

INTEGRAL YOGA OF TRANSFORMATION

PSYCHIC, SPIRITUAL AND SUPRAMENTAL

KIREET JOSHI

THE MOTHER'S INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH

Integral Yoga of Transformation

Psychic, Spiritual and Supramental

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)

Dedicated to

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

INTEGRAL YOGA OF TRANSFRAION

PSYCHIC, SPIRITUAL AND SUPRAMENTAL

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Preface

Integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is also known as Yoga of Transformation. The word 'transformation' has a distinctive meaning, and it is to be distinguished from what is normally called conversion or mere change of attitude or from the state of sainthood or ethical perfection. To be transformed is to be totally transmuted in every part of the being so that every part of the being is able to manifest Gnostic or supramental consciousness.

In most of the systems of yoga, the aim is to arrive at the liberation of the soul from Nature, but there is no deliberate aim to liberate Nature itself from its own limitations. In the state of liberation of the soul from Nature, the soul can experience itself as distinct from Nature or even as a master of Nature, but Nature remains the same. Nature has three strands, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas. In the state of liberation of the soul from Nature there is some change in nature, in the sense that Sattwa predominates, Rajas becomes quiescent and Tamas becomes obedient to the will of self and of the soul, but Sattwa itself does not get changed, nor do Rajas and Tamas undergo any fundamental change. In the state of the transformation of Nature, Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas are all transformed in their divine counterparts. Tamas is transformed into a divine calm, which is not inertia and incapacity of action, but a perfect power of Shakti, holding in oneself all its capacity and capable of controlling and subjecting to the law of calm even the most stupendous and enormous activity. Rajas becomes self-effecting, initiating sheer Will of the spirit,

which is not desire, endeavour, striving passion, but the same perfect power of being, Shakti, capable of an infinite, imperturbable blissful action. Sattwa becomes not the modified mental light, but the self-existent light of the divine being. This transformation leads to the manifestation of a new Prakriti, Gnostic Prakriti or Gnostic Nature. To use the words of the Gita, this would mean the manifestation of Para Prakriti. The secret of the manifestation of Para Prakriti has been discovered by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and it is this discovery which constitutes the novelty of the yoga of the integral transformation. This has a great deal to do with the evolutionary intention of Nature, and the entire process has been divided into three major steps in the Integral Yoga, namely, psychic transformation, spiritual transformation and supramental transformation.

The aim of perfect perfection that the Integral yoga places before mankind can be accomplished only when there occurs in the evolutionary process the evolution of the supermind and the consequent transformation of mind, life and body. This would mean the manifestation of the supramental supermanhood, a new step in evolution.

The idea of the superman has been spoken of in modern times, particularly by Nietzsche, but Sri Aurobindo's concept of superman is quite different, and as Sri Aurobindo points out, while Nietzschean superman would manifest barbaric strength and ruthlessness and force, — rakshasic or asuric, the supramental superman is a self-realised being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity, an urge of the soul and deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty, — not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of body and its possession

of life in the power of the spirit, a new course in which humanity itself finds its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity.

The divine way of supermanhood has been described by Sri Aurobindo as follows:

“When the full heart of Love is tranquillised by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength, when the strong hands of Power labour for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light, when the luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart’s obscure inspirations and lends itself to the workings of the high-seated Will, when all these gods are founded together on a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them, then is the condition of man’s integral self-transcendence. This and not a haughty, strong and brilliant egoistic self-culture enthroning itself upon an enslaved humanity is the divine way of supermanhood.” (*The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, Vol. 16, p. 281)

An attempt has been made in this book to provide a brief outline of the main steps of the triple transformation, but readers will do well to study the last six chapters of Sri Aurobindo’s ‘*The Life Divine*’, as also Sri Aurobindo’s, ‘*The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*’.

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PART ONE

Meaning of Transformation

The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother can rightly be described as the yoga of total transformation. The word “transformation” which has been used by Sri Aurobindo in expounding the integral yoga of triple transformation has a distinctive meaning, and although explained briefly elsewhere, we may refer to the following statement of Sri Aurobindo:

“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 (*chinmaya*) 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 realisation, something mixed and inconclusive, does not meet the demand I make on life and yoga.”¹

Sri Aurobindo makes a distinction between the liberation of the soul from Nature or Prakriti and the liberation of Nature from its own limitations. Generally, liberation of the soul from

Prakriti is considered to be the highest possible objective of yoga, and that liberation is termed in various ways such as moksha, kaivalya or Nirvana. Again, the Indian yogic tradition recognizes three important kinds of liberation, *sālokya mukti*, liberation that is attained when the soul attains its dwelling with the Supreme Reality, *sāyujya mukti*, liberation that is attained when the soul unites and becomes one with the Supreme Reality, and *sāmipyā mukti*, liberation of the soul when it attains nearness or close intimacy with the Supreme Reality. In all these states of liberation, the individual discovers its separateness from Prakriti and from the ignorance that is at play in its three gunas. There is, indeed, some change or modification in Prakriti, as a result of which there comes about predominance of sattwa, principle of light and harmony, as also general quietude in and around the activities of the three gunas. But otherwise the three gunas remain basically bound to their own peculiar qualities as also to the state of ignorance which is supposed to be inherent in Prakriti. In the synthesis of yoga that we find in the Veda, Upanishads, Gita and Tantra, the highest siddhis for accomplishments are also measured in terms of greater and more radical changes in the Prakriti, and therefore the aims in these systems of yoga include not only liberation of the soul from Prakriti but also increasing operation of Aditi or Divine Mother or Para Prakriti in the dynamic parts which also tend to change radically the three gunas of Prakriti. For instance, when we study the yoga of the Gita, where the greatest emphasis is laid on the discovery of the divine will and surrender to the divine will and dynamic action of the divine will through the human instrumentality, there is considerable emphasis on the change of Prakriti by the infusion in the three gunas of Para Prakriti and of the swabhava of the jiva or

individual, who is conceived as the eternal portion of the Supreme Reality² that is brought forth in manifestation by the Para Prakriti.³ Thus, we find that the Gita speaks of the operation of shraddha or faith in the three gunas, but shraddha itself is derived, not from Prakriti but from what is considered to be the constituent of the Purusha or the soul.⁴ Similarly the concept of swabhava, on which a special emphasis is laid, is the becoming of the soul, which does operate in the three gunas but is itself not derived from Prakriti. In fact, the same thing can be said in regard to kartavyam karma, the action that is not to be renounced. The Gita also speaks of the state of *triguṇātīta*, the state beyond the three gunas, of *muktasya* karma, the action of the liberated soul, of *madbhāva*, the divine's own nature, and also of *sādharmyam*, the state of the law of action which is identical with the law of action of the Supreme Reality.⁵ It also speaks of the enjoyment of immortality when one arrives at the transcendence of the three gunas.⁶ Similarly, the Gita also speaks of *sāśvata* dharma, eternal law of action. All these and allied concepts in the Gita definitively point towards the action of the soul which manifests Para Prakriti.

Liberation of soul and of Nature

It is thus clear that in the Indian tradition of yoga, there has been the aim, not only of the liberation of the soul from Nature, but also of the possibility of action of Nature that is free from the Nature's bondage to the ignorance of the three gunas. There is, thus, the acknowledgement of the possibility of the liberation of nature itself from its bondage to the three gunas. Sri Aurobindo envisages that, apart from the liberation of the soul from the Nature, there can also be liberation where nature is itself liberated from its own limitations and where

Nature or Prakriti becomes perfect whether in the state of action or in that of inaction. While discussing the ordinary idea of the liberation of Nature, Sri Aurobindo states as follows:

“The ordinary idea is that it is not possible because all action is of the lower gunas, necessarily defective, *sadoṣam*, caused by the motion, inequality, want of balance, unstable strife of the gunas; but when these unequal gunas fall into perfect equilibrium, all action of Nature ceases and the soul rests in its quietude. The divine Being, we may say, may either exist in his silence or act in Nature through her instrumentation, but in that case must put on the appearance of her strife and imperfection. That may be true of the ordinary deputed action of the Divine in the human spirit with its present relations of soul to nature in an embodied imperfect mental being, but it is not true of the divine nature of perfection. The strife of the gunas is only a representation in the imperfection of the lower nature; what the three gunas stand for are three essential powers of the Divine which are not merely existent in a perfect equilibrium of quietude, but unified in a perfect consensus of Divine action. Tamas in the spiritual being becomes a divine calm, which is not an inertia and incapacity of action, but a perfect power *śakti*, holding in himself all its capacity and capable of controlling and subjecting to the law of calm even the most stupendous and enormous activity: Rajas becomes self-effecting initiating sheer Will of the spirit, which is not desire, endeavour, striving passion, but the same perfect power of being, *śakti*, capable of an infinite, imperturbable and blissful action. Sattwa becomes not the modified mental light, *prakāśa*, but the self-existent light of the divine being, *jyotiḥ*, which is a soul of the perfect power of being and illumines in their unity

the divine quietude and the divine will of action. The ordinary liberation gets the still divine light in the divine quietude, but the integral perfection will aim at this greater triune unity.”⁷

The total transformation that leads to what may be called perfect perfection would mean, according to Sri Aurobindo, the appearance in the evolution of a Gnostic being or Purusha and a Gnostic Prakriti, a Gnostic Nature. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“There must be an emergent supramental Consciousness-Force liberated and active within the terrestrial whole and an organised 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 realise in each lower degree its divine significance.”⁸

Evolutionary Intention of Nature

According to Sri Aurobindo, the evolutionary process through which Matter, Life and Mind have evolved, if sufficiently studied in its depth, points to an intention of Nature to evolve the spiritual man and awaken him to the supreme Reality and not only to release him from herself, or from the Ignorance in which she as a Power of the Eternal has masked herself, but bring about a radical integral transformation of herself. In other words, even though the spiritual man has evolved, Nature has in her the intention to evolve the supramental being who shall thence forward be the leader of that Nature. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“There is a will in her to effectuate a true manifestation of the embodied life of the Spirit, to complete what she has begun by a passage from the Ignorance to the Knowledge, to throw off her mask and to reveal herself as the luminous Consciousness-Force carrying in her the eternal Existence and its universal Delight of being. It then becomes obvious that there is something not yet accomplished, there becomes clear to view the much that has still to be done, bhūri ~~spāṣṭam~~ ^{ay} kartvām; there is a height still to be reached, a wideness still to be covered by the eye of vision, the wing of the will, the self-affirmation of the Spirit in the material universe.”⁹

PART TWO

Psychic Transformation

But the work to be done was so enormous, so meticulous and so perfect that it could be accomplished, in Sri Aurobindo's view, only by the triple transformation, — psychic, spiritual and supramental. This implied three major processes and results. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the first process as that of the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul-instrumentation; next or along with the first, he points out, there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of life and body, even into the darkness of our subconsciousness; and thirdly, there must supervene the supramental transformation, — there must take place as a crowning movement the ascent into the Supermind and the transforming descent of supramental Consciousness into our entire being. This entire process involved and still involves the most difficult endeavour that humanity or at least that part of humanity which is capable of highest aspiration has to carry out.

The Psychic Entity

According to Sri Aurobindo, each human being has in him a psychic entity or soul. This entity can be recognized as an individual leader of evolution, and it is that entity that causes the upward aspiration that we find in the human being to break

the barriers of Ignorance and to march towards Knowledge. It is that entity that prepares in the human being the individual instrumentation; and it is that entity that collaborates with the evolutionary Nature and evolves itself as the psychic being and works for its freedom and sovereignty over the body, life and mind, as also for the liberation of the ignorant workings of Nature from their own established grooves so that eventually the Nature gets replaced by Super-Nature or Para Prakriti.

In the Indian tradition of yoga, the discovery of the psychic entity appears to be as ancient as the discovery of Agni, the Mystic Fire, which has been described as something that has been brought down into the cosmic dark Inconscience, and which is at work in the world as a cosmic being in the cosmos and as the individual being in the individual. In the Katha Upanishad, this psychic entity has been described as “the Purusha who is seated in the midst of our self”. It has further been described as “no larger than a finger of a man”. It is also mentioned that “he is like a blazing fire that is without smoke, and that he is lord of his past and his future”. The Katha Upanishad also declares this psychic entity to be the immortal individual being in the human being. It states: “He alone is today and he alone shall be tomorrow”. Finally, it is also said: “Him having seen one shrinks not from ought nor abhors any”.¹⁰

One of the chief characteristics of the yoga, where psychic consciousness receives its due place in its method and aim, is that it tends to lay increasing emphasis on the process of self-consecration and self-surrender to the Master of yoga, who presides over the processes of discipline and guides the seeker in the attainment of Yoga-Siddhi, the perfection that comes from the practice of yoga. From this point of view, we find in

the yoga of the Gita, increasing stress on the psychic love which is the real and spontaneous bond between the psychic entity and the Divine of whom it is an eternal portion;¹¹ it is that love that renders the complete surrender to the Supreme Lord as the highest and all-comprehensive method of the Gita's yoga. In the later history of the Indian Yoga, there arose a wide and intense movement of Bhakti yoga, the yoga of divine love, in which the development of the psychic consciousness and its application in the psychicisation of mind and life recorded immense and miraculous levels of fulfilment; a great climactic peak of this movement can be seen in the life and yoga of Sri Caitanya. But never before in the history of yoga was the role assigned to the psychic entity and psychic being in such a wide and comprehensive way as we find it in the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. For in this yoga, psychic transformation of the entire being, including the physical being has been conceived as an indispensable foundation and accompaniment.

Sachchidananda: Ananada: The Psychic Entity

We find here, in Sri Aurobindo's exposition of his integral yoga, a luminous clarity in regard to the origin and nature of the psychic entity. Sri Aurobindo's yoga affirms the reality of Sachchidananda (conscious and blissful Existent) in terms of which all that is in the world and all that is operative in the world can be explained and understood. Sachchidananda is, according to Sri Aurobindo, not only transcendental Reality of the world, not only immanent in the world, but also the originator of the world, the very stuff of the world and also the omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient Lord of the world. How this stuff of the Sachchidananda is present everywhere and yet fully veiled in the inconscient and how that veil is

being gradually lifted by the process of evolution receives, in the writings of Sri Aurobindo, a detailed examination and solution. The crux of the solution lies in the integral nature of Sachchidananda, the integrality of which is manifest in the integration of three terms, sat, chit and ananda. Sachchidananda is at once the Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara, — the transcendental essence which is the stuff of all manifestation (Brahman), the consciousness that originates manifestation and dwells in it in a poise where the energy of manifestation, Prakriti, depends on the originating will and originating being that is Purusha, and the lord and controller of all that is manifested (Ishwara). If, in the manifestation, there has emerged the phenomenon of the inconscience, it can only be by some will in the Sachchidananda and, that too, by the operation of his own power of self-limitation and the operation of Tapas, the power of various kinds of concentration, including the exclusive concentration of consciousness. If the inconscience presents a figure of total opposition to the nature of Sachchidananda, it can only be a result of the exercise of the omnipotent power and will of the Lord of manifestation who permits the effective mass of the inconscient and its opposition over which He can triumph in a process of struggle and slow development of the inconscience towards the manifestation of the superconscience. If there are the phenomena of pleasure and pain, and of the ego and its dualities, these, too, can only be what they are and what they are becoming in due course of evolution because of the inalienable presence and power of Sachchidananda.

