CHAPTER 2

SRI AUROBINDO’S THEORY OF EVOLUTION

‘I am no more a vassal of the flesh,
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the sense’s narrow mesh.
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God’s happy living tool;
My spirit is a vast sun of deathless light’. 1

Among the contemporary humanists of India, Sri Aurobindo occupies a unique place. His realistic approach to the problems of life and his grand vision of human perfectability gave new hope to the then bewildered mankind. Sri Aurobindo was really able to live the kind of life he actually wanted to live. He was able to invade and conquer and bring down the invisible, and to live in the light of truth and catch its rays in his many beautiful poems and his great prose treatises. Romain Rolland regarded him

1 Peter Heehs, The Essential Writings of Sri Aurobindo. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 355
as "the highest synthesis of the genius of Europe and the genius of Asia".²

The Life Divine has been hailed as one of the greatest works of the twentieth century and can be compared to St. Augustine's The City of God, St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologica and Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya on the Brahma-Sūtras. The philosophy of The Life Divine is also know as 'Realistic Advaita' as contrasted with the idealistic advaita of Sankara. Of course, Sri Aurobindo, whose philosophy is in tune with Upaniṣadic thinking, believes in Saccidananda – Bliss - Existence - Consciousness – as the ultimate truth. But the real import of the term Realistic Advaita, according to him, is that this creation is the manifestation of that one reality and, therefore, the manifested world as well as all that has become is as real as Brahman. So the idea that the individual is a separate unit is quite foreign to his philosophy. Savitri is a mystic poem, a combination of Upaniṣadic and Kalidasa's styles. Savitri reminds one of Dante's Divine Comedy.

Savitri is represented in the poem as an incarnation of the Divine Mother. In it we find the attempt of Aurobindo to portray the flight of thought as it takes off from the normal intellectual plane and sweeps across the illumined, intuitive and over-mental regions, finally disappearing, bound for the ultimate. The central idea of the poem, which is the transformation in the self, is brought out as the ascent of consciousness to the supramental level.

Evolutionary development in modern thought is that all growth in the world is an evolutionary development, because it establishes a vital link with the result of the past and promotes a harmonious rather than an exclusive growth. It is particularly relevant to a situation where an appearance of the higher form fulfils the law of evolutionary development when it modifies the lower without destroying its essential qualities and upgrades it to its own level. The law requires that all that appears on earth, even if it is unearthly; must become part and parcel of earth nature.

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3 Sri Aurobindo describes the soul’s evolution through the character of Savitri. The human in Savitri seeks the Divine; for that, she weds Satyavan.
Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is a combination of both eastern and western thought. S.K. Maitra writes that this meeting is not mere handshaking, but there is a real synthesis of these two types of thought in him. There is even something more, a fulfilment of what each of them aims at but has not been able to realise. The west aims at a fuller realisation of the evolutionary and cosmic character of its thought. But it is hampered by its intellectualism and its existential outlook. What it requires is the acceptance of a spiritual standpoint. Similarly, Indian thought is spiritual. It must break its narrow walls of individualism and acquire a dynamic and cosmic character. There lies its fulfilment.

Aurobindo, in his philosophy, is greatly influenced by the western scientific theory of evolution and its positive attitude to the material world. He discovered both the elements in the Śivā and the Śakti forms of the Advaita entity. The influences of these traditions (sampradāyās) are seen both in his sādhanā (religious practice) and in his philosophy. The Tantrās interpret Māyā not as mere illusion but as a positive entity. As the Sakti (energy) of Śivā, which
evolves, without affecting the purity of Śiva, the Jiva (individual) is essentially identical with the absolute (Śiva). The world is real and is the result of the transformation (Parināma) of Śakti. Corresponding to the evolution of matter out of Śakti, there is involution of it into Śakti. Śakti is identical with Śiva as heat is with fire and is therefore conscious like Him. This process is cyclic. Here, Aurobindo introduces the modern conception of evolution of life and mind out of matter. The involution of matter into Śakti, which is the reverse form of the original evolution, is the same as the evolution of the forms of life and mind out of matter. Matter transforms itself into the higher forms of life and life into mind and consciousness. The mind is that of the Jīva, above which there are three minds, the Overmind, the Supermind and Saccidananda, which is the highest ideal to be realised. The realisation of its place at the disposal of man, then becomes identical with Śiva. The latter’s Śakti (power) with man becomes Superman. Superman is not an egoist, self-assertive and aggressive, but one who has surrendered his own ego (ahāmkāra) to Śiva and merged himself in the Absolute. He is a self-ruler, but does not strive to stamp his own individuality upon the world.
Sri Aurobindo and his disciples have also rooted the philosophical theory of ascent and descent in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s conception of Īśvarokti and Bhāvokti. Plato’s concept is one of ascent from the sensuous and phenomenal world to the archetypal world of ideas, culminating in the realisation of the idea of the good, and a descent to the lower world again for the sake of reforming it. This idea is symbolically represented as the ascent from the cave to the sun and again the descent from the realm of the sun to the cave.

