrender, since the higher and divine nature which requires to be manifested in every dynamic movement in the state of accomplishment of Karma Yoga can be attained only by the influx of the divine nature into the operations of the lower nature; and this influx becomes possible only if the operations of the lower nature give up their demands and their narrow satisfactions and provide ample room for the influx of the divine nature. The method of self-surrender is, as we can see in the Gita, a plenary invitation to the divine nature by its descent from its heights with all its power of transformation in the alchemy of which the lower nature is transformed and the state of *sādharmyam* is attained, — the state in which the human being is united with the Supreme not only in His essentiality and in His Lordship of manifestation, but even in respect of actual operations of activities in the human instrument.

This great principle of self-surrender, which has been so clearly enunciated in the synthesis of yoga of the Gita, is explicitly acknowledged in the new synthesis of yoga. But, as Sri Aurobindo points out, the Gita works out fully the path as the ancients saw it, but the highest secret of the method of self-surrender is hinted rather than developed. Sri Aurobindo states:

“The Gita at its cryptic close may seem by its silence to stop short of that solution for which we are seeking; it pauses



at the borders of the highest spiritual mind and does not cross them into the splendours of the supramental Light. And yet its secret of dynamic, and not only static, identity with the inner Presence, its highest mystery of absolute surrender to the Divine Guide, Lord and Inhabitant of our nature, is the central secret. This surrender is the indispensable means of the supramental change and, again, it is through the supramental change that the dynamic identity becomes possible.”<sup>59</sup>

The new synthesis of yoga accepts the Gita’s method of self-surrender, but, in its search of the total manifestation of Spirit in Matter, it found it necessary to discover the supreme splendours of the supramental Light, and a vast labour of research had to be undertaken and accomplished that led to the discovery of the process of the descent of the supermind right into the physical and the inconscient. The permeation of the supramental consciousness in the organic cells of the human body came to be envisaged and worked out, the detailed account of which reveals new vistas of knowledge and power as also of the formidable obstacles which were required to be crossed.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of the method of total and sincere surrender; but this surrender is not to be confused with an inert passivity. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“...out of an inert passivity nothing true and powerful can come. It is the inert passivity of physical Nature that leaves it at the mercy of every obscure or undivine influence. A glad and strong and helpful submission is demanded to the working of the Divine Force, the obedience of the illumined disciple of the Truth, of the inner Warrior who fights against obscurity and falsehood, of the faithful servant of the Divine.”<sup>60</sup>

What is thus demanded is this process of self-surrender in which the seeker is not only constantly engaged in the search of the Truth and Truth alone but is also in a state of illumination and of obedience to the Truth, in a state of the one who is heroic and constantly vigilant to obscurities and falsehoods and fights against them courageously, and in a state of faithfulness and total devotion to the service with full loyalty and fidelity in the service of the Divine. It is the total and sincere surrender to the divine Being, divine consciousness and power, that is required as the condition under which the highest supramental Force can descend, and as Sri Aurobindo states: "... it is only the very highest supramental Force descending from above and opening from below that can victoriously handle the physical Nature and annihilate its difficulties..."<sup>61</sup>

### **Integral Yoga: Aspiration from Below and Grace from Above**

In the path of the integral yoga at the beginning and long after, the development of the seeker depends on the aspiration and personal effort. In fact, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that rises constantly upwards is one of the two fundamental powers of the integral yoga, the other power being the response that comes from above – the response from the Supreme, the response of the supreme Grace. The conjunction of the two, the aspiration from below and the supreme Grace from above can alone effect the fulfillment of the great and difficult aim of the integral yoga. Aspiration from below manifests itself as a turning of the seeker from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outer appearance and attraction of things to a higher state in which the Supreme Divine Being, — the Transcendental and Uni-

versal Being, — can pour itself into the individual mould and transform it. This implies the intensity of the turning and personal effort of the seeker, and this intensity can be measured by the power of aspiration of the heart, the force of the will, the concentration of the mind, and the perseverance and determination of the applied energy. The ideal seeker should be able to say in the Biblical phrase, “My zeal for the Lord has eaten me up.”<sup>62</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has formulated the personal effort as a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender as follows:

*“... — an aspiration vigilant, constant, unceasing – the mind’s will, the heart’s seeking, the assent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic the physical consciousness and nature;*

