CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
"The true law of our development and the entire object of our social existence can only become clear to us when we have discovered not only, like modern Science, what man has been in his past physical and vital evolution, but his future mental and spiritual destiny and his place in the cycles of Nature".  

It has been rightly said that the real study of man is man himself. An enquirer might raise his eyebrows here and ask as to why, the real study of man be man himself when the vast open book of Nature, i.e., the mysterious universe, 'the round ocean, the blue sky, the wide firmaments...', or, in otherwords, the vast expansiveness is stretched before him. One might be flabbergasted, so to say, but a close analysis of the logic of the statement will enable us to unpack, the exact implication and significance of the statement. Let us just take the logical geography of the idea of man. What exactly does one understand by the simple assertion that 'man exists'? Various responses, sometimes scientific, sometimes sociological, sometimes existential, might be offered in reply to this simple question. While the Rationalist like Descartes would comeforward with the hypothesis 'cogito ergo sum' or 'I think therefore I exist', or in other words - essence or thought constitutes the very core of existence, the existentialist,
as opposed to it, would claim that existence precedes essence. No doubt, this will raise controversies and yet there is the apprehension that it would remain as an unsolved problem. But then, the fundamental question is, what do I mean by 'existence'? John Hick says, "existence makes a difference." No doubt, the suggestion is profound, particularly when it is related to the human affairs. What sort of difference would count as the justifier for the claim made above? Is it the physical or biological difference, is it the mental difference between one man and the other or is it the difference in status only? What then is the criterion? A plausible solution to this impasse might be the difference in vision. But this criterion would further require a situation where the difference in vision would be meaningful. What is this situation then? The vision of an individual can be assessed from our social interactions or more, particularly, in our social behaviours. One might of course give a counter suggestion that the individuals, particularly the saints, can have differences in visions due to their mystic experiences. What then can possibly be the ground of experience except the human situation which is clearly evident from the social interactions or social behaviour?
The concept of interpersonal communication and social behaviours etc. are puzzling concepts, if studied closely and carefully. No doubt, as a social being one has to communicate with others. But do all such communications contribute to the growth and well-being of the society? The question still remains open before us. The question is significant, in view of the fact that instead of contributing to the growth or well-being of the society, i.e., instead of enriching or ennobling our social norms, our interpersonal communications might be just confined to the gratification of our individual selfish interest, our pettish outlook, which is quite discouraging and yet very much common with saints and gods, what to speak of human individuals? As Tulasi Das would put it, "It is a universal feature with all, even with the divine agents the great souls and the saints that their so called love for others is surcharged with selfish interest". Thus, it appears that it is very difficult to designate the human behaviours and predict them as well. As Eric Carlton would put it in a different context,

The subject of the social sciences is human affairs and, unlike the behaviours of say, the molecular structure of hydrogen, little can usually be said which is not subject to some degree of quantification. As T. Bottomore puts it, 'In the natural
sciences, it is possible to conceive an ultimate, closed theoretical system, while in the social sciences this is inconceivable because in human affairs genuine novelty can result from human volition.  

The question now is, what will count as a qualifier(s) for man as a social being, or man, particularly man as the instrument of social progress? How can this question be answered? The reply to this question might appear to be easy as it can be judged and decided from different angles of vision. Can this be answered then with the help of recent developments in the physical science? Why not? Bertrand Russell says that human knowledge has a scope and limit. In the words of Sri Aurobindo

Man's highest aspiration, his seeking for perfection his longing for freedom and mastery, his search after pure truth and unmixed delight— is in flagrant contradiction with his present existence and normal experience.  

It is clear from the above that human experience which is the basis of any scientific development can not offer a satisfactory explanation to the above question. Science deals with the vital existence, the gross physical existence, but the explanations of these
aspects of nature cannot go a long way to solve the riddle of social existence. The concept 'social behaviour' or for that matter, 'social existence' appears to be a pandora's box as it involves a volley of questions. One might ask for example, does social existence mean a collective existence ?, does it mean a bare physical existence ?, does it mean a mere concern for others ? Does social existence mean a static, dormant, changeless, bare existence ? These are the questions that arrest the mind of a serious student in philosophy. He is flabbergasted, so to say, in his attempt to offer a satisfactory answer to these questions. He approaches different doors, but comes back frustrated. As Omar Khayaam would put it,

When young did I eagerly frequent the doctors and the saint, but came in through the same door through which I went.  