According to Sri Aurobindo, man’s destiny lies in understanding the real purpose of nature and in trying to realise it in his individual as well as social life. Man is the child of Nature. Only the mother nature will teach him what he will do and how he will do it. But for that, man must understand the mother, not only in her surface appearance, nor even in her appearance as energy, but also in her inmost essence of the Consciousness-Force as Saccidānanda. Here the theories of Darwin, Lamarck, Herbert Spencer, Samuel Alexander, Whitehead, Lloyd Morgan, Bergson, Hegel and Croce have stopped short of the whole evolutionary
truth. All these serve the useful purpose of emphasising one or more aspects of the working of nature. But none of these sees her in all her powers and majesty. Sri Aurobindo by his yogic method of direct and integral oneness with nature has been able to unravel the mysteries of her aims and methods.

The philosophy of evolution has assumed a special status in the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This theory envisages an altogether new concept in modern times. The Absolute or the Saccidānanda is the primary principle involved in this evolution. Evolution is not a simple ‘nisus’. It is its dual aspect of ‘evolution’ and ‘involution’. There are two processes or movements, the downward and the upward. The upward process is called the Evolution and the downward the Involution. The future tree is present in the present seed. This process of evolution is both linear and horizontal. Saccidānanda, in the delight of involution, plunges into the realm of ignorance in order to create the world. This plunge into ignorance is possible because of the ability of the Absolute. Through cit-śakti to manifest self-variation, self-limitation and self-absorption, the Absolute places itself under limitation and performs Tapas in order to manifest the world. This involution is presented in Figure 1. This figure shows that

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4 Mira Richard, a French lady. Each saw the other as an incarnation of the divine.

5 Tapas literally means heat, heat of incubation of conscious-force.
Involution

Existence (Sat)  
Consciousness - force (cit)  
Bliss (ānanda)  
Horizon A  
Supermind  
Horizon B  
Horizon C  
Matter  
Life  
Psyche  
Mind  
Higher Mind  
Illumined Mind  
Intuition  
Overmind

Saccidananda descends or involutes to the Supermind (Horizon A), downwards into mind, psyche, life and matter. The Supermind is absolute knowledge and power (Vidyā). It is the knowledge of reality and the future. It is in unity with Saccidananda. Because of the make-up of involution, the Supermind passes from a stage of knowledge to a stage of ignorance (Horizon B) in its downward movement to mind. Mind is avidyā. Involution moves on by a process of fragmentation which eventually reaches the level where fragmentation is complete and unity is lost. The last stage is matter and is a state of inconscience (Horizon C). In this last state of inconscience, the spirit is completely lost.

Evolution is the soul of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. His theory of evolution is the pivot round which his whole philosophy moves. Evolution is the movement which is the reverse of the movement of the involution or creation. It is because of the descent of the spirit into matter, life and mind, that these can ascend to the higher regions of the spirit. Evolution 'is a sort of home-sickness of the spirit'. The spirit has descended into the lowest particle of matter. Therefore, matter seeks to evolve into something higher. Similarly, there is a descent of the spirit into life, and consequently life must ascend to something higher than itself. The highest principle so far evolved is mind. But evolution cannot stop with
mind, for mind is not its last word. It must move further up and come to the next stage. But when it does so, there will be a radical change in the nature of the world. For, with the emergence of the Supermind, the process of evolution becomes a process through knowledge. The previous process was through ignorance. Evolution is a conscious movement. A graphic presentation of the involution-evolution process is given in figure 2. Evolution begins from the inconscience upward in the ignorance through life, psyche, mind, higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, overmind to knowledge (Horizon B). Here, Aurobindo’s thought can be seen to approach its climax. That evolution has a definite goal, and that goal is a divine life on earth. This is Aurobindo’s most optimistic scheme of evolution.

The cosmic and integral evolution of Aurobindo means that all the lower grades of consciousness have to rise to the status of the spirit. None of them is rejected at the appearance of the higher principles. All the grades of reality are taken as different poises of it. Integration has occupied an important place in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Maitra observes that the usual view of evolution,
which looks upon it as a mere ascent from the lower grade to the higher grade, may be compared to the march of an army which advances without keeping its line of communication with the base intact. We may compare Sri Aurobindo’s conception of evolution to the march of an army which advances with the whole force, keeping all its lines of communication perfectly intact. In this way, we find that the conscious force or Cit Śakti, which is the power of spirit itself, lifts all the lower grades to the higher. Even in the lowest forms of matter, the Absolute is present as an indwelling principle—as the Gīta puts it, a dweller within the heart, hrddēṣe arjuna tiṣṭhit—pushing it continually forward. In this course of lifting the lower grades to the higher grades of consciousness, matter is transformed into life, life into mind, and mind into supermind, and the process continues till the fulfilment of the destiny of man.

“Evolution is not material but spiritual in nature.”