Against this basic background, Sri Aurobindo explains how Matter is the divine All-existence, but veiled, hidden behind the actual phenomenon of things and manifest here

initially through its own subordinate term, Substance, Form of being or Matter. Similarly, Life can be seen as a divine Conscious-Force, omnipresent in the material cosmos, but veiled, operative secretly behind the actual phenomenon of things and expressing itself in the world characteristically as its own subordinate term. Similarly, again, Mind can be explained as the subordinate term of the Supermind, which is the self-awareness of the Sachchidananda, the Infinite and Eternal and a power of self-determination inherent in that self-awareness. Finally, there is in the manifestation of the principle of divine Bliss, omnipresent in the cosmos, veiled indeed and possessing itself behind the actual phenomenon of things, but still manifested in the world and in us through some subordinate principle of its own in which it is hidden and by which it must be found and achieved in the action of the universe. That principle of delight, although veiled in nature, manifests itself to the lover of Nature when he takes joy in all things of Nature universally without admitting repulsion or fear or mere liking or disliking, perceiving beauty in that which seems to others mean and insignificant, bare and savage, terrible and repellent. Similar is the experience of the artist and the poet and even of the God-lover who finds the object of his love everywhere, except in the parts where the experience is marred by the little ego which renders the essential current of delight into emotional and physical joy or suffering, pleasure and pain. That same term of divine bliss is, according to Sri Aurobindo, found in us individually, which we sometimes call in a special sense the soul, the psychic principle which is not the light of the mind or the body, but which holds in itself the opening and flowering of the essence of all these to their own peculiar delight of self, to light, to love, to joy and beauty and to a refined purity of being. That

principle of psychic consciousness which throbs in the universe behind the phenomena of insensitivity and dullness in various degrees is also present in each one of us individually as the psychic entity.

This entire world is the manifestation of Sachchidananda, who is in himself Transcendental above the universe, but is also universal being and individual. We find universal Matter corresponded by physical being for the individual, universal life corresponded by the vital being for the individual, and universal mind corresponded by the mental being in the individual. In the same way, there is the universal delight secret behind the world manifestation, and it is corresponded by the psychic principle in the individual. The individual that is constituted of the psychic principle is what can properly be called the psychic entity.¹²

The psychic entity or the true soul is as invisible and as secret in the individual as the psychic principle which is secretly vibrating all over in the universe. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, calls it “the true soul secret in us”, and points out that the presence of this soul or psychic entity, “burns in the temple of the inmost heart behind the thick screen of an ignorant mind, life and body, not subliminal but behind the veil”. The divine bliss of which the psychic entity in us is its term in the individual is further described by Sri Aurobindo as “a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the ignorance”; and its fundamental task is to grow in the field of Ignorance and to turn it towards the knowledge. This psychic entity is, “Not the unborn Self or Atman, for the Self even in presiding over the existence of the individual is aware always of its universality and transcendence, it is yet its deputy in the forms of Nature, the individual soul, *caitya puruṣa*, supporting mind, life and body, standing behind the mental,

the vital, the subtle-physical being in us and watching and profiting by their development and experience.”¹³

Psychic Entity and Psychic Being

In the totality of the gradual process of self-knowledge, the awareness of the psychic entity develops into psychic being and psychic personality. If we use the terminology of the Gita, the Ultimate Reality is Purushottama, who in his will of manifestation puts forth His power and energy of Becoming, which is inherent in His Being, and in doing so, there is a relationship between the Purushottama and his energy of manifestation, which the Gita refers to as Para Prakriti. The relationship between Purushottama and Para Prakriti is such that Para Prakriti exists as one with the existence of the Purushottama, and thus it cannot exist without Purushottama; but without Para Prakriti, Purushottama remains unmanifest. Para Prakriti, in the process of manifestation brings forth the complexity of the contents of Purushottama, since Purushottama is not an empty blank, and His essence does not exhaust all that He is. That essence is itself, in a sense, more than essence in the sense in which Plato in his philosophy of the highest Good defines that Good as something that exceeds essence both in power and dignity. The essence has within it the power of formation, and since Forms issue from the essence, that power of formation must be inherent in the essence.

It has, indeed, been argued that Form does not really exist, that it is an appearance or an illusion, but it even if that were so, the power of illusion and the power of formation as an illusion must somehow be a content of the essence. It has even been argued that there is neither essence nor form and that both vanish in the experience of Nihil. But even then the Nihil

must have the potentiality of the real or illusory Essence and Form. Logically, therefore, there does not seem to be an escape from That conclusion if the ultimate reality is One without the second, as is the contention of the Veda, Upanishad and the Gita. Indeed, the One is not a mathematical integer, something more than zero and less than two, but essence of identity having complexity in it and having power in it, which in its manifestation, brings out formations, — the formations of multiplicity of particulars and individuals, of the universal and of the totality, which is always more than totality. In the yogic system of the Gita, there is a clear recognition of the relationship between Purushottama and Para Prakriti as also of the manifestation of universality and individuality, both manifested through the infinity of Para Prakriti. With regard to the individual, there are two clear indications in the Gita, which need to be underlined. In the first place, the individual or the jiva, has been described as an eternal portion of the Divine,¹⁴ and this portion is, by the law of the Infinite, inseparable from its Divine universality; it is indeed itself that universality, except in its frontal appearance and its frontal separative self-experience. The second description of the individual or the jiva is to be found in VII.5, where it is stated that Para Prakriti is the constitutor of the becoming of the individual. On account of this ontological relationship between the Purushottama, Para Prakriti and the Jiva, one of the possible realizations of the higher level may be marked by the individual, in his awakening to the reality of the Purushottama, plunging himself into the reality of Purushottama. Another possibility would be where the individual liberating himself becomes aware of his eternal Companion and elects to live forever in the presence of Purushottama, in an imperishable union and oneness.

In the system of the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the individual working in the world of Ignorance has been described as the psychic entity. The psychic entity is fundamentally the Jiva, an eternal portion of the Divine, but it assumes, in the manifested world and in its descent into the Inconscience, the form of a spark and as an individual nucleus of ananda or divine love in the mass of our ignorant Nature. That is the reason why Sri Aurobindo describes psychic entity as:

“A small nucleus here in the mass of our ignorant Nature, so that it is described in the Upanishad as no bigger than a man’s thumb”, and therefore capable by the spiritual influx of enlarging itself and embracing “the whole world with the heart and mind in an intimate communion or oneness.”¹⁵


According to Sri Aurobindo, this psychic entity, representing the Jiva, which is an eternal portion of the Divine, is immortal. A clear distinction can, therefore, be made between various parts of our natural composition and the psychic entity. Various parts of our natural composition at our present state of evolution consist of the body, life and mind. These parts of our natural composition are, according to Sri Aurobindo, not only mutable but perishable; “but the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all essential possibilities of our manifestation but is not constituted by them; it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, not tarnished by the imperfections and impurities, the defects and depravations of the surface being.”¹⁶

The psychic entity, the nucleus of the individual, the spark of the Divine is, in relation to the field of ignorance, a labourer

carrying out the task of leading the evolutionary products of ignorant Nature or Apara Prakriti towards the total transformation of body, life and mind by triumphant infusion into them the qualities and powers of Para Prakriti. It is, at the beginning of its work in the field of the Apara Prakriti, like a secluded King in a screened chamber which is ruled by the evolving body, life and mind. Indeed, the screen behind which the secluded king is at work is thick, and therefore the body, life and mind are unaware of the secret Light of the King. But still “lodged in the cavern heart of things”,¹⁷ it burns behind the thick screen of an ignorant mind, life and body. Indeed, intimations continue to flow from the innermost sanctuary where the psychic entity lives as a secluded King; these intimations can even rise to our surface, but our mind does not detect their source. As a result, the mind follows or does not follow those intimations according to its bend or turn at the moment. The ignorant mind, which is exclusively concentrated on its own activities along with those of the physical being and vital being, is normally obedient to the ego, which is one of the devices evolved by ignorant Nature for co-ordinating activities of a limited field with itself as the apparent centre. The mind is able to obey the intimations rising from the psychic entity only if it has already developed clarity, subtlety, power of synthesis and quietude; otherwise, mind tends to obey the urge of the vital ego, particularly when the vital consciousness is turbulent and easily excitable; the egoistic consciousness that operates in the vital being overpowers the mind, and the mind, instead of turning inwards, remains externalized. In that condition, there is little chance of the psychic consciousness at all controlling the nature for manifesting in us something of its secret spiritual stuff and native movement.

There is, it may be said, a certain relationship between the psychic entity and the ignorant Nature in which it is missioned to act. If the psychic consciousness has descended into ignorance, it is because the entire evolutionary process is to be awakened to receive the higher light and be transformed by it. At the individual level, the psychic entity acts as an aid to the gradual evolution of the body, life and mind; and this aid is hampered by two characteristics of the evolutionary process: there is, first, resistance and even refusal to make a transition from Inconscience to Ignorance or from Ignorance to Knowledge; and there is, secondly, a resultant battle between the upward movement of evolution and the resistance and refusal to evolve upwards and even refusal to accept the aid that can come to it from the psychic entity which is at work in it. Indeed, Nature ultimately works out an upward evolutionary movement, but that movement is tardy or rapid, depending upon the consent that is obtained in the evolutionary Nature towards its upward movement.

The psychic entity or the soul having earlier no experience of the inconscience or the ignorance when it descended from above as a spark from the Divine, undergoes a process of learning by experience the nature of the Inconscience and of the Ignorance. This learning process implies the soul's growth by experience of the inconscience and the ignorance. This growth of the soul consists of gathering the essence of all the mental, vital and bodily experience; the soul also assimilates that experience by means of which it gains gradual control and mastery over the evolutionary process of the body, life and mind. It is only when this control and mastery become strong that the body, life and mind become more and more inward and become more and more inclined to receive and accept intimations of the psychic entity. There is thus a double

process of the action of the psychic entity: the action of aiding the development of body, life and mind, and the action of gaining control and mastery over its instruments. This implies that the soul, by means of its growth, begins to take a secret form; in other words, it puts forward and develops a soul personality; that soul personality is not itself the soul, but its formation growing out of the soul, and that soul personality represents the soul; that growing soul personality is what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother call the psychic being. While this secret soul personality grows, it is able increasingly to influence the body, life and mind and even their superficial activities that take place on the outer surface. As a result, even on the ignorant surface, we become dimly aware of something that can be called a soul or a psychic being as distinct from mind, life and body. This is the stage where maturer forms of the development of personality take place. 

As Sri Aurobindo points out, it is part of the work of the soul or the psychic entity to influence mind and heart and vital being and turn their ideas, feelings, enthusiasms, dynamisms in the direction of what is divine and luminous, but this work of the soul is facilitated increasingly as the psychic being and psychic personality grow stronger. This underlines the momentous importance of the growth of the psychic being in the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The psychic being, as it develops, begins to increase its communion with psychic entity behind it, on the one hand, and improve, on the other, its communications with the instruments of the mind, life and body and even with the surface consciousness. The psychic being can transmit its intimation to mind and heart and life with greater purity and force, but even then the progress would be slow and long, if left solely to the difficult automatic action of the evolutionary Energy. Hence, there arises an

indispensable need to develop some conscious and deliberate and even designed efforts on the part of the human individual being.

In other words, the growing individual has to undertake the task of the practice of yoga, which is a methodised effort, first, to awaken to the knowledge of the soul and, secondly, to the knowledge of the principles and processes by which the soul and the psychic being can be brought to the front in order that life can be made receptive and capable of carrying out the guidance that the soul and the psychic being can provide.¹⁸

According to Sri Aurobindo, the mind's clear perception and insistence on an effort to know the nature of the soul and psychic being can be a great help. One of the main difficulties in arriving at the mind's clear perception of the soul and psychic being is the fact that when one attempts to go within in search of the soul, one finds many formations which present themselves as soul elements, and one can be mistaken as to which element is truly psychic. There are confusions on account of the early Greek and some other traditions about after-death descriptions, and there are beliefs about experiences of the wraith or ghost of the personality. This ghost is often confused with the soul because, like the soul, the ghost seems to survive death of the body. In fact, as Sri Aurobindo points out, the ghost is sometimes a vital formation reproducing the man's characteristics, his surface life-mannerisms, sometimes a subtle physical prolongation of the surface form of the mind-shell or it is at best a sheath of the life-personality which still remains in the front for some time after the departure from the body. But even though this sheath of the life-personality survives the death of the body, it is still a formation and gets dissolved in due course of time. The real soul has altogether a different character, and it is immortal and

undying Traveller of various domains of experience, and it is what assumes body after body in a series of rebirth.¹⁹

Concept of Psychic Being in relation to the Concepts of Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara as also to Jivatman and Psychic Entity

The second difficulty in recognizing the true soul and psychic being arises from our ignorance of the subliminal parts of our nature and the forms and powers of the conscious being or Purusha which presides over their action. The concept of Purusha itself suffers from various confusions. In the Sankhyan philosophy, the word Purusha indicates the individual being which is in its very nature inactive but luminous. In the Katha Upanishad, the individual being is described as the Jivatman, Eater of sweetness.²⁰ The Taittiriya Upanishad speaks of the individual being as the five-fold Atman or Purusha, the physical individual being, vital individual being, mental individual being, Gnostic individual being and the blissful individual being, — *puruṣa annara-samayāḥ, ātmā prāṇmayāḥ, ātmā manōmayāḥ, ātmā vijnānamayāḥ, and ātmā ānadamayāḥ*.²¹ The Upanishad uses the word Purusha not only for the individual being but also for the Supreme beyond the immutable, and the words Purusha and Brahman are also used as synonymous²² and also as Lord, (Isā and Prajapati, Father of creatures).²³ In the Gita, as in the Veda and the Upanishads, the word Purusha is used as synonymous with Brahman and Ishwara, but there is also a distinction made between Jiva, the individual being,²⁴ and it also speaks of Purusha in three poises, kshara, mobile, akshara, immobile, and Purusha beyond mobile and immobile. In the later philosophies of India, the words Atma, Jiva and Purusha are often used as synonyms, and yet their

descriptions are not always identical. In Sri Aurobindo's statement of philosophy and yoga, we find clear descriptions and distinguishing features for each of these terms. Whenever the word Brahman or Atman is used, it means the ultimate essence that can expand in manifestation; whenever the word Purusha is used, it means the Being with the will of origination of expansion by which the energy which is quiescent in the essence is brought out into manifestation, and thus the word 'Purusha' means originator of the movement of Prakriti with which it can have a relationship of play, such that Purusha can dwell in Prakriti as the originator, even while the Purusha consciousness, as originator, can remain above Prakriti; on the other hand, Prakriti depends for its movement on the originating will of the Purusha and offers its movement for the enjoyment of Purusha, who as the enjoyer can assume the role of the giver of the consent to the activities of Prakriti. Again, the word Purusha is used in connection with its three poises, the transcendental, the universal and individual as also for its other three poises, — mobile, immobile and beyond mobile and immobile. The word Ishwara is used to indicate the status of the lord, controller and ordainer of all that is manifested and of all the arrangements of manifestation. For conveying the connotation of the individual being, Sri Aurobindo uses the word jivatman or individual Purusha, and he distinguishes clearly between the jivatman, psychic entity and psychic being, all of which relate to the individual being. Finally, it may be added that Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara are not three independent realities, but they refer to the same Ultimate Reality, which is at once the essence that can expand, the essence that can will and originate expansion and manifestation, and the essence which enjoys its lordship over what is manifested. The Ultimate Reality is one, and therefore

the yoga and philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is advaitic or monistic, but since, according to him, Ultimate Reality is Complex-Simple, and therefore, multisided and multipoised, that monism is integral or pūrṇādvaita.²⁵

Jivatman, Psychic Entity and Psychic Being

As we are seeking mental clarity as an aid regarding the soul and individual being, we may refer to the following statement of Sri Aurobindo, where a clear distinction is made between jivatman, psychic entity or spark soul, and psychic being. It is in one of his letters that this distinction has been clearly brought out: “The Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together, as that confuses the clearness of the inner experience.

“The Jivatman or Spirit, as it is usually called in English, is self-existent above the manifested or instrumental being — it is superior to birth and death, always the same, the individual Self or Atman. It is the eternal being of the individual.