When science does not appear to be helpful to us, can sociology offer an adequate answer to the problem ? A cursory glance on the annals of sociology clearly indicates that it gives us a comprehensive view of the genesis, growth and development of society. In other words, sociology is a positive science, a descriptive exercise and informative in its outlook. Of course it has to be admitted that sociology gives us certain
ideas about the importance and significance of values, of the rudiments of culture which play a significant role in the social change. But the problem is, what exactly is the value or cultural element which can be taken as the ideal for assessing the social existence of man? When the question of the ideal or norm comes to our mind, the obvious difficulty is, are norms so essential to assess the social existence of an individual? The possible answer might be that without ideals, not the isms, the existence of mankind will be at a crossroad. Then the question will be what sort of ideal is expected? Tentatively it can only be suggested that the ideal which one expects must be able to encompass, control and guide the total fabric of human existence from the past to the future through the present. In other words, the ideal must be able to assess and interpret the human progress, both in the life of the individual and in the society. The problem here might be when we talk of an ideal controlling and guiding the progress in the life of the individual and the society, are we not landing ourselves in a paradoxical situation? Why paradoxical? The paradox might be there, as in many cases it has been observed that the social progress and the individual progress are in flagrant contradiction with each other. What is required is that we must be in search of an ideal which not only can over-come the impasse, but can dissolve it, so to say. According to Wittgenstein,
the function of the philosopher is not to solve the problems but to dissove them, or to 'show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle'. When we talk of the word 'progress' a serious student in philosophy is at a cross road. An analysis of the word 'progress' clearly indicates that it is not mere change, it is not mere development either. Moreover, we do not talk of progress only in the sphere of society. We talk of progress in science, progress in technology, progress in research, progress in mind and body. Thus we are at a fix to bring out the idea of progress which can clearly explain the original question we have raised in this thesis. This needs a conceptual clarification. The progress we talk of must be discussed vis-a-vis the ideas of progress available in other disciplines.

A critical reflection on different models of progress of society requires us to consider the status of the individual itself. The obvious question is, what exactly do we mean by an individual, particularly in the context of the concept of social progress? If we cast a glance on the concept of individual particularly from the western standpoint we come across different notions. An individual is the minimum unit of existence. We are not discussing the nature of the individual from the standpoint of Leibniz or P.F. Strawson. So far as these philosophers are concerned the concept of individual is a metaphysical concept. According to Leibniz this individual
is the indivisible unit of existence called the 'Monad'. The Monad is not a mere mathematical existence, it is a unit of force or energy.

P.F. Strawson accepts the monadistic standpoint, but treats it in a different way. Metaphysics, according to him, is descriptive metaphysics. Apart from the metaphysical standpoint which has dominated the western hemisphere through centuries, the Indian viewpoint also needs special attention.

It is very difficult to give a comprehensive, even a fragmentary, picture of the individual which is unique so far as the Indian philosophical systems are concerned. In the Indian Philosophical terminology the individual is called 'Jiva'. It is a controversial issue whether Jiva is purely a physical existence or a psycho-physical existence, whether the Jiva is a harmonious existence or a collective existence. So far as Sānkhya is concerned the Jiva is otherwise known as 'Purusa' or consciousness as such. In other systems of Indian metaphysics Jiva is a psycho-physical being, clearly distinguished from the Absolute. The individual is in this sense, a hypothetical and relative existence. It is controlled by the social laws, the other conditions leading to the existence of the individual. The Vedānta, particularly Advaita Vedānta, gives a unique treatment
of the individual. Here the individual is neither a constituent nor a fragment of the universal. It is 'that' (Tat) or it is the Brahman.

A critical look at the different views regarding the nature of the individual shows that it is treated either psychologically or scientifically or teleologically but never socially. That system of metaphysics which treats the individual as an aggregate of mind and body (sthula sarira), Sukshmasarira and manas, does not treat the individual in the wider perspective of social existence. No doubt, the individual has been systematically treated by these metaphysicians. But the individual has been analysed as an individual, not as a unit of social existence. When one looks at the Vedantic standpoint one has a hazy idea of the social existence of man, as according to Advaita in the ultimate analysis the universal and the individual are identical. But one is not satisfied regarding the status of the individual as a unit of social existence in the metaphysics of Advaita. Since the final word of Advaita is dissolution of the ego, not its manifestation, which is a necessary ingredient of the individual as a unit of social existence.