“...The Godhead moves in this field modifying each web of things

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separately in many ways... one, he presides over all wombs and natures; himself the womb of all, he is that which brings to ripeness the nature of the being and he gives to all who have to be matured their result of development and appoints all qualities to their workings.¹⁹ The ultimate aim of man’s evolution is the divine life on earth. It is not svarga or paradise beyond. It rather leads towards the realisation of man’s integral unity with the world and the supreme spirit in an eternal divine life to be lived on earth. According to Sri Aurobindo, this world with all its things and beings is the play of self-concealment and self-revelation of the divine. It is the Saccidānanda, the formless, who has assumed a form and condescended to manifest himself through two essential appearances, the universe and the individual. Superconscience gradually descended, step by step, into material nature. It concealed itself; put veil upon veil round its superconscience till it disappeared completely under the mask of inconscient matter. Now it is undertaking the journey back. Thus, all is ultimately reduced to space and time. Evolution is the complexification of the less complex. Evolution leaves the lower and pushes towards its goal,

⁹ Peter Heehs, Op.Cit., p. 204
which is deity. Deity is thus the next higher empirical quality to mind, which the universe is engaged in bringing to birth. Deity will evolve from mind by complexification. This complexity is discussed by Alexander in three senses: deity as being God; deity as the quality of divinity, and deity as the next higher being. The phenomenon of evolution includes a concept of progress and telos. Progress means that each grade of cosmic manifestation is turned by the process of rebirth into a means for the individual soul or psyche entity to manifest more of its concealed consciousness. Each life becomes a step in a victory over matter by a greater progression of consciousness in matter. Matter is a means for the full manifestation of the spirit. Progress, then, is the movement from matter through life and mind, to spirit. The spirit is the telos toward which evolution is progressing. Evolution is governed by five immortal truths: God, light, bliss, freedom and immortality. Thus, the philosophy of evolution is a long tale of progress and perfection. “Evolution is nothing but progressive unfolding of spirit out of the density of material consciousness and the gradual self-revelation of God out of apparent animal being.”

10 The Hour of God, Op. Cit. p. 15
"* As the lower stratum advances sufficiently in complexity and configuration, a higher form emerges.

* This higher, inert matter, life or consciousness, as the case may be, when it appears does not reject the lower but takes it up as it were and transforms it radically.

* While the old and the lower is thus taken up and transformed, the new and the higher seeks to expand its own domain and to prepare itself for the emergent next –to-appear."\textsuperscript{11}

The evolution may be compared to the triple eye of Lord Siva. Among his three eyes one is turned upward, another is turned downward and the third one is turned inward. In the same way, the cosmic evolution is concerned with upward and downward movements and our soul is concerned with the inward movement. The life must attain the status of mind and supermind respectively. Because Brahman or the Absolute is already present in them in a latent form by its descent. The supermind has the intrinsic awareness of both the supra-relational and the supra-rational

\textsuperscript{11} Ripusudan Prasad Srivastava, \textit{Contemporary Indian Idealism}. (Allahabad: Leader Press, 1973) p. 82
aspects of the Absolute. This becomes more evident when the evolution proceeds in its individual and cosmic aspects from the stage of mind to the higher levels of consciousness and existence.

Evolution is a triple character, of widening, heightening, and integration. The lower principles become wide, open, receptive, sublime, refined and adaptive when it has to ascend to a higher state. For instance, matter must undergo a process of complication, self-differentiation, subtle and intricate organisation in order that the higher principle, life, may evolve in it. If matter remains a simple, hard, and therefore, an un-adjustable stuff, life can never evolve in it. The process of widening of a principle means its increasing organisation, expression and differentiation. May be, evolution is capable of higher principles from it and within it as a base. Secondly, evolution is a process of heightening of the force of consciousness to higher and higher grades. Evolution is in essence a heightening of the force of consciousness in the manifest being, so that it may be raised to the greater intensity, from matter into life, life into mind, from mind into spirit or until the conscious-force becomes explicit and fully manifest.
Integration of the new higher principle with the lower principles is the third essential feature of evolution. Evolution is not confined to the manifestation of higher principles in abstraction from the lower evolved beings. But it establishes a larger field of life in which the power of the new principle may have sufficient play and room for its emergence.

Matter is the first manifestation of Brahman in space. It is the substance and stuff of the universe. Matter is the substance itself, whether subtle or dense, mental or material. It is the form and body of the spirit, and was created to be a basis for the self-expression of the spirit. Matter, as conceived by Aurobindo, is different from the notion of matter in the system of Democritus, Leucippus, Hobbes, Marx or the Materialists, but is similar to that of Leibneiz. There are different types of matter according to Aurobindo. “First, matter is conceived as a physico-chemical entity. Secondly, vitalised matter becomes the receptacle of living organisms. When matter responds to the vibrations and movements of a mental organism, it is regarded as mentalised matter. Lastly, there is the spiritualised matter when it serves the purposes of
spiritualised gnostic individuals.”\textsuperscript{12} Thus ultimate reality behind matter is spirit. The \textit{Upaniṣads} say that matter is \textit{Brahman: annam brahmeti vyajanat}. Even modern physics proves that matter is not dead. It is, in fact, the form of energy. Einstein’s theory of relativity established the truth that matter can be converted into energy. “The mathematical relation between the energy ‘\(e\)’ and the mass ‘\(m\)’ is given by the famous equation \(E = mc^2\) where ‘\(c\)’ is the speed of the light. Einstein proves that the mass of any body (matter) depends upon speed (energy) with which the body is moving. Energy thus supports matter and matter embodies energy.”\textsuperscript{13} Matter evolves the principles of life; first there is the plant life, then animal and man.