“The soul is a spark of the Divine which is not seated above the manifested being, but comes down into the manifestation to support its evolution in the material world. It is at first an undifferentiated power of the Divine Consciousness containing all possibilities which have not yet taken form, but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark is there in all living beings from the lowest to the highest.

“The psychic being is formed by the soul in its evolution. It supports the mind, vital, body, grows by their experiences, carries the nature from life to life. It is the psychic or *caitya*

puruṣa. At first it is veiled by mind, vital and body, but as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body; in the ordinary man it depends on them for expression and it not able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal or human and not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation, becomes possible.

“The Self or Atman being free and superior to birth and death, the experience of the Jivatman and its unity with the supreme or universal Self brings the sense of liberation, it is this which is necessary for the supreme spiritual deliverance: but for the transformation of the life and nature the awakening of the psychic being and its rule over the nature are indispensable.

“The psychic being realizes its oneness with the true being, the Jivatman, but it does not change into it.

“The *bindu* seen above may be a symbolic way of seeing the Jivatman, the portion of the Divine; the aspiration there would naturally be for the opening of the higher consciousness so that the being may dwell there and not in the Ignorance. The Jivatman is already one with the Divine in reality, but what is needed is that the rest of the consciousness should realise it.

“The aspiration of the psychic being is for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this

instrumental being and nature.

“Both aspirations are essential and indispensable for the fullness of this yoga. When the psychic imposes its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, then they too aspire... The aspiration felt above is that of the Jivatman for the higher consciousness with its realisation of the One to manifest in the being. Therefore both aspirations help each other. The seeking of the lower being is necessarily at first intermittent and oppressed by the ordinary consciousness. It has, by sadhana, to become clear, constant, strong and enduring. ...”²⁶

Psychic Being and Subliminal Beings of Body, Life and Mind

The psychic being is also called by Sri Aurobindo to be the inmost being, and between this inmost being and the surface consciousness of which we are ordinarily aware to some extent, there is, what Sri Aurobindo calls, the inner being or the subliminal being. To the ordinary man who lives in his own waking surface, psychological existence is simple and consists of clamorous company of desires, some imperative intellectual and aesthetic cravings, some tastes, a few ruling or prominent ideas, a number of more or less imperative vital needs, alterations of physical health and disease, a scattered and inconsequent succession of joys and griefs, frequent minor disturbances and vicissitudes and rarer strong searchings and upheavals of mind or body. When one turns inward to go deep within oneself, the most disconcerting discovery is to find that every part of one's being has its own complex individuality. Whether it is intellect, will, sense-mind, nervous or desire self, the heart, the body, — each is in conflict with the other. One finds that one has many

personalities and each has its own demand and differing nature. As Sri Aurobindo states:

“Much more than half our thoughts and feelings are not our own in the sense that they take form out of ourselves; of hardly anything can it be said that it is truly original to our nature. A large part comes to us from others or from the environment, whether as raw material or as manufactured imports; but still more largely they come from universal Nature here or from other worlds and planes and their beings and powers and influences; for we are overtopped and environed by other planes of consciousness, mind planes, life planes, subtle matter planes, from which our life and action here are fed, or fed on, pressed, dominated, made use of for the manifestation of their forms and forces.”²⁷

One of the essential tasks of the psychic being is to become, in the growing individual totality, a divine centre and create growing harmony and luminous order. This can best be achieved if the psychic being can be brought more and more increasingly on the surface consciousness; on the other hand, this process can be aided greatly if the surface consciousness strives to go deeper and deeper towards the psychic being. Ultimately, a stage should be reached where the gulf between the surface consciousness and inmost consciousness is bridged. But as one goes deep inward, one discovers in the intermediate zones a mind self, a life self, a physical self. Each one of these selves is called Purusha, provided we mean by the word Purusha, not the individual soul, but that power of consciousness, which originates movement of energy or Prakriti and assumes a poise of accompaniment and indwelling with Prakriti, appropriate to each grade of the development of Prakriti. In each individual there is one soul or the individual Purusha, but that Purusha presides over each

grade of Prakriti's movement that is operative in the evolution of body, life and mind. Thus, there is in our total composition, a being of mind, a mental Purusha or manomaya Purusha, expressing something of itself on our surface in thoughts, perceptions, activities of our mind-nature; there is also a being of life, vital Purusha or pranamaya Purusha which expresses something of itself in the impulses, feelings, sensations, desires, external life-activities of our vital nature; there is also a physical being or annamaya Purusha, a being of the body which expresses something of itself in the instincts, habits, formulated activities of our physical nature. These beings in us are powers of the individual Purusha, or of caitya Purusha. These Purushas, — annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya, — are not limited by their temporary expressions, for what is formulated is only a fragment of its possibilities; but as Sri Aurobindo points out, "the expression creates a temporary mental, vital or physical personality which grows and develops even as the psychic being or soul-personality grows and develops within us. Each has its own distinct nature, its influence, its action on the whole of us; but on our surface all these influences and all this action, as they come up, mingle and create an aggregate surface being which is a composite, an amalgam of them all, an outer persistent and yet shifting and mobile formation for the purposes of this life and its limited experience."²⁸

The mind self, the life self, the physical self are ordinarily experienced in our surface consciousness; but the more the surface consciousness turns inwards, the more it comes to experience these inner selves and their greater powers. Owing to the ignorance of what these selves really are, how they are constituted or how they are formed, and of how the Purusha consciousness acts in relation to grades and formations of

Prakriti, we can easily mistake something of the inner mind or life self as the psychic being. We normally do not have a clear distinction between (i) the surface consciousness and surface personality or surface multi-personality and (ii) the Subliminal or the inner mind, inner vital and inner physical, their formations and their influences in the constitution of development of our surface consciousness. And, similarly, we are ignorant of the distinction between these Subliminal or inner beings and the psychic being which is our inmost being. It is true that man is in a grade of consciousness higher than that of the animal, and therefore there are deeper states of consciousness and understanding. In certain states of the mind, it is possible to stand behind the movements of mental powers and surface consciousness, and there is thus this ability to stand apart and above mental operations and above operations of the surface consciousness; man is, as a result, self-compelled to make some attempt, however elementary in many, to control and in the end more and more perfectly to harmonize the manifold components and the different and conflicting tendencies that seem to make up his surface being. In due course of time, man can succeed in setting up a sort of regulated chaos or ordered confusion in him. And yet, this success can be temporary and fragile. The human nature is extremely complex, and, ultimately, he is led to understand and harmonize all tendencies, propensities and other operations. The complexity of human nature arises from the fact that there are in the human being those elements which are resultants of the evolutionary process that commences from the inconscience and passes through the subconsciousness and arrives at the evolution of the body, life and mind and their difficult and complicated junction, which is itself fragile and fluctuating; there is, at the same time, a constant action of what

Sri Aurobindo calls the typal worlds, — worlds of the subtle matter, of life force and of the mind, which are not evolutionary but which belong to the involutionary process as a consequence of which there came about the involution of the consciousness of the superconscient into the Inconscience. These typal worlds radiate influences on the evolutionary process, and they have by their pressure from above, aided the evolutionary emergence of matter, life and the mind. There are, therefore, in every human being, belts of connections between those typal worlds and the evolving human nature. These belts of influences and connections constitute a large part of our consciousness, but because of our exclusive concentration of consciousness in the normal field to which we are limited in various degrees, we are unaware of those operations which result from the interaction between what is evolved and the operations that are radiating from the typal worlds; of that interaction and junction, we are normally unaware, and therefore, the operations, specially of the typal worlds and their influences on ourselves, remain behind the threshold of our consciousness. That realm of interaction and junction is the realm of the subliminal consciousness, and this realm should be distinguished from the realm of the subconscious. Just as we are not aware of the subconscious which is below our threshold of consciousness, even so, we are not aware of the subliminal which is behind the threshold of our consciousness. It is in the subliminal that we can discover various grades of Purusha consciousness, each adapted to the evolving grade behind which it presides. The physical self, *annamaya Puruṣa*, the vital self, *prāṇamaya Puruṣa* and mental self, *manomaya Puruṣa* belong to the subliminal consciousness, and it is only when we are able to penetrate and rend or tear the screen between our surface consciousness

and the subliminal by repeated processes of inward concentration that we can find entry into what may be called the inner kingdoms of consciousness and travel through them until we reach the psychic being or *caitya puruṣa*, which is the inmost being. The more we grow into subliminal consciousness, and the more we are able to have contact with the psychic being, the more are we enabled to become free from the limitations of the egoistic consciousness and to enter into the grades of universal consciousness; and this provides a great aid to the ascent towards the regions of the superconscience.²⁹ Of the superconscience, too, we are unconscious, although from the planes and worlds of superconscience, too, radiations flow into us and contribute in varying degrees to the development of our personality.

PART THREE

Analysis of Mental, Vital and Physical Consciousness in the Human Being³⁰

Sri Aurobindo has provided detailed analysis of the complexity of our nature, subconscient, conscient, intraconscient or subliminal and superconscient; but we may first present a brief analysis of three important parts of our ordinary nature, namely, the mental, vital and the physical. Sri Aurobindo speaks of three parts of the mind, — thinking Mind, dynamic Mind and externalizing Mind. The vital is divided into three parts, the emotional vital, the central vital and the lower vital. The physical refers to the material or physical consciousness or corporeal consciousness and to the physical body.

The thinking Mind is concerned with ideas and knowledge in their own right. It reasons and perceives with ideas of infinity, eternity, unity, identity and self-contradiction. It considers and finds out the value of things. The dynamic Mind is concerned with the putting out of mental forces for realization of the idea. The externalizing Mind is concerned with the expression of ideas and knowledge and mental forces in life, not only by speech, but by any form it can give.

The emotional vital is the seat of various feelings, such as love, joy, sorrow, hatred and the rest. The central vital is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions, such as ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions,

desires and passions of various kinds and the field of many vital energies. The lower vital is occupied with small desires and feelings, such as food desire, sexual desire, small likings and dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise, anger at blame, little wishes of all kind — and a numberless host of other things.

The physical consciousness is mechanical and repetitive in character, and it is limited to the purely bodily needs, and it is this consciousness which insists on the mind to seek the evidence of physical senses and the physical sense-organs. The purely bodily consciousness is largely subconscious, unconscious and even inconscient.

These three, the mental, the vital and the physical, are interrelated in the complexity of our being. As a result, there is in us what Sri Aurobindo calls the mental-vital (vital mind), mental-physical (physical mind), vital-mental, vital-physical and physical-vital; all these distinctions are necessary because the aim of total transformation implies detailed working in every nook and corner of our nature so that the psychic consciousness, spiritual consciousness and the supramental consciousness can effectuate, gradually and systematically, by the power of contagion, their influence and their descent in all parts of the being right up to the inconscient. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo aims at perfect integration and perfection and integral transformation so that ultimately the mental, the vital and the physical can all be transformed by the supramental consciousness.

The mental-vital, which is also called the vital mind, is the mind which is at the service of vital desires and vital emotions. It is a sort of mediator between vital emotion, desire, impulsion, etc, and the mental proper. It expresses the desires,

feelings, emotions, passions, ambitions, possessive and active tendencies of the vital and throws them into mental forms. Finding arguments in support of vital movements (such as rationalization of all kinds) is also an activity of the mental-vital or the vital mind. Other activities include pure imaginations or dreams of greatness, happiness, etc, in which human beings indulge very often. The mental-vital (which is the same as the vital mind), plans or dreams or imagines what can be done. It makes formations for the future which the will can try to carry out if opportunities and circumstances become favourable or even it can work to make them favourable. In men and women of action this faculty is prominent and a leader of their nature; they always have it in a very high degree. At a lower stage of the mental-vital, the vital passions, impulses and desires rise up and get into the pure Thought and either cloud it or distort it. The mental-vital should be distinguished from the dynamic Mind. While the mental-vital is limited by the vital view and feelings of things, the dynamic Mind is not, for it acts by idea and reason.

The emotional vital and the central vital are sometimes taken together and referred to as the higher vital, in contrast to the lower vital which is concerned with the bottom movements of action and desire and stretches down into the vital-physical. The vital-physical is the vital at the service of the physical. It is the nervous being, and it governs all the small daily reactions to outward things. It governs also reactions of the nerves and the body consciousness and reflects emotions and sensations; it motivates much of the ordinary actions of the human being and joins with the lower parts of the vital proper in producing lust, jealousy, anger, violence, etc. In its lowest parts, where it can be called vital-material, it is the agent of passion, physical illness, etc.

The physical-vital supports the life of more external activities and all physical sensations, hungers, cravings, satisfactions. It is full of desires and greed and seeking for pleasure on the physical plane.

The vital-physical is below the mental-physical, but above the material. However, they interpenetrate each other. The body-energy is a manifestation of material forces supported by vital-physical energy which is the vital energy precipitated into matter and conditioned by it.

Mental-Physical and Material Mind (Mind of the Cells)³¹

The mental-physical (which is the same as the physical Mind) is a mind at the service of the physical. It is the mind conditioned by the physical, and it is fixed on physical objects and happenings; it sees and understands these only and deals with them according to their own nature, but with difficulty responds to the higher forces. Left to itself, it is skeptical of the supra-physical things, of which it has no direct experience and to which it can find no clue. To enlighten the physical mind by the psychic consciousness and the consciousness of the higher spiritual and supramental planes is one of the important objects of the integral Yoga, just as to enlighten it by the power of the higher vital and higher mental elements of the being is the greatest part of human self-development, civilization and culture.

The gross material part has also a consciousness of its own, the consciousness proper to the limbs, cells, tissues, glands and the organs. To make this consciousness luminous and directly instrumental to the higher planes and to the divine movement is what is meant in Sri Aurobindo's yoga making

the body conscious, — that is to say, full of a true, awakened and responsive awareness instead of its own obscure, limited subconscience.

The subconscious is below the level of mind and conscious life, inferior and obscure and covers the purely physical and vital elements of our constituent bodily being, unmentalised and unobserved by the mind, uncontrolled by it in their action. It can be said to include the corporeal mind, the mind or dumb occult consciousness, dynamic but not sensed by us, which operates in the cells and nerves and all the corporeal stuff and adjusts their life-processes and automatic responses. The mind of the cells is distinguishable from the mental-physical (which is the same as the physical mind). The mental-physical is the mind at the service of the physical, whereas the mind of the cells is the consciousness working in the cells themselves. It is something like the submerged sense-mind which is highly operative in animal and plant life but is also obscurely at work below our conscious nature.

According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the great discovery which has been made in their yoga is that of the cellular consciousness or of the mind of the cells, and they have pointed out that it is only when that obscure mentality which covers and operates in the cells is penetrated by the supramental consciousness, and it is only when supramental consciousness is made operative directly in the cells of the body that the supramental transformation can become accomplished. For, according to them, it is only in the cellular consciousness that the supermind can become fixed and permanently established on account of the fact that the pure cell, liberated from the coating of the different layers of the mind, can receive securely and permanently the operation of the supramental consciousness. How this discovery was made

and what were the stages of this discovery and the consequences of this discovery are to be found in the form of a detailed account of the Mother's experimental research, narrated by the Mother herself in the thirteen volumes of *Mother's Agenda*.³²

How to deal with the Sub-conscious and the Inconscience?

But this entire operation of the supramental transformation has to be preceded by the plunge of the supramental consciousness into the subconscious. But, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, a plunge into the subconscious when we are not yet sufficiently ready is unsafe, and would not help us to explore this region, for this would lead us into incoherence, sleep or dull-trance or comatose torpor. In this connection, Sri Aurobindo has brought out in some of his letters the inadvisability of recourse to psychoanalysis, which aims at dealing with the subconscious without developing the right and comprehensive knowledge of consciousness and the conditions under which one can plunge into the subconscious for purposes of its transformation.