When we consider the nature of man, particularly in the context of social progress, it is incumbent on us to analyse the concept of Nature, as it contributes
in a long way to the growth of the individual. Sri Aurobindo's idea of the development of Nature deserves special consideration here. According to him

The development of Nature is distinctly methodical. She moves from simplicity to complexity, rigidity to plasticity, from inconscience through ignorance to self-consciousness, from lower to higher harmony and smaller to larger unity.9

As it appears, the course of Nature reflects the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo. When we cast a glance on his idea of evolution, we come across the idea that matter is the starting point of the evolutionary process where as the 'Life Divine' is the apex of the pyramid and evolution continues from the matter to the 'Life Divine'. One might question here, how is a discussion on the evolution of Nature relevant to a discussion on the nature of the individual? Can we not study the individual in an isolated manner? The reply from the side of Sri Aurobindo would be that Nature is not a mere collection of the isolated units of existence. Nature and individual are integrally related, so to say. The development of Nature has an impact on the development of the individual. No man or community can exist and progress in an isolated manner. Every thing in Nature,
as Professor D.P. Chattopadhyaya rightly remarks, has two aspects - 'self-affirming' and 'self-exceeding'. When we say that Nature is self-affirming, what we mean is that it projects its uniqueness. But the question is, what is so very unique in Nature? How is this uniqueness projected in the Natural phenomena? According to Sri Aurobindo, the uniqueness of Nature is the true unity which supports a rich diversity. By the word 'true unity', we must not understand that Nature is a mere cementing force to hold on the diverse elements. In other words, true unity means to maintain the identity of each isolated existence and yet unites them. In this respect Sri Aurobindo's concept of Nature can be compared to the law of identity of the indiscernibles of Leibniz. What is the idea lurking behind the uniqueness of Nature as envisaged in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo? Analysis shows that in speculating the identity of the individual he opens the gate for individual freedom. As we shall see later, according to Sri Aurobindo, freedom is granted to the individual and the dignity of the individual consists in the realisation of freedom which is ingrained in the very core of its existence. Paradoxically, he also speaks of freedom of the individual being drawn from Nature herself. That means, Nature grants freedom to the individual. In the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo the dignity of the individual consists of freedom. This individual freedom is the key note to understand his
ideas of Karma, Rebirth, Karmayoga etc. That is how
the concept of an individual is the corner stone of
Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics.

His ideas of individual freedom lands us in
intricate metaphysical issues when we discuss it in
the context of concept of Nature. The problem is, how
is it plausible to comprehend the freedom of the
individual which is an integral part of Nature? Nature,
as we know, is controlled by certain inscrutable laws.
These laws are neither changeable nor violable. As an
integral part, the individual is determined by these
fixed, rigid inscrutable laws. If so, where is the
possibility of individual freedom? One might try to
understand it in the light of the Spinozistic meta-
physics, where freedom is deduced as a necessity from
Nature. But as we shall see later, the Spinozistic
metaphysics, and, for that matter, Sri Aurobindite
metaphysics also is loaded with metaphysical burdens,
as it leads to the complicated issues of determinism
and freedom. This requires us to understand the exact
implication of the idea of freedom, particularly in
the context of individual progress, vis-a-vis the
social progress.

According to some thinkers, our freedom depends
upon our consciousness of the spiritual purpose opera-
tive in Nature. Further, it has been pointed out that human society progresses in proportion as the individual progresses in enjoying his freedom.

The problem now would be, whether the consciousness required to understand the spiritual purpose in nature is same in every individual? If so, what is the necessity of individual progress? If there are degrees in the level of consciousness then the further question would be, how to explain the idea of disuniformity in the gradation of consciousness? Can we make the individual himself responsible for it particularly when the individual is an integral part of Nature? On the other hand, if Nature is made responsible for the disuniformity in the level of consciousness then the idea of Divine perfection, which is the summum bonum of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics will be at a stake. All these problems demand a plausible solution to which we shall come afterwards.

The other aspect of Nature which is also a key concept in the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo is that Nature as well as the individual do not only affirm themselves, they also exceed themselves. This is the idea of self-transcendence which is the fulcrum of progress, be it scientific, social, or spiritual. This idea has its root in the Indian antiquity, particularly
in the *Isāvāsyā Upanisad*, where it is said that the self is static as well as dynamic.\(^{11}\) Dynamism and self-transcendence are the integral concepts. But what does one mean by self-transcendence? How is this idea meaningful in the context of social development or progress? When we try to understand the implication of the concept of self-transcendence in the life of an individual, what we mean is that through one's own effort alone the individual can go beyond his present *status quo*. This is the doctrine of 'self-effortism' or pravatnavada.\(^ {12}\) Even then the problem would be what prompts an individual to exert all his efforts to transcend his present status? Is it a mechanical process? If it is mechanical then the idea of self-exceeding loses its significance. If it is not mechanical, then the question still remains unsolved as to how to explain the idea of self-transcendence.