Just as matter is a hidden form of the Absolute, so is life a hidden form. Life, like matter, proceeds and evolves through the widening, heightening and integration process. Life is universal, all-pervading and imperishable. Disintegration and renewal, status

\textsuperscript{12} Vishwanath Prasad Varma, \textit{The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo} (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1960) p. 16

and change, birth and death, are all different forms and organisations of the same life. There is no essential difference in the life in plant, animal or man. As life evolves, it passes through four stages of development. The first status of life is characterised by a dumb inconscient drive as that in plant. This drive is not free, but controlled by the universal movement of which it is a part. The second status of life is the desire of an animal. This desire is inherent in life and pushes it forward on the ladder of perfection. But this status is limited because its capacity cannot fully possess universality. The third status is that of love, mental will or knowledge in man. This status seeks to possess and to be possessed, to receive and to give. Out of love, the fourth status and perfection of life is realised. The fourth is a sign of perfection. It is conceived of as the pure and full emergence of the original will.

There are three stages in the evolution of life: material life, vital life and mental life, the subconscious, the conscious and the self-conscious.

The third emergent category in the process of evolution is mind. Just as matter is a subordinate power of the existence aspect
of the supreme reality, life is a subordinate power of its energy aspect. Then mind is a subordinate power of the supermind. The divided mortal mind, parent of limitation and ignorance and the dualities is a dark figure of the supermind. Mind is an intermediate power of consciousness with matter and life below it and the superconscient heights above it. Sri Aurobindo elaborates and says: "Really speaking two things matter; one, the spirit that is dynamic above; the other, the life here which is the field of expression of the spirit. Mind, emotion, and other psychological activities are only intermediate terms. Mind is more or less a channel and so is heart. The body is merely the mould."\textsuperscript{14} He further remarks: "We mean by man, mind imprisoned in a living body. But mind is not the highest possible power of consciousness; for mind is not in possession of Truth, but only its ignorant seeker. Beyond mind is a supramental or gnostic power of consciousness that is in eternal possession of truth. This supermind is at its source the dynamic consciousness, in its nature at once the inseparably infinite wisdom

\textsuperscript{14} A. B. Purnani, \textit{Evening Talks with Aurobindo}. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1961) P. 74
and infinite will of the divine knower and creator.” Mind helps the process of the universal manifestation but it is never given in Aurobindo’s system the vast creative potencies, as in the systems, of subjective idealism, like those of the *Vijñavādi Buddhists*, Berkeley and Fichte.

Sri Aurobindo is a true lover of humanity. The concept of Man in his philosophy is multi-dimensional. Man is endowed with evolutionary destiny and his aim on earth is no less than divine life. Man is a conscious medium. His consciousness evolves into ever new levels from generation to generation and even from moment to moment. Man is endowed with an embodied soul apart from illumined consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo, there will be no fulfilment of cosmic nature without the conscious existence of man on earth. By discovering the truth of his being, man can win over himself by all means. To Sri Aurobindo, both will and reason are imperfect truths. They always remain as surface realities. Life operations are altogether different from mental actions. Man is

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capable of projecting his conscious being into other domains or planes. "The earthly evolution will have taken its great impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression, of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and far-off promise."16 Sri Aurobindo is viewed as the first prophet of the age to focus on the complexities of the being of man. Aurobindo deals with the problem of human nature and man's ultimate destiny, in a more practical way rather than in a speculative way.

Aurobindo's superman is neither a mere emergent a mere deification of the 'asura' in man, a strong flowering of the ego like that of Neitzche's, nor it is like the deity of Alexander which cannot raise man to the higher status, nor the absolute idea of Hegel. But it is the waking of divinity lying within man. Modern existentialism may be described as an endeavour to attain the innermost core of human existence in a concrete and individual way. The existence advocated by Sri Aurobindo is more than finite.

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existence. It is the finite, the absolute, that will gradually express in infinite forms in the course of evolution. The two are “intertwined and interpreted, and so vitally connected with each other, that they do not yield real and full meaning and fruitful result unless they are read and studied in the light of each other.”

The aim of Aurobindo’s Yoga “is to bring down the power of absolute in order to harness it to the service of man and establish the kingdom of God on earth.”