According to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, our first concern must be with all that we are conscious of, and it is only when there has been a good deal of harmonization of our conscious being by the power of our psychic consciousness and an ascent to high levels of consciousness in the superconscious that it becomes easier and safer to deal with the subconscious. The higher we rise, the greater the capacity we acquire to deal with the lower. The lower and the higher have correspondences and the highest superconscious and the

lowest inconscient are in a sense nearest to each other. The lowest inconscient can effectively be dealt with and transformed only by the highest powers of the supramental superconscient.

In the evolutionary process, as explained by Sri Aurobindo, the Inconscience seems to be the beginning of the upward movement towards the emergence of the subconscious, the conscient and the superconscient, but the subconscious, the conscient and the superconscient emerge out of the inconscient because they are already involved in it. Evolution is in essence a heightening of the force of consciousness in the manifest being so that it may be raised into greater intensity of what is still unmanifest. In this evolutionary process, our conscious being stands as middle term. As noted earlier, our consciousness is normally unaware of all that is subconscious and unconscious of all that is superconscient. It is conscious only of certain operations of the physical, the vital and the mental, and even of them only of their outer overt activities and manifestations. For behind our conscious physical, vital and mental operations, there is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a deeper and inner consciousness which is subliminal, but it is sometimes called the sub-consciousness, because, as already stated, it is behind the threshold of our outer consciousness, and of this subliminal consciousness we are normally unconscious.

Consciousness and Powers of the Subliminal

We have already seen to some extent the nature of the domain of subliminal consciousness. It includes the large action of the inner mind, inner intelligence and inner sense-mind, of an inner vital, and of an inner subtle physical being. Our subliminal being is not, like our surface being, an

outcome of the energy of the Inconscient. It is a meeting-place of the consciousness that emerges from below by evolution and the consciousness that is radiating from the typical worlds. There is here a consciousness which has a power of direct contact with the universal, unlike the mostly indirect contacts which our surface being maintains with the universe through the sense-mind and the senses.

As Sri Aurobindo explains: "There are here inner senses, a subliminal sight, touch, hearing; but these subtle senses are rather channels of the inner being's direct consciousness of things than its informants: the subliminal is not dependent on its senses for its knowledge, they only give a form to its direct experience of objects; they do not, so much as in waking mind, convey forms of objects for the mind's documentation or as the starting-point or basis for an indirect constructive experience. The subliminal has the right of entry into the mental and vital and subtle-physical planes of the universal consciousness, it is not confined to the material plane and the physical world; it possesses means of communication with the worlds of being which the descent towards involution created in its passage and with all corresponding planes or worlds that may have arisen or been constructed to serve the purpose of the re-ascent from Inconscience to Superconscience. It is into this large realm of interior existence that our mind and vital being retire when they withdraw from the surface activities whether by sleep or inward-drawn concentration or by the inner plunge of trance."³³

According to Sri Aurobindo, the intelligence of the subliminal being preserves the accurate form and relation of all its perceptions and memories and can grasp immediately their significance. And its perceptions are not confined to the scanty learning of the physical senses but extend far beyond

as telepathic phenomena of many kinds bear witness; it has a subtle sense the limits of which are too wide to be easily fixed. The relations between the surface-will or impulse and the subliminal urge have not been properly studied except in regard to unusual and unorganised manifestations and in regard to certain morbidly abnormal phenomena of the diseased human mind. But if we pursue our observation far beyond, we shall find, as Sri Aurobindo points out, that cognition and will or impulsive force of the inner being really stands behind the whole conscious becoming; the latter represents only part of its secret endeavour and achievement which arises successfully to the surface of our lives. To know our inner being is, according to Sri Aurobindo, the first step towards a real self-knowledge.

“There is indeed an inner sense in the subliminal nature, and a subtle sense of vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste ... This inner-sense can create or present images, and scenes, sounds that are symbolic rather than actual or that represent possibilities in formation, suggestions, thoughts, ideas, intentions of other beings, image-forms also of powers of potentialities in universal Nature ... It is the subliminal in reality and not the outer mind that possesses the powers of telepathy, clairvoyance, second sight and other supernormal faculties ...”

“But more important is power of the subliminal to enter into a direct contact of consciousness with other consciousness or with objects, to act without other instrumentation, by an essential sense inherent in its own substance, by a direct mental vision, by a direct feeling of things, even by a close envelopment and intimate penetration and a return with the contents of what is enveloped or penetrated, by a direct intimation or impact on the substance

of mind itself, not through outward signs or figures, — a revealing intimation or a self-communicating impact of thoughts, feelings, forces.”

As Sri Aurobindo explains:

“It is by these means that the inner being achieves an immediate, intimate and accurate spontaneous knowledge of persons, of objects, of the occult and to us intangible energies of world-Nature that surround us and impinge upon our own personality, physicality, mind-force and life-force.”³⁴

A still farther power of the subliminal is seen in the changes which take effect in our dealings with the impersonal forces of the world that surround us. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“The inner being not only contacts directly and concretely the immediate motive and movement of these universal forces and feels the results of their present action, but it can to a certain extent forecast or see ahead their farther action; there is a greater power in our subliminal parts to overcome the time barrier, to have the sense or feel the vibration of coming events, of distant happenings, even to look into the future.”³⁵

It must, however, be noted that although the subliminal consciousness opens out to us wider vistas of knowledge and actions, much surer and much more intimate than our external physical, vital and mental consciousness, still the subliminal consciousness is centered on multiplicity and divisions and not on unity, which is the characteristic of what can spiritually be called true Knowledge. As in our external consciousness, so also in subliminal consciousness, knowledge is a mixture of knowledge and ignorance, and it is capable of erroneous as well as true perception. It may also be noted that the

knowledge proper to the subliminal being is not complete. According to Sri Aurobindo, knowledge, in order to be true and complete must be a knowledge by identity and must arrive at oneness and unity in diversity. Therefore, a deeper and higher consciousness is needed to cure the deficiencies and mixtures of ignorance and knowledge that we obtain at the level of subliminal consciousness.

PART FOUR

How the Psychic Consciousness Develops

There are two domains of consciousness, psychic and superconscient, where we need to look for, if we are in search of true knowledge and integral knowledge. Psychic consciousness is, as we have noted earlier, the inmost consciousness in the individual, and we find that the psychic entity and, its representative, soul personality, which are in profounder depths than the subliminal consciousness, are other than our body, life and mind, and it is they that support our individual life, mind and body. The psychic entity is the deputy of the individual self, jivatman, and it is a spark of the divine fire and divine love which are operations of the principle of Ananda, which is itself the union of Sat and Chit, the two other elements of Sachchidananda. It is the psychic entity which is missioned to work in the inconscience, to develop individual body, life and mind and to turn them to the Divine from which it has itself descended into the inconscience. At the human level of evolution, this psychic entity is found to have succeeded in developing, out of its potentialities, a growing psychic personality or soul-personality or psychic being. While explaining the relation between the psychic entity, psychic being or soul personality and other parts of our developing individuality, Sri Aurobindo states as follows:

“There is indeed a soul-personality, representative of this entity, already built up within us, which puts forward a fine psychic element in our natural being: but this finer factor in

our normal make-up is not yet dominant and has only a limited action. Our soul is not the overt guide and master of our thought and acts; it has to rely on the mental, vital, physical instruments for self-expression and is constantly overp-owered by our mind and life-force: but if once it can succeed in remaining in constant communion with its own larger occult reality, — and this can only happen when we go deep into our subliminal parts, — it is no longer dependent, it can become powerful and sovereign, armed with an intrinsic spiritual perception of the truth of things and a spontaneous discernment which separates that truth from the falsehood of the Ignorance and Inconscience, distinguishes the divine and the undivine in the manifestation and so can be the luminous leader of our other parts of nature. It is indeed when this happens that there can be the turning-point towards an integral transformation and an integral knowledge.”³⁶

The discovery of the psychic being, its experience and its development is a decisive stage in the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. The psychic entity is not an evolute of the Inconscient, although it has descended into the evolutionary process as a spark of the Divine and accompanies the evolution of our being and, with increasing evolution of our being, and with increasing power of guidance and control of the body, life and mind in our being, it, too, evolves and develops as a spark grows and develops as fire. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“It is a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge. It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and

is imperishable in us from birth to birth, untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine.”³⁷

According to Sri Aurobindo, the psychic being (also known as Caitya Purusha or *Antarātman* or the Purusha in the heart, *hrdaye guhāym*, or the being which is described in the Upanishads as “no bigger than the size of one’s thumb”) has a spontaneous aspiration for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into our nature. When the psychic being reaches a point of its evolution where it can impose its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, they too aspire and this is what is felt as the aspiration from the level of the lower being. The seeking of the lower being is necessarily at first intermingled and oppressed by the ordinary consciousness; however by Yogic practice it becomes clear, constant, strong and enduring.

In regard to the contribution of the psychic being in the process of the yogic discipline or the sadhana, Sri Aurobindo has stated in one of his letters as follows:

“The contribution of the psychic being to the sadhana is: (1) love and bhakti, a love not vital, demanding and egoistic but unconditioned and without claims, self-existent; (2) the contact or the presence of the Mother within; (3) the unerring guidance from within; (4) a quieting and purification of the mind, vital and physical consciousness by their subjection to the psychic influence and guidance; (5) the opening up of all this lower consciousness to the higher spiritual consciousness above for its descent into a nature prepared to receive it with a complete receptivity and right attitude — for

the psychic brings in everything right thought, right perception, right feeling, right attitude.”³⁸

The Mother on the Discovery of the Psychic Being

While describing the need to undertake the discovery of the psychic being, the Mother points out that the discovery reveals the truth of the individual being and that that discovery requires a great determination, a strong will and an untiring perseverance and that each one must, so to say, trace out his or her own path through his or her own difficulties. She points out that the discovery of the psychic being requires at least as much fortitude and endurance as a discovery of new continents. As an aid to this discovery, the Mother has given a few general indications:

“The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it a sense of universality, limitless expansion, unbroken continuity. Then you decentralise, extend and widen yourself; you begin to live in all things and in beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, feel in their feelings, live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated by a marvelous consciousness without time or limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic

realisation; there are others, many others. All help you to go beyond the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.”³⁹

Truth, beauty and goodness are, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, akin to the native character of the psychic consciousness, and therefore, in the early stages we dimly become aware of the psychic consciousness through a certain sensitive feeling for all that is true and good and beautiful, fine and pure and noble; it is the psychic being who responds to and demands increasing growth of truth, beauty and goodness; it is that consciousness which puts pressure on mind and life to accept and formulate truth, beauty and goodness in our thoughts, feelings, conduct, and character; it is this psychic influence that we can most easily recognize as a finer or even a diviner part in us and the most powerful or the slow turning towards some aim at perfection in our nature.

As noted earlier, there are in our composition heterogeneous elements; our heterogeneous compound consists of temporary mental, vital, physical personalities; each has its own distinct nature, its influence, its action on the whole of us; there is a constant confusion and even a conflict in our members; often it is by our mental reason and will that we are moved to control and harmonise confusions and conflicts; it is in the mental being to which we look up for some kind of order and guidance; even so, ordinarily, we drift too much or are driven by the stream of our nature and act from whatever in it comes uppermost at the time and seizes its instruments of thought and action. But whatever harmony that we can achieve remains imperfect; and we are obliged to go deeper into the inmost truth that lies behind all conflicting elements, and this can be perfectly done, according to Sri

Aurobindo and the Mother, only if we go within and find our real centre, and even then the harmony in our personality cannot be achieved as long as our psychic personality put forward by the psychic entity is not yet sufficiently developed. As Sri Aurobindo points out, when this personality is strong enough for the inner entity to impose itself through it, then the soul or the psychic entity can come forward and control the nature.

“It is by the coming forward of this true monarch and his taking up of the reigns of government that there can take place a real harmonisation of our being and our life.”⁴⁰

Psychic Development and the Role of the Yoga of Knowledge, Yoga of Will and Yoga of Divine Love

As pointed out above, the entire process is extremely long and difficult, and major efforts are necessary for the soul's complete emergence from its inmost depths right up to our surface consciousness. A major effort is required to make our surface consciousness sensitive to the spiritual Reality. That major effort assumes gradually the character of disciplined and methodized pursuit of yoga. In a sense, it may be said that every system of yoga is a specialized method by means of which our surface consciousness is so sensitized that our soul can come in direct contact in the surface being with the spiritual reality. In a sense, it may be said that every system of yoga is sought for by our soul in its attempt to achieve the contact with the spiritual reality in the surface being. The soul may attempt through Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga or any other system of yoga, depending upon what element in our composition finds it more appropriate or useful. Through the integral yoga, the soul aims at the contact with the spiritual

reality for a larger and comprehensive aim. The soul may attempt to achieve the contact with the spiritual reality mainly through the thinking mind as intermediary instrument, as in Jnana yoga; or it can attempt an ordinary approach through the heart and through the emotions, through love and adoration of the All-Beautiful and All-Blissful, the All-Good, as in the Bhakti yoga; it may approach through both these systems of yoga, but whatever can be achieved through these systems of yoga is not enough for the purpose of integral transformation. That integrality demands a larger change, all part of the being and individualization of the mind on its surface, of the heart or life-force on its surface and even of the body on its surface. This larger change can be partly attained by adding to the experiences of the heart and of the thinking mind a consecration of the pragmatic will. It is by combination of all these three approaches that one can create or arrive at a spiritual or psychic condition of the surface being and nature in which there is a larger and more complex openness to the psychic light within us and to the spiritual Self or the Ishwara or to the Reality which is superconscient and now felt above enveloping and penetrating in our being and nature. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“A combination of all these three approaches, the approach of the mind, the approach of the will, the approach of the heart, creates a spiritual or psychic condition of the surface being and nature in which there is a larger and more complex openness to the psychic light within us and to the spiritual Self or the Ishwara, to the Reality now felt above and enveloping and penetrating us. In the nature there is a more powerful and many-sided change, a spiritual building and self-creation, the appearance of a composite perfection of the saint, the selfless worker and the man of spiritual knowledge.”⁴¹

Psychic Being, Experience of Witness Purusha or static Consciousness, and Process of Psychic Transformation

In order to arrive at the widest totality and profound completeness, one has to shift the centre of consciousness from the surface to the inner being both in its static and dynamic positions. The outer nature has to undergo change of poise, and there must grow up within oneself or there must manifest a consciousness more and more open to the deeper and the higher being. As a result, the outer nature, and not only the inner nature alone, arrives at conversion of the consciousness, and increasing transformation of nature, both psychic and spiritual, will become effected. It is true that at a certain stage, particularly, when one can stand back from the activities of Prakriti, it becomes possible to realize one's inner being as a silent impersonal self, the witness Purusha. In this state, one may not arrive at a discovery of the psychic being or psychic entity in their fullness, but one may be led to a spiritual realization and liberation. In that state, a certain mastery over the body, life and mind can be achieved, but that mastery is not transformation; the change led by them cannot be sufficient. In order to arrive at process of transformation, one has to get back, beyond mind being, life being, body being, and still move deeply inward to the psychic entity inmost and profoundest within us, — or else to open to the superconscious and spiritual domains at the highest levels. For the penetration into the luminous crypt of the soul, one has to get through all the intervening vital stuff to the psychic stuff within us, however long, tedious or difficult may be the process. The methods of Jnana yoga, Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga are indeed, useful aids to this difficult passage, but, according to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, "the strongest, most central

way is to found all such or other methods on self-offering and surrender of ourselves and of our parts of nature to the Divine Being, the Ishwara.”⁴²