Assuming that we ascribe the act of self-transcendence to the working of some unrevealed *teleos* behind it, the question would be, whose purpose actually prompts? Stated otherwise, the question would be whether the process is a quasi-teleological or a teleological one? However, when the idea of self-transcendence in the life of an individual is comprehensible, is it comprehensible, *mutatis-mutandis* in the life of society? These are some of the problems with which we are concerned to make the ideas of self-affirming and self-exceeding clear. But these ideas
cannot be clarified without understanding the nature of man qua Man. This prompts us to understand the three aspects of the life of the human individual, which, according to Sri Aurobindo, consists of the vital, the mental and the spiritual.

THE HUMAN INDIVIDUAL:

According to Sri Aurobindo the progress of the individual is from vital or gross physical state to pure spiritual existence. This progress corresponds to the progress of Nature or the evolutionary process. The basic idea behind the nature of the progress of the individual can be traced back to the Upanisads where there is a vivid discussion on the five sheaths i.e. annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnana-maya and anandamaya kosas. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan,

The progress from the pranamaya kosa to the anandamaya kosa is a progress from anna to ananda i.e. from the gross material to the trans-experiential.13

Also in the eyes of Sri Aurobindo, the foundation of the progress is infra-ethical, while at the summit it is supra-ethical.

In order to unfold the progress of the individual from the infra-ethical to the supra-ethical we have to
reflect upon the different stages of progress. The first aspect of the individual is the vital aspect. In emphasizing upon the vital aspect of the individual as well as society, Sri Aurobindo discards the dichotomy between mind and matter. Traditionally, mind and matter are taken as two distinct concepts. This tradition owes its origin to the Bhagavad Gita in the East and to Plato, René Descartes etc. in the Western philosophy. The dualism between mind and matter makes it difficult to bridge the gap between the two and as such all explanations such as epiphenomenalism, psycho-physical parallelism and interactionism etc. fail to give a total picture of an individual. The integral metaphysic of Sri Aurobindo transcends any form of dualism what-so-ever. It may be noted here that while Sri Aurobindo successfully over-comes dualism, he highlights the uniqueness and distinctness of both body and mind, particularly with regard to the role they play in the Life Divine. Thus according to him, nothing is absolute either materialism or spiritualism, either a Cārvāka or Śankara. But the integral metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo is different from the Jaina relativistic and pluralistic metaphysics which also does not reject anything. It may be mentioned here that Jaina metaphysics speculates that every existence is real from a relative stand point, where as in the Realistic metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo, such relativism and the possibility of illusion or Māyā even is ruled out. It is also important
to note that the word *Māyā* acquires different meaning here. One may of course compare Sri Aurobindo with Rāmānuja inspite of their fundamental differences. However, there appears to be a sharp distinction between Sankara and Sri Aurobindo with regard to the nature of *Māyā*. Again while according to Sankara, *Brahman* alone is real and the world is illusory, according to Sri Aurobindo nothing is illusory. He gives a real status to *Māyā* while accepting the distinction between lower *Māyā* and higher *Māyā*.

Since the vital is most significantly material, it is obvious that the mental aspect must be distinguished from the vital aspect. But a deep study of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics reveals that the mental aspect is an achievement or fulfilment of the vital. This idea is based upon presuppositions like the western theory of evolution and the concept of *involu tion* which is unique to Sri Aurobindo. The western theory of evolution, which again owes its inception to Darwin, points out that instead of being a distinct entity, mind evolves from matter through life. The statement of the Mother deserves special attention here. According to the Mother, the Divine life can be possible for a man provided he satisfies two conditions. The individual must aspire to attain perfection and must keep his mind open for the descent of the Divine. These two requirements - the aspiration and opening make...
entire metaphysical network significant. In every aspect of the individual life, there is a possibility of self-transcendence and this is possible through 'aspiration' and 'opening'. These two aspects are sometimes vividly and sometimes indistinctly present. When they are present in an indistinct manner the human individual sinks down to the gross material or the vital level. On the other hand, when mind clearly visualises the goal and aspires to attain it, there is mental evolution. The goal to be envisaged is the attainment of the Divine, which encompasses the whole gamut of existence. Thus the mental is nothing but the distinctive presentation of the Divine. But it is not that distinctness which can comprehend the Divine in its entirety. As the body works with its different organs to establish rapport with the environment and helps the individual in the process of socialisation, mind goes a step forward and elevates the individual from the concrete to the abstract, from the perceptual to the conceptual, from the perception of the manifold to the intuitive insight. Thus in the evolutionary hierarchy, mind is an achievement of the vital. The role of mind in the attainment of the Divine is very significant in the sense that through its conceptual tools it attempts to comprehend the manifestation of the unmanifest or in the upanisadic terminology it comprehends Hiranyagarbha. But mind again is
not the highest achievement, since through the conceptual network it only dissects reality, in the opinion of Henery Bergson. However, there is an aspiration for ascent. The aspiration, for which mind plays a significant role, transforms the vital man to a spiritual man.