Man is a complex creation. In fact, he is the most complex creature that has been created. He is the richest in content of consciousness. But, like other creatures, man too has his own native law. Man has a special kind of nature, Svabhāva and Svadharma, within whose limits he can extend and develop. Man is under the power of his own becoming and it is this becoming that forms the basis of future man. Because of his freedom, he is an ethical being. The aim of ethics for the human is to prepare him for

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further evolution. The inmost aim of ethics is to lessen and tame, purify and prepare it to be fit instruments of the vital, physical and lower mental life, so that they may be transformed into higher mental and eventually the supramental harmony. “The human or higher mental phase of evolution has within itself three grades of human mind. These are the physical man, the vital man and the intellectual. The lower phase of the human is the physical man or mind. The physical man is one who is an extrovert. The physical man is he who attaches most importance to objective things and to his outer life: he has little subjective intensity or inner existence and subordinates whatever he has of it to the greater claims of exterior reality. The second and middle phase of the human is the vital man or mind. The nature of the vital man is adventurous, artistic, poetic and he is a champion of causes. The vital man is the man of desire, the kinetic individual who lays great stress on material existence. He strives for experience, longevity, life-power and life-affirmation. At his highest he becomes the breaker of bonds, the seeker of new horizons, the disturber of the past and present in the interest of the future. This man of intelligence is not the highest in the evolutionary scheme. He is merely the point at
which the man of the present is at the moment. But, for us, these three phases seem to be only psychological types that have just happened to develop. They are the steps of man's evolution towards his own self exceeding.\footnote{L. Thomas O' Neil, Op.Cit., p. 53 - 54} For man to evolve upward within his own being and ascend through the three states, physical, vital and intellectual man, he must be given the opportunity to do so. This opportunity is present in the action of rebirth and \textit{karma}.

The man we know with our senses is not the complete man. We do not even have the ability to know ourselves completely. We are composed of three aspects. According to Aurobindo, they are the surface or the outer self, the inner self or the \textit{caitya puruṣa} and the divine self or the \textit{Jīvātman}. The surface aspect of our being constitutes our waiting existence and our empirical self. It works in man's cravings, emotions, desires, power, happiness and knowledge. The inner self of our being is the representative of the \textit{Jīvātman} in the psychophysical organism. This is the aspect of the self that stands behind mind, body and life. Unlike the surface aspect of our being, the inner self is not concerned with material or
bodily existence only, but it utilises its self for the fulfilment of higher ambitions and goals. This status is equivalent to that of the Sthitaprajña described in the Gītā. The third aspect of the Jīvātman is conceived by Aurobindo as the spark of the divine. This is the upper aspect of man and transcends the process of ascent, whereas the inner self gives the picture of man in the process of evolution. The question of birth and death can be raised only in connection with the outer aspects of our being. Because the inner self is the subtle body and is beyond birth and death, it carries man to his spiritual goal, thus expediting divine transformation.

In the Taittiriya Upaniṣad, man is seen in several layers of reality and significance: annamaya, prāṇamaya, manomaya, vijñānamaya and ānandamaya, corresponding to the physical man, vital man, mental man, supramental man, and the wholly realised man resting in the Saccidānanda consciousness. The great crossing has to be from the aparārdha hemisphere of the first three to the parārdha hemisphere of the last two. Tracing the course of human civilisation, the human consciousness exhausts the possibilities of matter. It deals with life and with the world on the basis of matter -
annam brahman. In the next stage, man finds existence as the pulsation of evolving life. From eternal matter he seeks eternal life and this is the stage of prāna brahma. The next stage is that of the self – expressing and self – finding man. It is manomaya brahma. From this stage we reach the stage of spirit eternal and call it ayamātmā brahma. This leads to the spiritualization of the soul. Then the human race itself would live like spiritual individuals, not in the collective ego but in the collective soul.20

Aurobindo’s integral philosophy has very well synthesised the inner and outer being in all its perfection. Thus, his concept of integral being is invariably rooted in spirituality and divinity. Man at one end is one with the best of creation and at the other end he is one with the divine and the absolute. Man’s evolutionary transformation is represented in figure 3. When man ascends from psychic to spiritual, then to supramental, the breach between his being and the absolute will no longer exist.

Sri Aurobindo points to four main lines which nature has followed in her attempt to open up the inner being – religion,

20 Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle, op.cit., p. 316
Man's Evolutionary Transformation

Saccidananda Unmanifest → Saccidananda Manifest

Knowledge → Ignorance

Horizon A
Supramental

Horizon B
Overmind

Intuition Mind

Illumined Mind

Higher Mind

Mind (Man)

Transformation
Supramental

Spiritual Transformation

Psychic Transformation

Thomas O'Neil, p.99
occultism, spiritual thought and an inner spiritual realisation or experience. The first three are only ‘approaches’ whereas the last, the inner spiritual realisation and experience, is the decisive avenue of entry. First, if man is to transcend the present ignorant state, he must know himself and discover and utilise all his potentialities. For this, man is required to know his inner or subliminal being, that is, his inner, mental, vital, physical, and psychic being. The field of occultism helps the individual in his journey towards divinity. Secondly, subject to death and disease as man is, he must try to know the powers behind the universe that control and guide it. This is the aim of religion. The purpose of religion is to link the human with the divine and, in so doing, sublimate the thought, life and flesh, so that they may admit the rule of the soul and spirit. But man’s knowledge must rise above the creeds and dogmas of religions in order to correlate itself with the principle of things and the observed truths of the universe. This object is fulfilled by philosophy, and in matters relating to the spirit it is spiritual philosophy, to which man must turn for more and more illumination.\(^2\) The entire chain of evolution is divided into two