The most important aim to be pursued would be not only the discovery of psychic entity and the development of psychic personality to its full stature, but also to allow the psychic consciousness to guide and rule our nature and to arrive at harmonization of all parts of the being and modulate them in the psychic key. Here, too, there are stages of growth and development. First of all, the crust of our outer nature begins to crack, as the walls between the psychic depths and surface consciousness begin to break down. The inner light gets to the surface consciousness, and one begins to feel increasingly the presence of the inner fire in the heart. As a result, the substance of the nature and the stuff of consciousness refine to greater subtlety and purity, and the deeper psychic experiences become possible. It is then that the soul begins to unveil itself and the psychic personality reaches its full stature. At this stage, as Sri Aurobindo points out, the soul, the psychic entity manifests itself as a central being which upholds mind, life and body and supports all the other powers and functions of the Spirit; the soul takes up its greater function as a guide and ruler of the nature. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realisation: every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation, action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity, desire, habit of the conscious or subconscious physical, even the most concealed, camouflaged, mute, recondite, is lighted

up with the unerring psychic light, their confusions dissipated, their tangles disentangled, their obscurities, deceptions, self-deceptions precisely indicated and removed; all is purified, set right, the whole nature harmonised, modulated in the psychic key, put in spiritual order. This process may be rapid or tardy according to the amount of obscurity and resistance still left in the nature, but it goes on unflinching so long as it is not complete. As a final result the whole conscious being is made perfectly apt for spiritual experience of every kind, turned towards spiritual truth of thought, feeling, sense, action, tuned to the right responses, delivered from the darkness and stubbornness of the tamasic inertia, the turbidities and turbulences and impurities of the rajasic passion and restless unharmonised kinetism, the enlightened rigidities and sattwic limitations or poised balancements of constructed equilibrium which are the character of the Ignorance.”⁴³

Process of Psychic Transformation and Influx of Spiritual Experiences

This is the level of higher degrees of psychicisation, and when this is accompanied and followed by a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience there comes about not only a psychic but, more widely speaking, a psycho-spiritual transformation in many directions. The psychic experiences relate to the discovery of psychic being and psychic entity and effects it produces towards the psychic transformation of nature and towards the free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experiences. The distinguishing feature of spiritual experiences is related to the discovery of Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara at different levels of the superconscious that lie beyond the mind. These experiences include those of the Self,

of Ishwara and the Divine Shakti of cosmic consciousness and of direct touch with cosmic forces and with occult movements of universal Nature. As a result of a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience, one receives illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart by love and devotion and spiritual joy and ecstasy, illuminations of dynamic action and the truth and largeness of a purified mind and heart and soul, the certitudes of the divine light and guidance, the joy and power of the divine force working in the will and the conduct. When the psychic experiences and the spiritual experiences combine, there comes into play soul's power of unerring inherent consciousness, its vision, in touch on things which is superior to any mental cognition. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“...there is there, native to the psychic consciousness in its pure working, an immediate sense of the world and its beings, a direct inner contact with them and a direct contact with the Self and with the Divine, — a direct knowledge, a direct sight of Truth and of all truths, a direct penetrating spiritual emotion and feeling, a direct intuition of right will and right action, a power to rule and to create an order of the being not by the gropings of the superficial self, but from within, from the inner truth of self and things and the occult realities of Nature.”⁴⁴

PART FIVE

Process of Spiritual Transformation: Role of the superconscious Levels of Mind

But even then there are still limitations of an inferior instrumentation; as a result, the highest spiritual transformation must intervene on the psychic or psycho-spiritual change. There is thus the necessity of an upward journey above our mind and an ascent of consciousness not only into the higher ranges of the superconscious Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuitive Mind but also of Overmind and spiritual nature in which the sense of Self and Spirit is ever unveiled and permanent and in which the self-luminous instrumentation of the Self and Spirit is not restricted or divided as in our mind-nature, life-nature, body-nature. The psychic change makes this ascent not only possible but even safe; psychic consciousness opens us to the cosmic consciousness by breaking many walls of limiting individuality; but it also opens us to what is now superconscious to our normality. If there is an awakening to the existence of the higher supernormal levels, then an aspiration towards them may break the lid or operate a rift in it. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“If the rift in the lid of mind is made, what happens is an opening of vision to something above us or a rising up towards it or a descent of its powers into our being. What we see by the opening of vision is an Infinity above us, an eternal Presence or an infinite Existence, an infinity of consciousness, an

infinity of bliss, — a boundless Self, a boundless Light, a boundless Power, a boundless Ecstasy.”⁴⁵

One discovers in the domain of the superconscient several planes beyond our present level of awareness. In these planes, a basic sense and knowledge of unity is a general characteristic, even though there are degrees and grades. Moreover, they are not only states of consciousness but also grades of being and power. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“In themselves these grades are grades of energy-substance of the Spirit: for it must not be supposed, because we distinguish them according to their leading character, means and potency of knowledge, that they are merely a method or way of knowing or a faculty or power of cognition; they are domains of being, grades of the substance and energy of the spiritual being, fields of existence which are each a level of the universal Consciousness-Force constituting and organising itself into a higher status. When the powers of any grade descend completely into us, it is not only our thought and knowledge that are affected, — the substance and very grain of our being and consciousness, all its states and activities are touched and penetrated and can be remoulded and wholly transmuted. Each stage of this ascent is therefore a general, if not a total, conversion of the being into a new light and power of a greater existence.”⁴⁶

Sri Aurobindo describes in some detail states of consciousness and power of five planes which are distinguishable in the path of spiritual ascension, the path of ascent into the superconscient above the mind. These five planes are: the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind, and Supermind.

Higher Mind

The Higher Mind is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a mind which is no longer subject to mingled light and obscurity or half-light. Its basic substance is a unitary sense of being with a powerful multiple dynamisation capable of the formation of multitude aspects of knowledge, ways of action, forms and significances of becomings, and in all of which there is a spontaneous inherent knowledge. Its special character, its activity of consciousness is dominated by Thought; it is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a luminous Thought-Mind, a mind of spirit-born conceptual knowledge. It can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeking at a single view; the relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth, are not established by logic but are pre-existent and emerge already self-seen in the integral goal. Large aspects of truth come into the view of the Higher Mind, and the structures of the view 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. In the end, there is a great totality of truth known and experienced, but still a totality capable of infinite enlargement because there is no end to the aspects of knowledge.⁴⁷

Illumined Mind

As one goes beyond the Higher Mind or what may also be called Truth-Thought, there is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a greater illumination instinct with an increased power and intensity and driving force, a luminosity of the nature of Truth-Sight with thought formulation as a minor and dependent activity. If, as Sri Aurobindo points out, we may compare the

action of the Higher Mind to a steady sunshine, the knowledge of the Illumined Mind beyond it can be seen as an outpouring of massive lightning of a flaming sun-stuff.⁴⁸

Intuitive Mind

Beyond the Illumined Mind is the Intuitive Mind. It has a still greater power of Truth-Force, and intimate and exact Truth-vision, Truth-thought, Truth-sense, Truth-feeling, Truth-action. The Illumined Mind does not work primarily by thought, but by a vision, and the Intuitive Mind is more than sight, more than conception. Intuition is a power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original knowledge by identity; it is when the consciousness of the subject meets the consciousness in the object, penetrates it and sees, feels or vibrates with the truth of what it contacts, that the intuition leaps out like a spark or lightning-flash from the shock of the meeting. The intuitive perception 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. According to Sri Aurobindo, Intuition has a fourfold power. To use his words:

“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.”⁴⁹

But still the intuitive light and power is only the edge of a delegated and modified Supermind, and does not bring in the whole mass or body of the identity knowledge.

Overmind and Spiritual Transformation

At the source of the Intuitive Mind, there is, according to Sri Aurobindo, a superconscient cosmic Mind in direct contact with the Supermind. That superconscient comic Mind is the Overmind. It is when, as a result of the ascent to the overmind, a descent of the overmental Consciousness is accomplished in the physical consciousness, that the status of the spiritual transformation is attained. This overmind 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.”⁵⁰

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 transmutes 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.

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 realise 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 organised and their actuality always possible.”⁵¹

Overmind and Supermind: Towards Supramental Transformation

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 dwells in the light would feel as if no darkness were 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 the Truth-Consciousness; 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 a 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.”⁵²

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 wills or forces. 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.”⁵³

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 organising 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.”⁵⁴

But this unified and infinite time consciousness and this vision and knowledge are, according to Sri Aurobindo, the possession of the supramental being in its own supreme region of light and are complete only on the higher levels of supramental nature. But the human mind developing into supermind has to pass through several stages and in its ascent and expansion it may experience many changes and various dispositions of the powers and possibilities of its time-consciousness and time-knowledge.

The process of the ascent from the Mind to the Supermind is extremely complex, and the process of ascent itself involves processes of descent of the higher into the lower, and it cannot be fixed in any rigid manner. The process of psychic development itself implies development of spiritualized consciousness in several degrees or in several ways. For, as we have seen, the inward turn of the psychic consciousness facilitates also the upward turn of consciousness, and while the inward turn is a proper domain of the psychic consciousness, the upward turn is the proper domain of the spiritual consciousness. Hence, the entire process is largely

psycho-spiritual; it can be said that the psycho-spiritual transformation has to reach a very high level before the supramental transformation begins to advance. A description of the three processes of the psychic transformation, spiritual transformation and supramental transformation is, therefore, bound to be highly complex and difficult. It may, however, be stated in a general way that behind every yogic endeavour, it is the psychic aspiration that takes the lead, even though that lead may not be really recognized or acknowledged in every yogic endeavour, particularly when the path of ascension from Mind is directed upwards towards the mental silence and quietistic realization of the Self or when the emphasis in the yogic endeavour is sought to be developed mainly by the aid of cosmic powers and cosmic Beings or Gods of the higher planes. It may also be said that by means of ascension on the higher planes of consciousness between the mind and the supermind one can attain to varieties of spiritual experience, but when the spiritual power and light descend into the operations of the body, life and mind for their transformation, the endeavour would succeed better and more rapidly if it is preceded by a good deal of development of psychic experiences and psychic transformation of the body, life and mind. In any case, psychic transformation and spiritual transformation have to reach high level of perfection much before the descent of the supermind can successfully be brought about.

It may also be added that in the development of the integral yoga, the seeker will be required to expand the scope and aim that we normally find in the specialized systems of Jnana yoga, Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga and any other system of yoga which is synthesized in this vast and comprehensive system. The important point is that in the integral yoga, the

awakening and full development of psychic consciousness is indispensable; similarly, the ascension from the mind to the supermind, which constitutes the domain of spiritual consciousness is also indispensable; and both these processes and high levels of perfection in the psychic transformation and spiritual transformation are prerequisites for the rapid advancement towards the ascent to the supermind and the eventual process of supramental transformation. In the integral yoga, the psychic being or the soul is the leader, and this leadership opens up the path of the guidance of the Spirit, and it is this guidance that opens up the paths of the transmutation of Nature, Prakriti, the culmination of which is reached when the tasks of supramental transformation are accomplished. In this yoga, Purusha is the leader, *caitya puruṣa*, as also the Supreme Purusha, but it also opens up the path of the leadership of Para Prakriti, of the Divine Mother; all the elements and fibres of Prakriti are sought to be transformed by means of increasing and constant help and descent of the higher and higher powers of the Divine Mother, the powers of the Supermind and even beyond. Thus not only the liberation of the soul but also the liberation of Nature and perfection of Nature, including all the instruments of the soul, body, life and mind and higher instruments of consciousness and power, are to be fulfilled.

In the integral yoga, therefore, the process of Jnana yoga, Karma yoga, and Bhakti yoga receives central emphasis, but these processes are inter-woven and perfected by the processes and objectives of what Sri Aurobindo calls the yoga of self-perfection, and the central emphasis in the yoga of self-perfection falls upon the dynamic aspects of yoga and on the detailed processes of purification and developments of powers and instruments of Prakriti.

Recapitulation of the Process of the Triple Transformation

There are, as we have seen, several steps involved in the complete process of the triple transformation. The first step consists of the manifestation of the psychic entity which functions as the guide and ruler of the nature as a result of which every movement of nature is exposed to the light of Truth and what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realization is rejected. The result of this movement is that the whole conscious being is made perfectly apt for the psychic and spiritual experience of every kind, and the whole conscious being is delivered from the hold of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*; the whole conscious being becomes tuned towards spiritual truth of thought, feeling, sense, and action. The second result is the ascent of consciousness in the superconscious and even towards the Transcendence, which results in the experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and Divine Shakti, experience of cosmic consciousness. This inflow of spiritual experiences has effects on the lower *Prakriti* of mind, life and body, and there are illuminations of the mind by knowledge, illuminations of the heart, illuminations of the sense and the body and even illuminations of dynamic action in the purified mind and heart. There is then the third motion, which consists of an increasing inflow from above, a downpour of an influx of the descending Spirit or its powers and elements of consciousness. This descent is essential for bringing the permanent ascension. Ordinarily, the consciousness does not rise to the summits except in the highest moments; it remains in the mental level and receives descent from above. But by the inflow of the processes of descent of the higher levels of consciousness, a permanent ascent on higher peaks of consciousness can be effected.

Established in the overmind and supermind, every part of our being, every instrument of our being in our body, life and mind can be taken up for transformation; this can be securely done if one has permanently ascended to the overmind and supermind. The descent of the powers of the consciousness descending from a higher level aims at meeting and transforming each minutest portion and movement of the lower Nature; each element, each fibre and each vibration must either be destroyed and replaced if it is unfit, or, if it is capable, transmuted into the truth of the higher being. A descent of consciousness from the higher and highest levels is necessary, but the higher powers of consciousness get modified or diluted when they come down. Even the great light and power of the overmind suffers from this diminution when it descends into the lower levels of consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

“A light and power of the Overmind working in its own full right and in its own sphere is one thing, the same light working in the obscurity of the physical consciousness and under its conditions is something quite different and, owing to dilution and mixture, far inferior in its knowledge and force and results. A mutilated power, a partial effect or hampered movement is the consequence.”⁵⁵

The descent of the overmind in mind, life and matter and transformation of these layers of Nature has been considered by Sri Aurobindo as the accomplishment of the spiritual transformation; but even this transformation is unable to do fully what is needed for the total transformation of the lower nature, *Apara Prakriti*. This is the reason why a still higher power, the supramental power, is needed, and this is the reason of bringing down the supermind in the lowest layers of the lower Nature. As Sri Aurobindo points out, only the

supermind can descend with its full power of action, since its action is always intrinsic and automatic, its will and knowledge identical and the result commensurate. The supramental Truth-Consciousness can overcome the limitations of the overmental descent because whereas overmind is global but characterized by the operation of the dividing principle, supermind is total, integral and characterized by the principle of unity. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“The Truth-Consciousness, finding evolutionary Nature ready, has to descend into her and enables her to liberate the supramental principle within her; so must be created the supramental and spiritual being as the first unveiled manifestation of the truth of the Self and Spirit in the material universe.”⁵⁶

It is then by the descent of the supramental consciousness that the third and final transformation, the supramental transformation can be accomplished. And it is against this background that the spirit and the processes of the integral yoga can properly be understood and practised; and, again, it is against this background that the processes of the Jnana yoga, Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga and the Tantra as also all other processes of yoga which are incorporated in the integral yoga need to be modified and expanded; but most importantly, the necessity and processes of the yoga of self-perfection have implications not only at the summits of the yogic processes but even initially and increasingly for all processes of the integral yoga.

PART SIX

Yoga of Self-Perfection

The yoga of self-perfection has, as its aim, perfect manifestation of the perfect supramental consciousness and power through the perfected individual vehicles for the upliftment of the entire humanity so that the supramental manifestation on the earth can facilitate more and more rapidly and more and more effectively humanity's endeavour towards increasing unity and harmony and, eventually, towards the evolution of the next supramental species.