The two levels of existence mentioned above, are confined to the earthly life. The vital man and the mental man have an immense effect upon the earth-life. They carry humanity forward from the mere human animal to the present status of man. The vital man lives but does not exist as the word existence has a special flavour not connotated properly by the word 'lives'. It implies many things. It is not merely living vitally or gratifying one's vital desires. The change that occurs to the vital man is a mechanical change, which consist of mere repetition and reproduction. In the words of Sri Aurobindo,

vious, for there it does not perish such constant reproduction is the only possible material immortality; Self-preservation, Self-repetition, Self-multiplication are necessarily, then, the predominant instincts of all material existence. 

"for life always seeks immortality; but since individual form is impermanent and only the idea of a form is permanent in the consciousness that creates the universe, for there it does not perish, such constant reproduction is the only possible material immortality; Self-preservation, Self-repetition, Self-multiplication are necessarily, then, the predominant instincts of all material existence."
It is remarkable to note here that Sri Aurobindo innovates the idea of material immortality through in its ordinary sense immortality means 'perpetual' or 'without dislocation'. This requirement is quite difficult to comprehend in case of material existence. Sri Aurobindo successfully manipulates this concept in order to justify the continuity as well as the significance of matter in the cosmic process.

According to him again;

The characteristic energy of pure Mind is change and the more it acquires elevation and organisation, the more this law of Mind assumes the aspect of a continual enlargement, improvement and better arrangement....

Thus the distinction between the vital existence and the mental existence is that while the vital is purely mechanical and confined to the organism or its reproduction process, through the mental aspect alone the individual attempts to expand and enlarge its scope. Thus existence takes a shape in the mental aspect of the individual though in the true sense of the term existence does not acquire a complete meaning at the mental stage as Sri Aurobindo sees it. It awaits another development which can be called as the achievement of the mental. Thus there is an evolutionary urge from the mental to the
spiritual in order that existence is to acquire a total meaning.

Sri Aurobindo remarks:

The characteristic law of Spirit is self-existent perfection and immutable infinity. It possesses always and in its own right the immortality which is the aim of Life and the perfection which is the goal of Mind.18

In the words of Prof. D.P. Chattopadhyaya:

Interested in evolving the higher planes of existence, including the Supermind, Nature cannot remain long an indifferent spectator and a silent witness to the defective and myopic endeavour of mental Man. Man is under an intrinsic, i.e., natural, obligation to discover the inner harmony underlying the struggle and strife of the material and the vital planes of existence, and to shape his own life in the light of that harmony. If man becomes exclusively concerned with his own mental or rational conflicts and fails to see the light of harmony and to be guided by it, Nature intervenes. The sovereign rules of Nature ultimately overrules the autonomous rules of Matter, Life and Mind.19
While discussing the process of evolution of the human individual from matter to spirit, two important concepts arrest our attention. These are perfection and harmony. What does perfection mean, particularly in the context of Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution? Considered from the standpoint of the Bhagavad Gītā, perfection lies in performing one's own duty in the station to which one is confined. This is the concept of 'Svadharma' in the Bhagavad Gītā. The word perfection also stands for excellence. A perfect action is an excellent action. But what sort of perfection is sought by Sri Aurobindo in the context of the concept of social progress and how can this perfection be attained at all? So far as his metaphysics is concerned, perfection lies in finding one's own self. The idea of finding one self needs further clarification. Moreover, the idea of Divine perfection, which is so much glorified by Sri Aurobindo also deserves scrutiny. If perfection consists in finding one's own self, what is the meaning of Divine perfection? How does the Divine finds itself? According to the Idealist thinkers like T.H. Green and F.H. Bradley etc; perfection or finding one's own self lies in self-realisation i.e., to realise the universal self in the individual self. This idea has been emphatically mentioned in Isāvāsyā Upanisad. Taken in this sense self realisation is nothing but the expansion of the self. It is the total development of the personality orientated towards the realisation of oneness of the limited self.
with the universal self. This is the real development of personality. In the words of Sri Aurobindo 'one must cease to be the surface personality and become the inner person, the purusa'.