hemispheres, the higher and the lower. A line is drawn between the higher half of the universe of consciousness (*parārtha*), and the lower half (*aparārtha*). The higher half is constituted of *sat*, *cit, ananda, mahas* (the supramental), and the lower half of mind, life and matter. This line is the intermediary. The Overmind, though luminous itself, keeps from us the full indivisible supramental light. The two hemispheres meet at the junction of mind and Supermind. The rending of this veil, the ascent of the lower into the higher is the crux of the problem: the *parārtha* of *saccidananda* and the *aparārtha* of our everyday existence, which is one of egoistic isolation, ineffectiveness and misery. The subliminal behind the scenes express the communication between the prison-house of egoistic individuality and the infinite freedom of cosmic universality. The link-principle is therefore described as truth-consciousness or even as supramental truth-consciousness. It operates between the unitarian and indivisible *saccidananda* above and the analytic and dividing mind or mental activity below. This mediating Supermind is both the child of *saccidananda* and the parent of the Mind. By its poise of identity, it has total
comprehension, and by its power of differentiation it precipitates the process of the mind.

The first step towards the Supermind is the higher mind. The higher mind is no longer of mingled light and obscurity nor of half-light, but a large clarity of the spirit. But, at the stage of the higher mind, things altogether change. There is no dependence on second-hand information. It is a luminous thought-mind, a mind of spirit-born conceptual knowledge. All awareness emerges from the original identity. Apart from this cognitive aspect of the higher mind, there is also the aspect of will, of dynamic, effectuation of truth. In its cognitive aspect the higher mind gets a view of truth, and in its effective aspect it secures an all-round achievement regarding truth. The feelings and actions that spring from the higher mind become the vibrations of a higher wisdom. It changes the whole being with new and superior consciousness, lays the foundation of change and prepares it for a superior truth of existence. It is able to tap the resources of logic by moving beyond logic to the knowledge which pre-exists in the absolute. The illumined Mind is a state of spiritual light. The illumined mind
having acquired the spiritual light gets at the very heart of truth. This mind works through vision. "A consciousness that proceeds by sight, the consciousness of the seer, is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker. The perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought. It is a spiritual sense that seizes something of the substance of truth and not her figure. Sri Aurobindo speaks of three methods of acquiring knowledge. They are knowledge of identity, knowledge by intimate direct contact, and knowledge by indirect contact. The third level of mind is the intuition mind. Sri Aurobindo points out the fourfold power of intuition: the power of revelatory truth-seeing; the power of inspiration or truth-hearing; the power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervention in our mental intelligence; the power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth. \(^{23}\) The next and the final step preceding the gnostic being is the Overmind. The Overmind consciousness is the highest state of consciousness in the lower hemisphere. The overmind is also

known as ‘inferior supermind’. It is the child of the supramental consciousness, the parent of division and ignorance. Intuitional change can only be an introduction to this higher spiritual mind. In order that the ascent and descent of the Overmind can be made possible by an opening into the cosmic consciousness, a vertical ascent towards the summit light and a vast horizontal expansion of consciousness into some totality of the spirit is necessary.

Ignorance is not a negation but a power of knowledge. The divine consciousness manifests itself as knowledge. But, for some divine purpose, it so restricts that knowledge that the phenomenon of ignorance is produced. Ignorance is the dynamic action of the divine consciousness. It is an outcome of self-forgetting concentration of consciousness. The divine consciousness deeply absorbed in its creative work becomes oblivious even of its own nature. This gives rise to ignorance. Thus ignorance is nature’s purposeful oblivion of the self. It is just like the experience of a player who forgets everything else and even himself while in the playground. The present egoistic ignorance is only a temporary event during the terrestrial journey of the soul.
According to Aurobindo, there are seven types of ignorance. They are: “The Original Ignorance: This is the ignorance of the Absolute who is the source of all being and becoming. The cosmic ignorance: The ignorance of the spaceless, timeless, immobile and immutable self due to which we mistake a part of the creative movement for the whole truth of cosmic existence. The egoistic ignorance: We regard our finite egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality as our true self and look upon everything other than that as not self. The temporal ignorance: We regard this short span of life in a short-lived body as the beginning and end of our being. We are utterly ignorant of the fact that our soul personality has journeyed through births and deaths through millions and millions of years or even more. The psychological ignorance: This is our ignorance of the subliminal parts of our being. We wrongly take our surface mind to be our total existence, while in fact there are also such parts of our mind as superconscient, sub-conscient, intra-conscient, and circum-conscient. The constitutional ignorance: We are ignorant of the true constitution of our becoming. We take mentality, vitality or physicality either jointly or separately, for the true principle of our
life and the principles which determine the aforesaid principles by their occult presence. The practical or pragmatic ignorance: This springs naturally from all types of Ignorance. We fail to acquire the true knowledge of life and remain confined, to the tortuous ways of fleeting joys and everlasting sorrows, rare successes and frequent failure.”