We may, in this connection, briefly indicate a few important elements in the integral yoga which reflect its thrust towards the yoga of self-perfection.

In Sri Aurobindo's synthesis of yoga, the spirit in man is regarded not solely as an individual being traveling to a transcendent unity and the divine but universal being capable of oneness with the divine in all souls and in 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.”⁵⁷

As has been noted, each of the three ways of Jnana yoga, Karma yoga and Bhakti yoga plays a major role, but in this yoga, each of these three ways is pursued with certain largeness and can take into itself the powers of the others and lead to their fulfillment. One can, therefore, start by one of them and find the point at which it meets the others at first parallel lines of advance and melts into them by its own widening. But one could also take up a more difficult, complex, wholly powerful process by starting, as it were, on three lines together. But in any case, one has to arrive at a point at every step of the development by which the conditions and means of the yoga of self-perfection are increasingly fulfilled. For it is by the yoga of self-perfection that the supramental knowledge, supramental will and supreme Ananda become a direct instrumentation of spirit. In other words, the methods of the integral yoga include the methods of total transformation of human nature into divine nature.

Organic Unity of the Integral Yoga

The foundation of the integral yoga implies integrality of will, knowledge and love, which are the three divine powers in human nature and all these three powers which are at work in the life of man need to be integrated, and the union of man with the divine unites all these three divine powers.

If one begins with the yoga of works and of will-power,

the path will be followed by the methods of renunciation of desire, renunciation of egoism in action, of offering works as sacrifice to the Divine, and of complete surrender of will in all its aspects (*sarvabhāvena*) to the Divine. When the will in the individual is made one with the divine will and the whole action of the being proceeds from the Divine and is directed towards the Divine, the union in works is perfectly accomplished. But as the Gita points out, works fulfill themselves in knowledge: *sarvam karmākhilam jñāne parisamāpyate*.⁵⁸ Works find their source in the divine being, and with the knowledge of that being, there grows the knowledge of the source of becoming, the source of the divine will and also of the operation of the divine will. That leads to the fulfillment of Karma yoga, since the specific aim of the karma yoga is to unite the individual being and will with the divine being and divine will, as a result of which the individual is rendered into the egoless and desireless instrument of the divine will that works itself out triumphantly through the individual. But there is also another consequence. With the knowledge of the divine being and the divine will as also with the dynamic operation of the divine will in the individual instrumentality, the individual grows not only into the divine Consciousness and divine Force but also into the divine Delight. There is then the rise of Bhakti, because Bhakti is essentially the delight in the Presence of the Divine Consciousness and Divine Force. The crown of the union of Karma yoga and Jnana yoga is divine Love, and the divine Love expresses the delight of conscious union with the divine Being in whom we live, act and move, by whom we exist, for whom alone we learn in the end to act and to be. The three powers of knowledge, will and love are then united in the Divine to which one can arrive when one starts from works as an initial way of access and our line of contact.

One can, however, begin with knowledge as the way of access and line of contact, and this way may be regarded as a foundational way, since consciousness is the foundation of all living and being, and knowledge is the action of the consciousness, the light by which it knows itself and its realities. It is by the powers of pursuit of knowledge that our conscious being grows until it accomplishes itself, by union, in the infinity of the divine being. In the pursuit of knowledge, one meets the Divine in many aspects, and it is by knowledge that one can enter into and possess the infinite and Divine in every way of one's being, *sarvabhāvena*, and one is able to receive the Divine into oneself and one is possessed by him in everyway of one's being. By the method of knowledge or Jnana yoga the divine being is foundationally known and possessed, but the knowledge of the being is not complete without the knowledge of the Divine Will and Divine Love. The divine will in being also is God and not the being or itself self-aware silent existence alone; and just as works find their culmination in knowledge, even so, knowledge also finds its fulfillment in works and the crown of the knowledge as also of the growth in the divine will is the divine love. Perfect knowledge leads to perfect love, integral knowledge leads to multitudinous richness of divine love. As the Gita points out, one who knows the supreme Purusha, who is not only the immutable monotone of oneness but who is also the many-sided movement, and who transcends both the immobile and the mobile, and thus because one has the integral knowledge, one seeks the Divine by love in every way of his being. Here again, we arrive at the union of knowledge, works and love, — all united in the Divine, — when one starts with knowledge.

There is in our consciousness a secret delight, but that delight is covered by suffering of division to heal which one

takes recourse to various forms and intensities of love for the Divine. And one may begin the pursuit of yoga on account of suffering of division, which may manifest as physical pain, or as dire need of physical help in terms of material wealth or else as irresistible demand to know. As the Gita points out, the *ārta*, *arthi*, and *jijnāsu* (the one who suffers from pain, one who is in need of material help, and one who wants to know) may and do approach God.⁵⁹ As the Gita further points out, all these three motives which turn Godward are legitimate (*udārāḥ*),⁶⁰ and all these approaches can develop into approaches of love. Love is indeed the crown of Karma yoga and Jnana yoga, but love as the starting point of yoga heals the suffering of division and the path is as simple and straightforward as love and desire going right towards their object. The more intimate yoga of divine love or Bhakti resolves itself simply into these four movements: there is, first, the desire of the Soul when it turns towards God and the straining of its emotions towards him; secondly, there is the pain of love and the divine return of love; thirdly, the delight of love comes to be possessed and there is a play of that delight; and, finally, there is the eternal enjoyment of the divine Lover which is the heart of celestial bliss. As one proceeds on this path of divine love, the power of knowledge also grows. The completer the knowledge, the richer the possibility of love. Again, as the Gita points out, it is by Bhakti that a man comes to know the divine in all his extension and greatness as also as he is in the principles of his being; and when one knows the divine in the principles of his being, then one enters into the Divine. It is by the union of love and knowledge that the seeker of the Divine in his pursuit avoids blindness, crudeness and stumbling blocks that are often dangerous; if love does not become united with knowledge,

there is only the fervour of adoration and that fervour condemns itself often to narrowness. Love leading to perfect knowledge brings the infinite and absolute union. But this union reveals God not only in his powers of consciousness and powers of delight but also in his powers of will; and the God-lover who loves God in every way of his being, *sarvabhāvena*, is automatically thrown into the channels of God's will and God's work for the world. Once again, one arrives at the trinity of our powers, the union of knowledge, love and will, when we start on our journey by the path of divine love.

In the integral yoga, there is a constant striving to unite the three powers and the seeker is counseled to avoid or throw away, if he has them at all, the misunderstanding and mutual deprecation which is often found between the followers of the three paths. Even in the paths, which are synthetic in character, there are claims of the superiority of one of the chosen paths over the other paths. It is, for instance, claimed by some that even when works and love are appropriate means to be adopted along with the path of knowledge, the ultimate deliverance of liberation comes only by knowledge; works may lead, it is sometimes said, to liberation but cannot give liberation; similarly, it is said that the devotion is helpful up to a certain point, up to a very high point of attainment, but since the path of love or devotion involves the duality between the seeker and the object to be attained, and since the liberation can come only by identity, the relationship of love or devotion has ultimately to be given up in order to achieve the object of the path of knowledge. It is also found that those who consider knowledge to be the ultimate power of deliverance seem often to look down upon the path of the devotee, as if it were a thing inferior, ignorant, and good only for souls that are not yet ready

for the heights of the Truth. On the other hand, some of those who follow the path of devotion often seem to look down upon those who follow the path of knowledge or works; even when they permit some place to these two powers of knowledge and will in some kind of their synthesis, the divine love is considered to be the power of ultimate deliverance. There is also a tendency among those who pursue the path of knowledge and devotion to look down upon those who follow the path of works. For there is an intensity of love, as there is an intensity of knowledge, and in that state of intensity, work seems something outward and distracting. But in the new synthesis of yoga, works appear to be outward and distracting only when one has not found oneness of will and consciousness and when one has not yet seen the being of the Beloved Lord working tirelessly for the establishment of the highest welfare of all creatures. In the real synthesis, works become the very power of knowledge and the very outpouring of love. It is true that the limitations and exclusiveness that we find in the mutual deprecation between the followers of the three paths do occur at the beginning and for a long time on the way. But in the new synthesis of yoga which Sri Aurobindo has put forward, these limitations will be passed through more loosely than in the more exclusive ways of seeking. Sooner than later, the three paths will grow as complements of each other, and they will meet in perfect synthesis where consciousness and knowledge will be found always to be the foundation and culmination of works and yet the secret basis for the perfection of works, where love will be always the crown of all being and its way of fulfillment, as also where knowledge will perfect love and love will perfect knowledge and they will both lend their powers for perfection and accomplishment of God's works in the world.⁶¹ The

essential and the inalienable relationship between knowledge, will and delight will also determine the principle of the synthesis of yoga, which in Sri Aurobindo's view, has to serve the higher and highest aims of the Yoga of Self-Perfection. The supramental perfection implies a complete enjoyment and possession of the whole divine and spiritual nature; and it is complete lifting of the whole nature of man into its power of a divine and spiritual existence. Integrality becomes, in this context, an essential condition of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supramental Yoga.

Six Elements of Perfection

Perfection of Equality

The supramental perfection that is envisaged in the integral yoga has been analyzed by Sri Aurobindo as consisting of six elements, and the yoga of self-perfection is directed towards the integral attainment of these six elements of perfection. The first necessity is the fundamental poise of the soul, both in its essential and its natural being, in regarding and meeting impacts and workings of Nature; this poise can be arrived at by growing into a perfect equality, *samatā*. This *samatā* is not merely the capacity to endure in a poise of equality pleasant or unpleasant, honorable or dishonorable, successful or unsuccessful. It is not even a philosophic equality of the mind which views the whole world as a complex unity in which everything and every occurrence finds its proper place, value and justification. It also transcends the state of resignation in which everything and every occurrence is offered to the Supreme Being without any preference. These three states of equality, stoic, philosophic or religious, are indeed necessary to be cultivated in the course of developing the supramental equality, which is not only the state of internal

tranquility but also a state of eternal potency which generates the perfect spiritual action. The calm of equality is the inmost principle, but there is also an active and positive side, even an equal bliss which can only come when the peace of equality is founded and which is the beatific flower of its fullness.⁶²

Perfection of Active Parts of Human Nature

The second element of perfection relates to all the active parts of the human nature. First of all, these active parts consist of active instruments such as the body, life and mind or the activities of understanding, activities of the heart, activities of life-force and activities of the body and its organs. Another element of active part in the human nature consists of the dynamic force (*vīrya*) of the temperament, character and soul-nature, *swabhāva*. Perfection of the instruments of action and perfection of temperament cannot be achieved without the aid of what the Gita calls the Para Prakriti. Para Prakriti or *daivī prakṛti* or *bhāgavati śakti* needs to be invited and received in increasing measure, and the perfection will grow, according to Sri Aurobindo, in the measure in which we can surrender ourselves to the guidance and then to the direct action of Para Prakriti and of the Purushottama, the master of our being and our works to whom our being belongs. But this perfection will grow, depending upon the power of our aspiration, the power of unfolding sense of certainty of what we inwardly are and what we can become, and also on the labour that we can employ to manifest that certainty and to transmute it into realization. This growing sense of certainty is what can appropriately be called the power of faith, *śraddhā*, and this power, as it grows, imparts in our being increasing faith in the *bhāgavati śakti*, the Divine Mother and the Supreme Lord. Perfection of the *śraddhā* is also a part of the perfection of our native parts. The second element of perfection, therefore, is

the perfection of “the full powers of the members of the instrumental nature, the perfected dynamis of the soul nature, the assumption of them into the action of the divine Power, and a perfect faith in all our members to call and support that assumption, *śakti, vīrya, daivī prakṛti, śraddhā*.”⁶³

Evolution of the Supramental or Gnostic Being

The third element of perfection implies the evolution of the mental into the supramental or Gnostic being, *viññānamaya*. This implies a stride upward and a conversion of all that we are into the terms of this greater consciousness. In the supermind itself, *viññāna*, there are several gradations which open at their highest into the full and infinite Ananda. The supermind or gnosis, when it begins to act effectively, will progressively take up all the terms of intelligence, will, sense-mind, heart, the vital and sensational being and transmute them by a luminous and harmonizing conversion into a unity of the truth, power and delight of a divine existence. The supermind has the power even of overcoming physical limitation and developing a more perfect and divinely instrumental body. Explaining this third element of perfection that comes about by the progressive action of supramental transformation of our nature, Sri Aurobindo states:

“While it perfects the individual soul and nature in the sense of a diviner existence and makes a full harmony of the diversities of our being, it founds all its action upon the Unity from which it proceeds and takes up everything into that Unity. Personality and impersonality, the two eternal aspects of existence, are made one by its action in the spiritual being and Nature body of the Purushottama.”⁶⁴

Gnostic Perfection and Divinizing the law of the Body

The fourth element of perfection relates to the supramental

or Gnostic perfection and the physical body, and it aims at and accomplishes the transformation of life in the physical world as one of its fields and even though the supermind opens up possession of planes and worlds beyond the material world. Perfection of the body as the outer instrument of a complete divine living on earth is a necessary part of the supramental transformation. In its highest movement, Sri Aurobindo envisages illumination of the whole physical consciousness and a divinizing of the law of the body. The yogic literature, particularly relating to Hatha yoga and Tantra, speaks of physical siddhis acquired by some opening up of the law of the subtle or a calling down of something of the law of the spiritual body. Normally, the method consists of opening up of the Chakras by Hatha yogic processes or of the Tantric discipline. According to Sri Aurobindo, these methods may be optionally used at certain stages by the integral Yoga, but they are not indispensable. In the integral yoga, reliance is laid on the power of the higher being to change the lower existence; a working is chosen mainly from above downward and not the opposite way, and therefore the development of the superior power of the supermind is awaited as an instrumentative change in this part of the Yoga.⁶⁵

Manifestation of Gnostic Delight

The fifth element of perfection is then developed and culminates in the perfect action and enjoyment of being on the Gnostic basis. This action and enjoyment will be not those of the gunas of Apra Prakriti, but they will manifest the will to delight of the Purusha enjoying in his freedom and perfection the action of the perfected Prakriti and all her members. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“The individual soul will be the channel of this action and

offering, and it will enjoy at once its oneness with the Ishwara and its oneness with the Prakriti and will enjoy all relations with Infinite and finite, with God and the universe and beings in the universe in the highest terms of the union of the universal Purusha and Prakriti.”⁶⁶

Gnostic Evolution into Divine Ananda and Brahmic Consciousness

Finally, — this is the sixth element of perfection, — the individual by virtue of his Gnostic evolution into the divine principle of Ananda, will live in union with the Purushottama in the Brahmic consciousness. In that state, as Sri Aurobindo points out, “he will be conscious in the Brahman that is the All, *sarvam brahma*, in the Brahman infinite in being and infinite in quality, *anantam brahma*, in Brahman as self-existent consciousness and universal knowledge, *jñānam brahma*, in Brahman as the self-existent bliss and its universal delight of being, *ānandam brahma*. He 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. His physical being will be one with all material Nature, his vital being with the life of the universe, his mind with the cosmic mind, his spiritual knowledge and will with the divine knowledge and will both in itself and as it pours itself through these channels, his spirit with the one spirit in all beings. All the variety of cosmic existence will be changed to him in that unity and revealed in the secret of its spiritual significance. 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.”⁶⁷

PART SEVEN

Major change in the Process of Evolution

The manifestation of the supramental transformation leading to the highest reach of self-perfection would imply a major change in the process of evolution. There is in the present process of evolution a control of the pervading Nescience, but in this new stage the veil thus put on will be lifted; the evolution at every step will, according to Sri Aurobindo, move in the power of the Truth-Consciousness and its progressive determinations will be made by a conscious Knowledge and not in the forms of an Ignorance or Inconscience.⁶⁸

In other words, the rule of the Inconscient will disappear, since the inconscience will be changed by the outburst of the greater secret Consciousness within it, the hidden Light into what it always was in reality, a sea of the secret Super-consciousness. As a result, a first formation of a supramental or Gnostic consciousness and nature will take place. A farther result of the emergence of the Gnostic being would be the increasing concretization and fulfillment of the hope of a more harmonious evolutionary order in terrestrial Nature. Sri Aurobindo even envisages the transmutation of the human species and of the appearance of a supramental or Gnostic race of beings.