Thus perfection means finding one's own self which further means the expansion of the self as the Isāväśya Upaniṣad says,

When to the man of realisation all beings become the very self, then what delusion and what sorrow can there be for that seer of oneness?

The concept of inner harmony which was talked of by Professor D.P.Chattopadhyaya becomes relevant here. One can not talk of the realisation of the self, as speculated by the Upaniṣad, unless one does not understand the law of internal harmony and discovers that harmony which underlies the struggle and strife of the material and vital planes of existence. The realisation that there is internal harmony makes it easier to expand the self or to attain perfection. This is the spiritual life according to Sri Aurobindo. This understanding won't be possible in the vital and mental planes of man. It can only be possible when one transcends the conflicts of the vital and the mental existence.

If this is the individual perfection, what does Divine perfection mean? Is the Divine in need of perfection
at all? And again it will be merely a jugglery of words if we talk of Divine perfection, since Divine itself is perfect. However, to bring clarity to the idea, one has no way out then to fall back upon the views of Sri Aurobindo. According to him, perfection is self-existent and immutable infinity. This self-existent perfection which is the model of 'perfection' itself is different from the law of pre-established harmony of Leibniz. Sri Aurobindo does not talk of certain inscrutable Natural laws. He visualises an inexpressible infinite existent, which is nothing but the harmonious existence and self-existent perfection. Realisation of this harmony or Rta, as the Vedas view it, is the attainment of Divine perfection. Hence attaining Divine perfection is not attaining a new status altogether.

If perfection is self-existent and there is an internal harmony, the question would be, how does the individual take part in the eternal perfection? This is a crucial problem. If it is said that the human individual participates in the infinite perfection, the further question would be what is the nature of this participation? Is it like participating in a dinner party, as has been discussed by John Hospers in connection with the problem of the universals? Is it like participating in a fun fair in the company of others? Reflection on Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics would reveal that it is not like participating in a dinner or enjoying a fun-fare. The human individual
stands mute and a silent spectator at the state of attaining perfection. No doubt, at the level of vital and mental existence, the vision of the individual being myopic he is also silent. But this silence speaks of one's inability to comprehend Divine play. But when one talks of attaining the spiritual height it means understanding the inner harmony of Nature and to make oneself fit to understand this. This is also the state of mute silence on the part of the individual, as he is in a state of speechlessness due to the realisation of his own limit. Hence it is not participation in a figurative sense, it is rather the application of one's intelligence, comprehension and self-knowledge to realise the harmony, to inculcate it and to avoid disturbing the balance of Nature.

But what is this harmony which has been visualised here? The metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo distinctly shows that it is a harmony of the material, the mental, the psychological, the ethical and the spiritual aspects of men. In other words, it is the harmony of the bodily action, the decision, the preparedness and self-transcendence.

It is significant to note here that in drawing a metaphysical model of the spiritual existence, Sri Aurobindo carefully avoids the dichotomy between pravrtti and nivrtti, between enjoyment and renunciation. Pravrtti
or enjoyment which is a part of the logical geography of the vital existence, as pravrtti is a vital urge, is not the final word for the vital itself. However, the claim of the vital can not be lost sight of, as it is the very core of human existence. Similarly, as an alternate metaphysical model, renunciation (Sannyāsa) can not be accepted as the absolute model. 'Sannyāsa' or withdrawing from active life is necessary for achieving mental and spiritual excellence. But if it means the complete rejection of the vital existence or withdrawal from it then it would loose its social implication. However, Sri Aurobindo's integralism is different from the karma-Sannyasa of the Bhagavad Gītā according to which, Sannyāsa in karma, is the model of spiritual life. On the other-hand, according to Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual is not different from the vital. It is not the renunciation from the vital, rather the realisation of perfection in the vital, which is the model of the spiritual life.

Critical estimate:

Sri Aurobindo's concept of man, particularly his account of man's position in the scheme of the infinity, appears to be a utopian hypothesis in the sense that it is impractical in nature. As such it is open to serious objections. At the outset, one can distinctly mark an undercurrent of hard determinism flowing in the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo. It has been discussed earlier that
according to him, individual enjoys the freedom granted by Nature alone. If man is determined by the inscrutable laws of Nature then the question of the individual enjoying freedom will raise many eyebrows of the serious students in philosophy. In fact, the stigma of determinism always poses a threat to the realisation of freedom. On the other hand, if human freedom is denied, then the whole spiritual scheme of Sri Aurobindo will fall like a house of cards. This is the paradox of freedom. It has raised enormous problem particularly while considering the claim of the hard determinists.