The sevenfold knowledge will mean the cancelling of the sevenfold ignorance by the discovery of what it misses and ignores. A sevenfold revelation within our consciousness. The absolute is the source of all being and becoming. Our true self is spaceless, timeless and immutable, and this creation is the manifestation of the self. The psychic being which an eternal portion of the divine is is the real centre of our individualisation and is immortal, persisting in time beyond death. There is a greater existence behind the surface. Our surface composed of our mind, life and body is merely a fraction of the occult or subliminal parts behind it. There is a true harmony of our thought, will and action. Finally,

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our nature may change into a conscious expression of the truth of
the integral spiritual reality."

Before the emergence of the gnostic being takes place, the
evolution has to undergo a triple transformation. They are the
psychic, spiritual and supramental transformations. There must first
be the psychic change, the conversion of our whole present nature
into soul instrumentation. Along with that there must be the
spiritual change, the descent of a higher light, knowledge, power
force, bliss, purity into the whole being, and even into the lowest
recesses of the life and body.

The spiritual transformation takes place as a result of the
descent of the light and energy from the higher grades of spiritual
existence. It is the first ascent just after the state of psychic
transformation. So it is free from all kinds of limitations of mind.
It raises man to a higher stage of evolution but its knowledge is
modified by mind, life and body. Illumined mind is a luminous
inner force. It is a power which makes the transformation more

rapid than that of the higher mind. In this, reason gives place to vision. At this stage, the personality is integrated into a higher state which is followed by the descent of knowledge, power and bliss. The knowledge and power of illumined mind also suffers from mental modification and distortion. The evolution goes a step ahead or to a higher spiritual plane called intuition. Intuition is a link between mind and supermind. It is a result of the meeting of the subject consciousness with object consciousness. When the subject penetrates into the object, intuition sparks. Reason and sense organs conceive the appearances of things only, whereas intuition penetrates into realities underlying these appearances. Mind often gets intuitions coming from the higher level but it does not get them in their pure form. Aurobindo says that a pure intuition is a rare occurrence in our mental consciousness. It modifies intuition whenever it is projected in the mind, because Mind perceives it according to its own law of perception. And consequently intuition loses its purity.”

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26 Bhagwant Singh, *Comparative Philosophy*. (Saharanpur: Manglik Prakashan, 1986) p. 159
The third and last stage of evolution is the supramental stage. Psychic and spiritual transformations may be said to be the preparatory stages for the supramental transformation. The preparation from lower stages and the grace from above are the essential requisites for the radical transformation of the world process into divinity. In all the four stages of evolution from mind to supermind, evolution proceeds through ignorance. But in the final stage of transformation, evolution proceeds through knowledge. So, the descent of the gnostic being effects radical change in the process. The difference between Puruṣa and Prakṛti is overcome and there becomes a complete harmony between them. They are there, as two-aspected single truth in the supermind. Unlike Hegel, Sri Aurobindo does not believe in the process of continuity but in the emergent process of evolution. So his process of evolution is also named emergent evolution.

As a result of the supramental descent, the spiritual being is transformed into the gnostic being. But even after this stage, the evolution will not stop. It will continue till the destiny of man, the complete divinisation of the personality, is reached. Evolution,
now, will continue through knowledge and not through ignorance. The gnostic being is completely free from all types of imperfections and contradictions. There is an endless and unceasing flow of the powers and bliss of *Saccidānanda* in the gnostic personality, just like the endless flow of the river Ganges from the Himalayas. No doubt, after taking a dip in the river, a man becomes one with the river but it does not mean that he is ruling out the possibility of his swimming across the river. In the same way, a man, even after getting the stage of the gnostic being, does not rule out the possibility of his more and more divinisation. Consequently, it is argued that the evolution continues till the destiny is reached, so long as man is involved in the finitude of his existence. Here, Sri Aurobindo’s view radically differs from that of Sankara. Sankara asserts that in the state of *aparokṣānu bhūti*, the reality is completely realised and then, no further step is required. The life of gnostic beings might appropriately be characterised as a Superhuman or Divine life. The life of a gnostic being, carrying the evolution to a higher supramental status, might fittingly be characterised as a divine life. For, it will be a life in the divine, a life of the beginnings of a spiritual divine light, power and
joy manifested in material nature. But it surpasses the mental human level.

A gnostic life is a beautiful harmony of all the three aspects of the psychic, namely, cognitive, conative and affective. A gnostic being has not only the will of action, but also the knowledge of what is to be willed and the power to effectuate his knowledge. Moreover, like the Karmayogin of the Gīta, he works dispassionately without any search for any fruit or result. Everything here is the finding “of the self by the self in the self.”\(^{27}\) The gnostic evolution at a certain stage must bring about a completeness of this reversal and of this power of self-protection which will fulfil the claim of the body for immunity and serenity of its being and for deliverance from suffering. A spiritual ṇānānḍa can flow into the body and inundate cell and tissue; a luminous materialization of this higher ṇānānḍa could of itself bring about a total transformation of the deficient or adverse sensibilities of physical nature. The main contribution of Sri Aurobindo to the theory of evolution is that he does believe not merely in the

\(^{27}\) Ripusuda Prasad Srivastava, Op.Cit., p 123
liberation of the soul or spirit, but also in the liberation of man's psycho-physical organisms. In the state of complete freedom not only spirit but also the body of man will cease to be governed by the laws of nature; and the body will manifest freely the joy and power of the spirit. The quest of life for growth, power, conquest, possession, satisfaction, creation, joy, love, beauty etc. is realised to the fullest extent in the gnostic personality. This is the destiny of man for which no pessimistic view need be assumed.