*rejection of the movements of the lower nature – rejection of the mind’s ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind, — rejection of the vital nature’s desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large, strong and consecrated vital being, — rejection of the physical nature’s stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, Tamas, so that the true stability of Light, Power, and Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine;*

*surrender of oneself and all one is and has and every plane of the consciousness and every movement to the Divine and the Shakti.”*<sup>63</sup>

## **Personal Effort in the Integral Yoga**

There are three stages of the process of the integral yoga,

not indeed sharply distinguished or separate but in a certain measure successive. In the first stage, the element of personal effort must normally predominate; in that stage the effort is directed towards at least an initial and enabling self-transcendence and contact with the Divine; in next stage, the seeker receives light, power, communion and help that comes to him from above; what is received is utilized for the transformation of the whole conscious being. In the third stage the transformed seeker is to be utilized as a divine centre in the world.

Each of the three stages has, in this yoga, its necessity and utility and must be given its time or its place. During the period of personal effort, which is more or less prolonged, there is struggle in which the individual will has to reject the darkness and distortions of the lower nature; one has to strain to put oneself resolutely or vehemently on the side of the divine Light. As one has voluntarily resolved to undertake the process of yoga and transformation, one has to ensure that mental energies, the heart's emotions, the vital desires, the very physical being accept the discipline of vigilance so that there is constant right attitude and there is constant training to admit an answer to the right influences. It will not do, and it cannot be safe or effective to take the attitudes which are valid for the higher stages of progression. When the personal effort has been truly done, then only can the surrender of the lower to the higher be effected. Indeed, as one progresses, the energy of the personal effort remains no longer personal and separate, but it becomes a part of higher Power and Influence which are at work in the individual. But even then, there remains for a long time a sort of gulf of distance between the emerging human effort and the transforming power that is descending from above. This

necessitates an obscure process of transit, and only at the end of the second stage of progression, with the progressive disappearance of egoism and impurity and ignorance that the gulf of separation between the individual and the divine is removed. Only then can one be secure in the third stage of the process and all in the individual becomes a divine working.

### **Integral Yoga and Methods of Evolution of Nature: Present status of the Results Achieved**

According to Sri Aurobindo, Nature has unconsciously followed the secret methods of integral yoga, but the integral yoga is a conscious application of the methods of the evolution that are found to be operating in Nature. The mental man, according to Sri Aurobindo, has not been Nature's last effort or highest reach; mental man is a transitional being; and the evolutionary Nature points man to a yet higher and more difficult level; Nature inspired him with an ideal of a spiritual living, begun the evolution in him of a spiritual being. As a result, the thinker, the idealist, the Prophet, the Sage, the self-controlled, self-disciplined, harmonized mental being have been led to exceed themselves and to go higher and deeper within. Their efforts indicate their call to the inner soul, inner mind and inner heart to come out into the front, and they also indicate their call to the higher forces of the spiritual mind and higher mind and overmind to come down; and we find among them the flowering, under the light and the influence that have come down from above, of the spiritual Sage, Seer, God-lover, Yogi, Gnostic, Sufi, Mystic.

Nature aims, first, at an enlargement of the bounds of our

surface Ignorance; secondly, Nature attempts in the spiritual endeavour to abolish the Ignorance, to go inwards and discover the soul and to become united in consciousness with God and with our cosmic existence. But that is not enough; if the victories of the Spirit are to be secure, a third step of integration is necessary. For that to happen, the old foundation of the inconscient itself, which lies at the bottom of Matter, will have to be made conscious, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother; and in that context, the yogic experiment of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has shown that the highest consciousness, the highest supramental consciousness can alone by the inflow of light and awareness brought down from its highest planes that can penetrate successfully the hard rock bottom of the inconscience and bring about the needed integration of Spirit and Matter. Then only would it be possible for the supramental consciousness not merely to dwell in the cellular consciousness of the body and widen it or universalize it but also permeate that consciousness and thus fix itself in the physical consciousness of the human body; only then the integration of Spirit and Matter can be secured. That integration would manifest, first, in a few individuals, and then it will spread into collectivities of such individuals; this would secure for humanity the higher and higher states of welfare and harmony.