Sri Aurobindo's theory of evolution, which is the bed-rock of all his metaphysical endeavours, rests on two important concepts like ascent and descent or evolution and involution. As it appears, he combines the scientific and the metaphysical approach to the problem here. It is quite intelligible to say that there is a gradual process of development of Nature which may be called as an evolutionary process, but it is quite unintelligible to say that no evolution is possible without involution of the Divine. Again the introduction of the very concept of 'Divine descent' is open to serious objection. From the scientific stand point, this hypothesis will appear to be a mere figurative expression. This problem, particularly the problem of the existence of God has been severely attacked by the scientists, particularly the Naturalists.
A host of recent-day thinkers have brought to focus the allegation of the scientists against the metaphysician. Viewed from this standpoint Sri Aurobindo's Divine scheme deserves special attention.

Considered from the metaphysical standpoint even the concept of involution is also problematic in character. If at all the Divine is involved in Nature, the obvious question would be, what exactly prompts the Divine to descend? If the Divine, which according to Sri Aurobindo is infinite perfection or perfection as such, what purpose is being fulfilled by descending? Again, if the Divine has a purpose then it would lead to a paradoxical situation. How can the Divine which is beyond all purposes and 'perfection as such' be designated as purposeful at all? Once purpose is attributed to the Divine, then it will limit His infinitude. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

The Divine has nothing that he needs to gain or that he has not. If there is creation and manifestation, it is for the delight of Divine, not for any purpose. The obvious question here would be, if Divine has no purpose at all, how is the concept of the delight of creation intelligible? For the sake of defending his own stand, Sri Aurobindo might argue that he does not use the word 'purpose' in its ordinary meaning. But the question, in that case would be, what is the line of demarcation between the ordinary use of the word and its
extra-ordinary use? In case, such a distinction is admitted, why should one choose the extra-ordinary instead of the ordinary? These are some of the important observations on the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo, which demand serious consideration. In order to avoid these questions, Sri Aurobindo uses the concept of 'Lilā' or game to accommodate the concept of Divine involvement and descent in his conceptual framework. But while considering his concept of Lilā one must discuss it in the context of Bhakti Literature. That is, the meaning of the concept should not be discussed bereft of its own context. In his defense against the metaphysical objection, which according to him, is more serious than the scientific objection, Sri Aurobindo points out that it is not logically untenable to accept that the Absolute, which is complete and perfect, "by definition" can have no purpose to realise in and through the process of evolution. In that case, evolution comes out to be a mere expression of Divine delight and Sri Aurobindo vindicates his position as a teleologist. His bone of contention is that the word 'purpose' should not be taken in the ordinary human sense. The purpose that guides the process of evolution is "urge of an intrinsic necessity conscious in the will of the indwelling spirit". Again against the objection that all this evolution is a game of Lilā and therefore objectless Sri Aurobindo points out that even if it is a
Lila, it can not be stated as objectless because a game is not played for the sake of playing only but for the sake of enjoyment of others. One is reminded of the Sankhya position where prakṛti evolves for bhoga and apavarga of the Purusa. Thus the play of the Divine is not purely objectless.

However, in spite of this defense from the side of Sri Aurobindo, the problem would be, what purpose does it serve to advocate that evolution is purposive or that there can not be evolution without involution? This is a serious objection raised in a different way by David Hume against the theistic standpoint particularly the design argument regarding the creation and arrangement of the world. Hume's argument is that the explanation of the phenomenal world would be same both by the Naturalist as that of a Theist. That is, the theistic explanation does not serve any special purpose here.

Sri Aurobindo also counters some of the objections raised by the Scientist. The Scientists' standpoint well defended by the Marxists, is that the materialistic explanation being the only plausible explanation of the Universe, the explanation offered by the spiritualist can not enjoy the support of the scientist. Sri Aurobindo counters this position and points out that the scientific explanation may be plausible but it commits the obvious fallacy of begging the question. In his view matter
itself can no longer be explained, by "matter alone, for it does not appear to be self-explained". He further points out that the materialistic substitute for teleology is explanation through chance. If teleology does not offer a satisfactory explanation how can explanation by chance or accident be satisfactory? In this connection, Sri Aurobindo's stand is very clear. He harps on the point that without involution there cannot be evolution at all. In his argument in favour of involution, he says that Nature shows too much order to be a process of mere chance and too much, "free play" of variation to be controlled by any kind of mechanical necessity. In his words:

There must be behind the Necessity or in it a law of unity with a co-existent, but dependant law of multiplicity.