The supramental or Gnostic individual would be the consummation of the spiritual man. The saint, the sage, the

divine lover and the divine soldier, — these four types of the spiritual being, would be integrated in their entirety and the Gnostic individual would live and act in the world in union with the divine law of action, *sādharmya*, — not only through the perfected mental and vital consciousness but even through the supramentalised physical consciousness. He would be in the world and of the world but would also exceed it in his consciousness and live in his Self of transcendence above it; he would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by separative individuality. In the words of Sri Aurobindo: “The true Person is not an isolated entity, his individuality is universal; for he individualises the universe: it is at the same time divinely emergent in a spiritual air of transcendental infinity, like a high cloud-surpassing summit; for he individualises the divine Transcendence.”⁶⁹

There would be in the Gnostic being a total change and reversal of consciousness that would establish a new relation of Spirit with Mind and Life and Matter. In the Gnostic way of being and living, the will of the Spirit would directly control and determine the movements and law of the body, and this would lead to the appearance of what may be called the supramental or divine body. The law of the body which is at present operative in humanity arises from the subconscious or inconscient; but in the Gnostic being, the subconscious would become conscious and subject to the supramental control penetrated with its light and action; as a result, the basis of inconscient with its obscurity and ambiguity, its obstruction or tardy responses would be transformed into a lower or supporting superconscience by the supramental emergence. The divine body would manifest the dynamic and irresistible spiritual realism of the Truth-Consciousness, and will be a true and fit and perfectly responsive instrument of the Spirit.

The Gnostic evolution at a certain stage where the divine body would be in formation would fulfill the claim of the body for immunity and serenity of its being and for deliverance from suffering. "A spiritual Ananda can flow into the body and inundate cell and tissue; a luminous materialisation of this higher Ananda could of itself bring about a total transformation of the deficient or adverse sensibilities of physical Nature."⁷⁰

Personality of the Gnostic Being: Perfection of Fourfold Personality

There is, indeed, a question of the nature of the personality of the Gnostic being. According to Sri Aurobindo, in the supermind consciousness personality and impersonality are not opposite principles; they are inseparable aspects of one and the same reality. This reality is not the ego but the being who is impersonal and universal in his stuff of nature, but forms out of it an expressive personality which is his form of self in the changes of Nature. The Impersonal Divine is Sachchidananda, and in all the supramental formations of personality, the Sachchidananda would be expressed, but none of the formations would limit the infinity of the possibility in the infinity of the being.

In the growth of the Gnostic personality, the psychic being or the soul, which is the individual spark of the Divine, plays a leading role. As long as the soul is at work in the unfoldment of the higher degrees of ignorant nature from Matter to Mind, it puts forth temporary personalities which are marked by the three gunas of Prakriti, sattwa, rajas or tamas. A personality of the man is then sattwic, rajasic or tamasic or a mixture of these qualities and its temperament is only a sort of subtler soul-colour which has been given to the major prominent operation

of the fixed modes of nature. But just as the psychic being, at a suitable stage of human evolution, begins to come forward more openly and sovereignly on the surface consciousness and takes recourse to the path of knowledge, divine work and divine love, even so, it brings out more and more effectively its own divine nature, swabhava, and stamps it more and more visibly on the sattwic, rajasic and tamasic personality. It is then that one recognizes that the soul-force in man represents the divine consciousness as a fourfold effective Power, *chaturvyūha*, a Power for knowledge, a Power for strength, a Power for mutuality, and active and productive relations and interchange, and a Power for works, labour and service. These powers grow and develop according to a certain rhythm appropriate to growth and development of the soul over its instruments, — mind, life and body. The law governing the rhythm of development appropriate to each individual has been called in Indian psychology, swadharma, and the process and becoming of the soul and its increasing power of the body, life and mind has been called swabhava. Swabhava and swadharma do not belong to Apra Prakriti, consisting of sattwa, rajas and tamas, but they belong to the psychic entity and psychic being, the expressive stuff of which is constituted by higher nature of Para Prakriti. An important element in the yoga of self-perfection is directed towards the transformation of the Apra Prakriti by Para Prakriti through the intermediacy of the soul-power, the power of the psychic entity and psychic being, and the entire building up of the inner and outer personality of the individual is fundamentally worked out by swabhava and swadharma which interacts with the formation of sattwa, rajas and tamas, — the operations of Apra Prakriti. In the ultimate process of transformation of Apra Prakriti, the fourfold soul-force is able to formulate all these four forms

in their fullness and in their integrality; the supramental being, however, goes beyond the integral fourfold personality and is able to utilize these four personalities and manifest without any limitations of personality that the inner Person wills to manifest, and at the level of higher perfections, the inner Person is a pure and transparent instrument and vehicle of the Supreme Person, who is anantaguna having infinite qualities and yet nirguna, qualityless in the sense of complete transcendence.

According to the integral psychology, the development of fourfold personality is a necessary part of the yoga of self-perfection.⁷¹ It observes, however, that even though the fourfold power of the soul-force is latent in every individual being, there is normally predominance of one or the other of the soul-powers, and although none of these four powers achieves its fullness without the full development of all the other powers, there is in the course of the development four types of temperaments, and different individuals manifest different combinations of these four temperaments under the predominant rule of one of them. In the Indian terminology, these four types of temperaments are called, respectively, brahmana, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra.

The ideal character and soul-power of the Brahmana appears during its development in temperament and personality marked by hunger and passion for knowledge, for its growth in oneself and its communication to others, for its reign in the world, the reign of reason and right and truth and justice, and at a higher level of the harmony of one's greater being, the reign of the spirit and its universal unity and light and love; the brahmanic temperament is poised in steady musing and calm, in reflection and meditation, and in dominating and quieting the turmoil of the will and passions;

it manifests more sovereignly through the self-governed sattwic mind. It begins with this temperament, begins to develop, first, as that of active, open, inquiring intelligence; at a next higher level this temperament develops intellectuality, and, at a still higher level this temperament flowers as a thinker, sage, great mind of knowledge that is open to a mind of light and to all ideas and knowledge and incomings of Truth.

The Kshatriya temperament is marked by the predominance of the will-force and the capacities which make for strength, energy, courage, leadership, protection, rule, victory in every kind of battle, a creative and formative action, the will-power which lays its hold on the material of life and on the will of others. At a lower level of development, this temperament creates the personality of a fighter or man of action; at a higher level, it manifests the man or woman of self-imposing active will; or at a still higher level, the Kshatriya is a ruler, conqueror, leader of a cause, creator, founder in whatever field of the active formation of life. In his refined expression, the Kshatriya is free from the disabling weakness of fear, who stoops to nothing little, base, vulgar or weak; he has the love of honour which would scale the heights of the highest nobility; he maintains untainted ideal of high courage, chivalry, truth, straightforwardness, sacrifice of the lower to the higher self, helpfulness to man, unflinching resistance to injustice and oppression, self-control and mastery. These things are carried to their highest degree which flower into a certain divine fullness, purity and grandeur.

The Vaishya temperament is essentially a temperament that ultimately aims at practical arrangement of relations that can manifest mutuality and harmony. It is behind the Vaishya temperament that is to be found the power to produce

abundance, to organize and effect exchange of forces; this temperament has generosity to possess and to give, to enjoy, to contrive and to put things in order and balance. The Vaishya temperament manifests, first, as a skillful devising intelligence, and it manifests in different degrees the mind that is characterized by expertise in legal, commercial, industrial, economical, practical, scientific, mechanical, technical, and utilitarian professions; at higher levels of its fullness this temperament is at once grasping and generous, prone to amass and treasure, to enjoy, show and use, bent upon efficient exploitation of the world, but well capable too of practical philanthropy, humanity, ordered benevolence, finer ethical spirit; this temperament is generally marked by capacity, adaptation and measure. At a higher level of expression, the Vaishya temperament manifests a largeness of mutuality, a generous fullness of the relations of life, a lavish self-spending and return and ample interchange between existence and existence, a full enjoyment and use of the rhythm and balance of fruitful and productive life.

The Shudra temperament has modest beginnings that manifest toil and labour and service, but as it rises higher, it is the Shudra who can manifest that highest sense of service which is one of the most beautiful elements of our greatest perfection. In the course of the development, the Shudra temperament develops the power of service to others, the modesty and humility to obey and follow and accept needful discipline; it is this temperament which can consecrate to service with love, which asks for no return, but spends itself for the satisfaction of that which it loves, the power to bring down this love and service into the physical field; at its highest level, the Shudra temperament manifests the aspiration to give oneself entirely to god and man, and it has the power of

complete self-surrender, which transferred to the spiritual life becomes one of the greatest and most revealing keys to freedom and perfection.

It is at the higher levels of development that one begins to enlarge oneself to include the soul-force in a larger integrality, even though one of them may lead the others; in due course, one begins to open one's nature more and more into the rounded fullness and universal capacity of the fourfold spirit. But at a still higher level, one begins to experience a general Presence of power, something impersonal in the personal form. Sri Aurobindo points out that the yoga of self-perfection brings out this Presence, — this soul-force, — and gives it its larger scope. All the fourfold powers are taken up and are thrown into the free circle of an integral and harmonious spiritual dynamis. The soul-power of knowledge rises to the highest degree of which the individual nature can be the supporting basis of a free mind of light; powers of revelation, inspiration, intuition, discrimination begin to flower; there comes about a high status of consciousness where, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "a bottomless steadiness and illimitable calm upholds all the illumination, movement, action as on some rock of ages, equal, unperturbed, unmoved, *acyuta*."⁷²

Similarly the soul-power of will and strength rises to a like largeness and altitude, and while describing the signs of the perfection of this will and strength, Sri Aurobindo states:

"An absolute calm fearlessness of the free spirit, an infinite dynamic courage which no peril, limitation of possibility, wall of opposing force can deter from pursuing the work or aspiration imposed by the spirit, a high nobility of soul and will untouched by any littleness or baseness and moving

with a certain greatness of step to spiritual victory or the success of the God-given work through whatever temporary defeat or obstacle, a spirit never depressed or cast down from faith and confidence in the power that works in the being, are the signs of this perfection.”⁷³

The soul-power of mutuality attains its perfection when there comes about skill that observes the law and adapts the relation and keeps the measure; one is able to take into oneself from all beings and at the same time one is able to give out fully out of oneself to all, “a divine commerce, a large enjoyment of the mutual delight of life.”⁷⁴

Finally, the soul-power of service attains to perfection when it manifests the universal love that lavishes itself without demand of return and one attains the abnegation that is ready to bear the yoke of the Divine Master and make the life a free servitude to Him; one is then able to arrive at the self-surrender of the whole being to the Master and to his work in the world.

In the supramental being or in the divine superman, these things unite, assist and enter into each other, become one. In the greatest souls, the perfection manifests harmony in which wisdom, heroism, universal love and highest skill of service are blended. There is in the temperament and personality a constant presence of impersonality, some kind of sovereignty but no egoistic haughtiness or self purification. Sri Aurobindo describes the state of the divine superman as follows:

“When the full heart of Love is tranquillised by knowledge into a calm ecstasy and vibrates with strength, when the strong hands of Power labour for the world in a radiant fullness of joy and light, when the luminous brain of knowledge accepts and transforms the heart’s obscure inspirations and lends itself

to the workings of the high-seated Will, when all these gods are founded together on a soul of sacrifice that lives in unity with all the world and accepts all things to transmute them, then is the condition of man's integral self-transcendence. This and not a haughty, strong and brilliant egoistic self-culture enthroning itself upon an enslaved humanity is the divine way of supermanhood."⁷⁵

Supramental Supermanhood: A New step in Evolution Distinction between Nietzschean Superman and Divine Superman

When Sri Aurobindo and the Mother speak of the supramental manifestation as a result of triple transformation and of the emergence of supermanhood, they make it clear that the supramental supermanhood must not be confused with past and present ideas of supermanhood. There have been in the past great personalities like Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Buddha, Christ and others, and they manifested divinity, but in terms of evolution, the divinity manifests at certain points of critical development of the instruments of the Spirit. The supramental supermanhood would, however, mean the manifestation of divinity at a new critical point of development of the supermind, which can serve as the new instrument of the Spirit. On the other hand, there have been in the past and even in the present human beings with extraordinary and superhuman qualities in their manifestation, but they were marked by what Indian psychology describes as Asuric or Rakṣhasic character. In recent times, Nietzsche has spoken of supermanhood, but when we examine the stuff and the qualities that characterize his idea of supermanhood, one feels in it the marks of the Asura or the Rakshasa. And Sri Aurobindo takes a special care to

distinguish the Nietzschean idea of supermanhood from his own idea of the divine supermanhood. Sri Aurobindo, while explaining this distinction, states as follows:

“...supermanhood in the mental idea consists of an overtopping of the normal human-level, not in kind but in degree of the same kind, by an enlarged personality, a magnified and exaggerated ego, an increased power of mind, an increased power of vital force, a refined or dense and massive exaggeration of the forces of the human Ignorance; it carries also, commonly implied in it, the idea of a forceful domination over humanity by the superman. That would mean a supermanhood of the Nietzschean type; it might be at its worst the reign of the “blonde beast” or the dark beast or of any and every beast, a return to barbaric strength and ruthlessness and force: but this would be no evolution, it would be a reversion to an old strenuous barbarism. Or it might signify the emergence of the Rakshasa or Asura out of a tense effort of humanity to surpass and transcend itself, but in the wrong direction. A violent and turbulent exaggerated vital ego satisfying itself with a supreme tyrannous or anarchic strength of self-fulfilment would be the type of a Rakshasic supermanhood: but the giant, the ogre or devourer of the world, the Rakshasa, though he still survives, belongs in spirit to the past; a larger emergence of that type would be also a retrograde evolution. A mighty exhibition of an overpowering force, a self-possessed, self-held, even, it may be, an ascetically self-restrained mind-capacity and life-power, strong, calm or cold or formidable in collected vehemence, subtle, dominating, a sublimation at once of the mental and vital ego, is the type of the Asura. But the earth has had enough of this kind in her past and its repetition can only prolong the old lines; she can get no true profit for her future, no power of

self-exceeding, from the Titan, the Asura: even a great or supernormal power in it could only carry her on larger circles of her old orbit. But what has to emerge is something much more difficult and much more simple; it is a self-realised being, a building of the spiritual self, and intensity and urge of the soul and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty, — not an egoistic supermanhood seizing on a mental and vital domination over humanity, but the sovereignty of the Spirit over its own instruments, its possession of itself and its possession of life in the power of the spirit, a new consciousness in which humanity itself shall find its own self-exceeding and self-fulfilment by the revelation of the divinity that is striving for birth within it. This is the sole true supermanhood and the one real possibility of a step forward in evolutionary Nature.”⁷⁶

The supramental life that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have envisaged would be much greater and multitudinous as well as more imperishably delightful than the interests of the finite. It would be the life of unity, mutuality and harmony. Evolution of the supermind would be the evolution in the Knowledge, and it would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding themselves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance. The supramental manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance; it will be a greater and happier constant miracle. As Sri Aurobindo points out, if there is an evolution in material Nature and if it is an evolution of being with consciousness and life as its two key-terms and powers, this fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life will manifest at an early or later stage of the march of humanity; in spite of the problems and hurdles of

the contemporary crisis, humanity will survive and arrive at the supramental manifestation at its crest of evolution and in due course of time, it will spread in larger and larger circles of humanity.⁷⁷

Notes and References

- ¹ Sri Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 22, p. 98.
- ² *The Bhagavad Gita (BG)*, XV.7.
- ³ *Ibid.*, VII.5.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, XVII.3.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, XIV.2.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, XIV.20.
- ⁷ Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 21, pp. 661-2.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, pp. 962-3.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 889-90.
- ¹⁰ *Katha Upanishad*, II.1.12-13.
- ¹¹ *BG*, XV.7.
- ¹² *Vide.*, Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 18, chapter 23.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.225.
- ¹⁴ *BG*, XV.7.
- ¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 18, p. 228.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 19, p. 891.
- ¹⁷ *Katha Upanishad*, I.2.12.
- ¹⁸ *Vide.*, Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 19, p. 891-5.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 895-7.
- ²⁰ *Katha Upanishad*, II.1.5.
- ²¹ *Brahmāndvalli of Taittiriya Upanishad*, chapters I – V.
- ²² *Mundaka Upanishad*, II.1.2 and 10.
- ²³ *Vide.*, *Isha Upanishad*, 16.
- ²⁴ *BG*, VII.5.
- ²⁵ *Vide.*, Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 20, p.283.