Evolution of consciousness on the earth, in order to be secure, must find a physical base. Everything that has evolved has had a material basis. The same rule will apply to the evolution of the supermind on the earth. For that purpose, supramental consciousness must not only descend in the physical consciousness, but it must also be fixed in the physical consciousness. On the other hand, the physical

substance itself must undergo the necessary change so as to be able to receive the supramental consciousness and to manifest it. But even this fixing of the supramental consciousness in the physical consciousness will, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, lead to great and even visible changes in the structure of the physical body. Just as with the evolution of newer species in the past, not only has there been the emergence of new capacities of consciousness but even physiological changes, even so, the evolution of the supramental being will eventually lead to the appearance on the earth of a new divine body. There will be, in other words, the development of the next supramental species. Sri Aurobindo has even described the essential features of the divine body in his book *'The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth'*. And the Mother's own experimental research in the physical transformation confirms the formation of the divine body of the new species, at least, in its subtle state. But the Mother has made it clear that the crucial point was the fixing of the supramental consciousness in the human physical consciousness. She had also foreseen several intermediate stages thereafter which would eventually lead to the physical appearance of the new supramental body on the earth. That eventual result may even take two or three centuries. For the present moment, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had envisaged the accomplishment of the crucial task of fixing of the supramental consciousness in the physical human body; and according to what is recorded in *'Mother's Agenda'*, that task was accomplished by her in her own body in 1970.<sup>64</sup>

## Notes and References

- <sup>1</sup> Vide., Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, 1971, Vol. 20, pp. 26-44.
- <sup>2</sup> Vide., Ibid., pp. 506-13.
- <sup>3</sup> Vide., Ibid., pp. 514 -20.
- <sup>4</sup> Vide., Ibid., Vol. 21, p. 584.
- <sup>5</sup> Vide., Ibid., pp. 583-89.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 587.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, p. 1031.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, pp. 669-70.
- <sup>9</sup> Vide., Ibid., Vol. 20, p.163.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 162-3.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 168-9.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18, p. 230.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 22, pp. 98-100.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18, pp. 65-6.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 781.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 784.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, pp. 939-41.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 946.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 947.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 774.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.775.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, p. 949.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 777.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., Vol. 20, pp. 267-8.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18, p. 278; vide also, *Isha Upanishad*, Verse 15.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 279-80.



- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 774.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 775.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 130.
- <sup>29</sup> Vide., Ibid., Vol. 19, pp. 919-63.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 24, p. 1154.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18 p. 131.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 854.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., Vol. 20, p. 283.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18, pp. 21-2.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-3; vide also, *Isha Upanishad*, verse 8.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 27; vide also, *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II.7.
- <sup>37</sup> *Mundaka Upanishad*, II.1.2.
- <sup>38</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, 1971, Vol., 18, pp. 28-30.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, pp. 239-40.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 263.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., Vol. 21, p. 531.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 545.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 550-1.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 556; vide also, *Rig Veda*, V.62.1.
- <sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 557.
- <sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 560-1.
- <sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 572.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, p. 937.
- <sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 949.
- <sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 950.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 954.
- <sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 956.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 962.
- <sup>54</sup> Ibid., Vol. 18, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 591-2.
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., Vol. 19, pp. 962-3.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 986.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>60</sup> Ibid., *The Mother*, Vol. 25, pp. 4-5.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>62</sup> Vide., Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, p. 52.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., *The Mother*, Vol. 25, pp. 6-7.

<sup>64</sup> Vide., *Mother's Agenda*, Institut de Recherches Évolutives (I.R.E), Paris, Vol. 11, Conversation of 14.3.1970.

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**Y**oga is the methodized effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the cosmos. An important question regarding Integral Yoga is as to what are its specific methods that distinguish it from the other systems of yoga.

Sri Aurobindo's concept of Supermind and the descent of Supermind in matter is momentarily relevant to the problems that humanity is facing today. All of us, who are keen to contribute our best to the advancement of humanity towards its next step of progress need to study the theme of integral yoga – its aims, processes, methods and results, so that we may be able to link ourselves with this yoga and prepare ourselves for the journey ahead. It is hoped that this book will provide some useful material to seekers of the highest modes of action and who wish to reflect at deeper and deeper levels on the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.