In his explicatory remarks, he points out that, if there is a necessity which compels evolution it must be that there is a consciousness already involved potentially in the inconscient which, at the right time, can break out from its so-called prison. This consciousness is a supramental principle which is also the law of unity upon which the law of multiplicity depends.

However, inspite of Sri Aurobindo's defense against the scathing remarks of the scientists and the metaphysicians as well, it still remains an open
question as to how to understand the presence of the implicit consciousness in the explicit multiplicity? I shall discuss this question later on.

A model for social development:

After considering the different aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought in a nutshell the question we are to consider is what is the alternate model for social progress if the scientific, the teleological and the mechanical hypothesis do not offer any satisfactory account.

Before offering Sri Aurobindo's model of social progress, or for that matter, social development, it is necessary to cast a cursory glance on the different recommendations for social progress offered by the sociologists. The important question which deserves serious consideration is, the question of the physical aspects of social change. Materialism as a school of thought owes its inception to the philosophy of Āryabhaṭa in India and Karl Marx in Western hemisphere. Marx is responsible for giving a dynamic and historical view of materialism. One is not expected within the scope of this dissertation to go into the different ramifications of materialism either of Āryabhaṭa or of Karl Marx. What we intend to emphasise upon is that according to some
sociologists economic progress, scientific development, advancement in technology are responsible for social development. According to Marx's own theory of Change, "the forces of production" are determining element but they are no more than the applications of science and technology and the development of the productive forces.  

As against this, some sociologists emphasise upon the role of culture in the progress of society. While considering the role of culture one has to see whether it necessarily opposes the materialistic forces in building the society. Before we go into the details of the role of materialistic and the cultural aspects of social progress, to which we shall come later, it is necessary to ponder over the type of society we visualise. In this connection Sri Aurobindo's view on social development deserves special consideration. As has been pointed out earlier, the aim of all individuals should be and must become, as man grows conscious of his real being, the formation of society, where all individual man and human race at large may travel towards Divine perfection. The question now would be, what is the nature of this Divine perfection and is it necessary at all? In discussing this important question one has to consider the difference between human perfection and Divine perfection. Moreover, while we talk of Divine perfection, are the materialistic elements which build the bone and
marrow of the society, to be lost sight of? In this connection, Radhakrishnan's view deserves consideration. While it is necessary on our part to explicate his view, in the next chapter it is worth mentioning, at this stage, that he is a champion of spiritual Absolutism, though his spiritualism does not reject matter or the visible word altogether. 30

While discussing the alternate model of social development we shall come across the views of Radhakrishnan in detail along with the views of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. What we are to discuss here is the view of Sri Aurobindo regarding social development. We shall also discuss the concepts like 'Divine perfection', 'Divinity' etc. which are of enormous significance in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. The Sociologists and thinkers concerned with social development admit that social progress occurs either centrally or peripherally. The question is, what is the core of social development, or social progress for that matter? According to Kingsley Davis, the cultural change;

Embraces all changes occurring in any branch of culture including art, science, technology, philosophy, etc., as well as changes in the forms and rules of social organisation. 31
Similarly, David Dressler and Donald Cams point out that,

Cultural change is the modification or discontinuance of existing 'tried' and 'tested' procedures transmitted to us from the culture of the past, as well as the introduction of new procedures. 

It appears from the above that culture constitutes the core of a society and without cultural change, the social change is meaningless, so to say. But the question would be, why should cultural element be so very important for social development? Again, if at all cultural elements constitute a major factor in the development of the society what is the basis of that cultural element which leads to Divine perfection as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo?

Our's is an attempt to bringout a faithful, yet, critical exposition of Sri Aurobindo's view on the subject. It is thus incumbent on our part to closely follow his views. According to him,

Mankind upon earth is one foremost self-expression of the universal being in His cosmic self-unfolding; he expresses, under the conditions of the terrestrial world he inhabits, the mental powers of the
universal existence. The nation or community is an aggregate life that expresses the self according to the general law of the human nature and aids and partially fulfils the development and destiny of mankind by its own development and the pursuit of its own destiny according to the law of its being and the nature of its corporate individuality.

The above view of Aurobindo is self-revelatory in the sense that he speaks of the unfoldment of the Divine in man, which as he speculates, is also reflected in the corporate life of the individual. The gamut of his discussion regarding the social development ranges from matter to spirit, from individual organism to world-organisation, from diversities to world-unity. A study of all these prompts us to scrutinise his conception of an Ideal society, vis-a-vis other-contemporary views.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


15. A Concept used in the Upanishads to express the idea of the ultimate reality, as the soul of the Universe.


17. Ibid., p.16.

18. Ibid., p.16.


20. Isa Upanishad, 7.