- ²⁶ Ibid., *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 22, pp. 282-4.
- ²⁷ Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 20, pp. 69-70.
- ²⁸ Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, pp. 896-7.
- ²⁹ Vide., Ibid., pp. 897 – 901.
- ³⁰ Vide., Ibid., *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 22, pp. 326 – 353.
- ³¹ Vide., Ibid., pp. 351 – 53; vide also: *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, pp. 733 – 4
- ³² Vide also Satprem, *The Mind of the Cells*, Mira Aditi and The Mother's Institute of Research, Delhi, 2002, pp. 138 – 67.
- ³³ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 18, p. 426.
- ³⁴ Ibid., pp. 535 – 7.
- ³⁵ Ibid., p. 539.
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp. 539 – 40.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 225.
- ³⁸ Ibid., *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 22, pp. 298 – 9.
- ³⁹ The Mother, *Collected Works of the Mother*, Centenary Edition, 1978, Vol. 12, pp. 32 – 33.
- ⁴⁰ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 19, p. 900.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 903 – 4.
- ⁴² Ibid., p. 907.
- ⁴³ Ibid., pp. 907 – 8.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 908 – 9.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 911.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 938.
- ⁴⁷ Vide., Ibid., pp. 940 – 44.
- ⁴⁸ Vide., Ibid., pp. 944 – 7.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 949.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., Vol. 18, p. 278.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 279 – 80.
- ⁵² Ibid., p. 130.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 131.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 845.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, p. 916.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 918.

⁵⁷ Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, p. 587.

⁵⁸ BG, IV.33.

⁵⁹ Vide., Ibid., VII.16.

⁶⁰ Ibid., VII.18.

⁶¹ Vide., Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Pondicherry, 1971, Vol. 21, pp. 521 – 7.

⁶² Vide., Ibid., pp. 671 – 700.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 666.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 667.

⁶⁵ Vide., Ibid., pp. 667 – 89.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 669.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 669 – 70.

⁶⁸ Vide., Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, p. 967.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 972 – 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 989.

⁷¹ Vide., Ibid., *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Vol. 21, chapter XV.

⁷² Ibid., p. 722.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, Vol. 16, p. 281.

⁷⁶ Ibid., *The Life Divine*, Vol. 19, pp. 1067 – 8.

⁷⁷ The fact that Sri Aurobindo discovered the supermind, the peak of the superconscience, and the gates were opened up for exploration of still higher levels of the consciousness and power of Sachchidananda, is of immense significance, not only for breaking the bounds of history and of evolutionary process, but also for the recovery of the ancient origins of yogic endeavour and subsequent development in the history of yoga as also for providing to the science of yoga fresh evidence of the objectivity of the truth of the supermind and of other discoveries recorded in the history of yoga. Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the supermind preceded his discovery of the descriptions of the supermind that were recorded in the Veda, even though for millennia these descriptions had remained undeciphered and therefore forgotten. Hence, Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the supermind was a new discovery, independent of what was achieved in regard to the supermind in the Vedic times. Sri Aurobindo subsequently showed to what extent the supermind was discovered by the Rishis of the Veda

and the Upanishads and even by the later tradition of which Sri Krishna's yogic knowledge and realization is the culminating point. It was not as if Sri Aurobindo had any mental idea of the supermind or of the yoga by which supermind can be attained by following which he reconfirmed the Vedic discovery of the supermind. Sri Aurobindo had, in course of his own yoga of self-development, attained the supermind; and he had certain experiences for which he had not found any clue in whatever was known or thought of in the past records of tradition of yoga. But when he came to read subsequently the pages of the Rig Veda, he found in the symbolic but fairly transparent hymns the epical victory of the Vedic Rishis that they had attained in discovering the supermind and in their attainment of what they had called immortality; the Rishis had described immortality as a state of the widening or universalisation of the physical consciousness as a result of the visitations of the supramental consciousness in the physical body. From the scientific point of view of yoga, it can be said that the discovery or rediscovery of the supermind by Sri Aurobindo could take place only if the supermind has objective reality; for then only could one encounter it, even if one were not guided by any subjective idea or by the ideas prevalent in the cultural environment.

Sri Aurobindo has described his discovery of the Vedic discovery of the supermind as follows:

"My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga, which, without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves; and among them there came the figures of three female energies, Ila, Saraswati, Sarama, representing severally three out of the four faculties of the intuitive reason, — revelation, inspiration and intuition. Two of these names were not well known to me as Vedic goddesses, but were connected rather with the current Hindu religion or with old Puranic legend, Saraswati, goddess of learning and Ila, mother of the Lunar dynasty. But Sarama was familiar enough. I was unable, however, to establish any connection between the figure that rose in my mind and the Vedic hound of heaven, who

was associated in my memory with the Argive Helen and represented only an image of the physical Dawn entering in its pursuit of the vanished herds of Light into the cave of the Powers of darkness. When once the clue is found, the clue of the physical Light imaging the subjective, it is easy to see that the hound of heaven may be the intuition entering into the dark caverns of the subconscious mind to prepare the delivery and outflashing of the bright illuminations of knowledge which have there been imprisoned. But the clue was wanting and I was obliged to suppose an identity of name without any identity of the symbol. ...

“... It did not take long to see that the Vedic indications of a racial division between Aryans and Dasyus and the identification of the latter with the indigenous Indians were of a far flimsier character than I had supposed. But far more interesting to me was the discovery of a considerable body of profound psychological thought and experience lying neglected in these ancient hymns. And the importance of this element increased in my eyes when I found, first, that the mantras of the Veda illuminated with a clear and exact light psychological experiences of my own for which I had found no sufficient explanation either in European psychology or in the teachings of Yoga or of Vedanta, so far as I was acquainted with them, and, secondly, that they shed light on obscure passages and ideas of the Upanishads to which, previously, I could attach no exact meaning and gave at the same time a new sense to much in the Puranas.” (Ibid, *The Secret of the Veda*, Vol. 10, pp. 34, 36-7)

Sri Aurobindo explains in detail how, following the clue that he had now discovered, he found also the clue to the symbolism of the words in the Vedic conception of the *vyāhṛtis*, the three symbolic words of the mantra, *Om bhūr bhuvḥ svaḥ*, and in the connection of the fourth *vyāhṛti*, Mahas, with the psychological term *ṛtam*. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

“The Rishis speak of three cosmic divisions, Earth, the *antarikṣa* or middle region and Heaven (*dyau*); but there is also a greater Heaven (*br̥had dyau*) called also the Wide World, the Vast (*br̥hat*), and typified sometimes as the Great Water, *maho ar̥ṇaḥ*. This *br̥hat* is again described as *ṛtam br̥hat* or in a triple term *satym ṛtam br̥hat*. And as the three worlds correspond the Vyāhritis, so this fourth world of the

Vastness and the Truth seems to correspond to the fourth Vyahriti mentioned in the Upanishads, Mahas. In the Puranic formula the four are completed by three others, Jana, Tapas, and Satya, the three supreme worlds of the Hindu cosmology. In the Veda also we have three supreme worlds whose names are not given. But in the Vedantic and Puranic system the seven worlds correspond to seven psychological principles or forms of existence, Sat, Chit, Ananda, Vijnana, Manas, Prana and Anna. Now Vijnana, the central principle, the principle of Mahas, the great world, is the Truth of things, identical with the Vedic *ṛtam* which is the principle of *br̥hat*, the Vast, and while in the Puranic system Mahas is followed in the ascending order by Jana, the world of Ananda, of the divine Bliss, in the Veda also *ṛtam*, the Truth, leads upward to Mayas, Bliss. We may, therefore, be fairly sure that the two systems are identical and that both depend on the same idea of seven principles of subjective consciousness formulating themselves in seven objective worlds. On this principle I was able to identify the Vedic worlds with corresponding psychological planes of consciousness and the whole Vedic system became clear to my mind." (Ibid, pp. 42-3)

Sri Aurobindo further elucidates how he identified Mahas with the Vedic concept of the infinity of the Truth (or the Vedic *satyam*, *ṛtam* *br̥hat*, the Truth, the Right and the Vast) as a "great passage" to the divine Bliss or Mayas. Sri Aurobindo states:

"I had already seen that the central idea of the Vedic Rishis was the transition of the human soul from a state of death to a state of immortality by the exchange of the Falsehood for the Truth, of divided and limited being for integrality and infinity. Death is the mortal state of Matter with Mind and Life involved in it; Immortality is a state of infinite being, consciousness and bliss. Man rises beyond the two firmaments, *rodasi*, Heaven and Earth, mind and body, to the infinity of the Truth, Mahas, and so to the divine Bliss. This is the "great passage" discovered by the Ancestors, the ancient Rishis." (Ibid, p.43)

In the "Life Divine", Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that the cryptic verses of the Veda contain, though concealed, the gospel of the divine and immortal Supermind and through the veil some illumining flashes come to us. He also points out that in these Vedic utterances the conception of the supermind is classified as a vastness beyond the

ordinary firmaments of our consciousness. While defining the supermind, Sri Aurobindo admits the Vedic clue of "truth-consciousness" for delimiting the connotation of the elastic phrase "Supermind". For without this delimitation, the word supermind would appear to be ambiguous and may mean either mind itself super-eminent and lifted above ordinary mentality but not radically changed, or it may mean all that is beyond mind and therefore assume too extensive comprehensiveness which will bring in even the Ineffable itself. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

"The Vedic seers seem to speak of two primary faculties of the "truth-conscious" soul; they are Sight and Hearing, by which is intended direct operations of an inherent Knowledge describable as truth-vision and truth-audition and reflected from far-off in our human mentality by the faculties of revelation and inspiration. Besides, a distinction seems to be made in the operations of the Supermind between knowledge by a comprehending and pervading consciousness which is very near to subjective knowledge by identity and knowledge by a projecting, confronting, apprehending consciousness which is the beginning of objective cognition. These are the Vedic clues. And we may accept from this ancient experience the subsidiary term "truth-consciousness" to delimit the connotation of the more elastic phrase, Supermind." (Ibid, *The Life Divine*, Vol. 18, p. 125)

But Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the supermind has resulted in breaking down the boundaries of history and of the evolutionary process itself. During the historical development of yoga, the Vedic knowledge of the supermind was lost, and the yogic endeavour gradually came to be confined to a more limited aim of the attainment of the liberation of the individual soul from its entanglement with the ego and the three gunas of Prakriti; the realms of the supermind as recorded in the Veda, Upanishads and the Gita did not come to be rediscovered. Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the supermind was not only a revisiting of the supramental realms of consciousness and power; he also found that the road to farther consequences of the visitations of supramental consciousness in the physical body were blocked; he also found that the Divine Will working in the evolutionary process required the necessity of removing that obstacle; as a result, Sri Aurobindo introduced a new objective in his integral yoga and developed new methods in conjunction with some of the methods

which were developed in the past in order that the supramental consciousness could manifest in physical consciousness with that kind of permanence in the evolutionary process that we find in regard to the permanence of Life in Matter and Mind in Life in the evolutionary development that we see on the earth. The Mother collaborated with Sri Aurobindo in this new task and led it to its accomplishment.

As a result, the true and full integration of the Spirit and Matter can now be said to have been achieved with their great accomplishment, and the boundaries of evolution and the limitations of the methods of evolution which have so far been at work have also radically been broken down. Sri Aurobindo has, therefore, envisaged a major change in the evolutionary process. While envisaging this radical change and the evolutionary process as a result of the descent of the supermind, Sri Aurobindo had stated in one of his last writings, "Supermind and the Evolution", as follows:

"The full emergence of supermind may be accomplished by a sovereign manifestation, a descent into earth-consciousness and a rapid assumption of its powers and disclosing of its forms and the creation of a supramental race and a supramental life: this must indeed be the full result of its action in Nature. But this has not been the habit of evolutionary Nature in the past upon earth and it may well be that this supramental evolution also will fix its own periods, though it cannot be at all a similar development to that of which earth has hitherto been the witness. But once it has begun, all must unavoidably and perfectly manifest and all parts of Nature must stand towards a greatest possible luminousness and perfection. It is this certainty that authorises us to believe that mind and humanity also will tend towards the realisation that will be far beyond our present dreams of perfection." (Ibid, *The Supramental Manifestation Upon Earth*, Vol. 16, p. 65)

A study of the accounts of the development of the experimental research carried out by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will enable us to suggest that after 1970, when the Mother stated that the supramental consciousness had come to be permanently fixed in the physical consciousness (vide Mother's Agenda, Vol. 11, pp. 97-105, dated 14.3.1970) there must have been an unprecedented acceleration in the progression of the earth-consciousness. One can even legitimately

suggest some novel aspects in the development and practice of the integral yoga as described by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, particularly with regard to the removal of difficulties that lie in the stupendous task of making supermind operate in physical consciousness as also in regard to the speed with which the progression that can take place in humanity's own evolutionary process. But still the processes and methods of integral yoga would fully hold good and the practice of the processes and methods of the triple transformation which are essentials of the integral yoga will remain inevitable.

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In 1976, the Government of India invited him to be Education Advisor in the Ministry of Education. In 1983, he was appointed Special Secretary to the Government of India, and he held the post until 1988. He was Member-Secretary of Indian Council of Philosophical Research from 1981 to 1990. He was also Member-Secretary of Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratishthan from 1987 to 1993. He was the Vice-Chairman of the UNESCO Institute of Education, Hamburg, from 1987 to 1989.

From 1999 to 2004, he was the Chairman of Auroville Foundation. From 2000 to 2006, he was Chairman of Indian Council of Philosophical Research. From 2006 to 2008, he was Editorial Fellow of the Project of History of Indian Science, Philosophy and Culture (PHISPC).

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Integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is also known as Yoga of Transformation. The word 'transformation' has a distinctive meaning, and it is to be distinguished from what is normally called conversion or mere change of attitude or from the state of sainthood or ethical perfection. Nature has three strands, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In the state of the transformation of Nature, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are all transformed in their divine counterparts. Tamas is transformed into a divine calm, Rajas becomes self-effecting, initiating sheer Will of the spirit, Sattva become not the modified mental light, but the self-existent light of the divine being. This transformation leads to the manifestation of a new Prakriti, Gnostic Prakriti or Gnostic Nature. To use the words of the Gita, this would mean the manifestation of Para Prakriti.

The secret of the manifestation of Para Prakriti has been discovered by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and it is this discovery which constitutes the novelty of the yoga of the integral transformation. This has a great deal to do with the evolutionary intention of Nature, and the entire process has been divided into three major steps in the Integral Yoga, namely, psychic transformation, spiritual transformation and supramental transformation.