The gnostic being is distinguished by certain well defined characteristics. He is the highest development or the consummation of the spiritual man, a fully integrated being. His body, life and mind have been thoroughly transformed and made automatically responsive to the demands of the spirit. As against the normal human being who is trapped within the four walls of egoistic ignorance, the gnostic being is constantly self-aware of all the trinities of the spirit and lives in a consciousness, not of narrow individually but of a vast universal spirituality. The gnostic being feels the presence of the absolute in every centre of his consciousness. He realises all beings as his own selves. Above all,
he becomes the manifestation of the power of the world master. His own life and the world life would be to him like a perfect work of art. It amounts to the creation of a cosmic and spontaneous genius infallible in its working out of a multitudinous order. In his consciousness, individuality does not in any way interfere with its universality. And universality does not interfere with its transcendence. The gnostic individual would be in the world and of the world. He would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separative individuality. A gnostic individual may cultivate and utilise occult powers through the practise of yoga. At the supramental level, these powers would be quite natural. But the gnostic being aims at the establishment of a divine kingdom on earth. And for this he seeks to create a community of perfected individuals like himself.  

The credit for introducing the conception of the ‘superman’ goes to Nietzsche. But Nietzschean superman is quite different from Sri Aurobindo’s gnostic being. Nietzsche emphasises that the superman will be different from other human individuals not in

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28 ibid., 120 - 121
kind but in degree. The superman of Nietzsche will overtop the normal human level by all-enlarged personality. In other words, the superman will be a colossal individual, an exaggerated and magnified form of the existing nature of human beings, with all its force, vitality, intellect, and consequently ignorance also. But this type of superman will be no better than an \textit{asura} or \textit{rākṣasa}. He might be, in the words of Aurobindo, a blonde beast. Aurobindo's superman is also different from the \textit{Jīvanmukta} of Śankara. Sri Aurobindo's superman or the gnostic being is a self-realised being, a building of the spiritual self, an intensity and urge of the soul, and the deliverance and sovereignty of its light and power and beauty. It is 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 humanity by the revelation of the divinity is striving for that birth from within. There are grades of the superman. These gnostic beings are egoless, perfect, devoid of ignorance. They are omnipotent, omniscient and divine beings. In the hierarchy of superman, some are more divine than the other. The evolution of the supermental
beings continues till all of them become Saccidānanda itself. The superman of Sri Aurobindo removes ignorance from mankind and supramentalises all the living being.

The birth of a superman helps a large number of gnostic beings to emerge and they engage themselves in redeeming and opening up the spiritual consciousness and power of all the individuals. This leads to salvation of all, or cosmic salvation. As the Bhagavad Gītā says, material nature can be transformed into divine nature, the aparāprakṛti into the parāprakṛti. Sri Aurobindo is opposed to the idea of individual liberation as an exclusive aim for two reasons: “the desire for personal salvation, however high its form, is an outcome of ego: it rests on the idea of our own individuality and its desire for its personal good or welfare. If his inexorable removal through the very act of illumination is the law, then the world is condemned to remain eternally the scene of unredeemed darkness death and suffering.”

A line divides between the supermind and the overmind, but it permits a free transmission. The Overmind is the junction where the two hemispheres of the evolution meet. The overmind has no integrity of supermind, yet it embraces the totality. In Sri Aurobindo’s conception, the experience of *parabrahma* is beyond knowledge, even self-knowledge. But the infinite, *sat-cit-ānanda* knows himself. Sri Aurobindo calls the self-awareness and world-awareness of God, the supermind. It is in the supramental consciousness that all knowledge of the world, its laws and processes are contained. We can say that the supermind is the source, the material, the guiding knowledge and the actualising will of the universe. It is through the supermind that God manifests himself as individual self, as the soul in the world and as mind, life and body. The supermind is a concentration of the being, the force and delight of existence of *sat–cit–ānanda*. It is infinite consciousness turned into the faculty of infinite knowledge; it is infinite consciousness turned into the infinite will. In a way the supermind is the central category of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual philosophy. “The Supermind is a knower and creator of its own truth, the mind of man only a knower and creator in the half-light
and half-darkness of a mingled truth and error, and creator too, a thing which it derives altered, translated, lessened from something greater than and beyond it." According to Aurobindo, the supermind is in its very essence a truth, a consciousness always free from the ignorance which is the foundation of the present natural or evolutionary existence and from which nature in us is trying to arrive at self-knowledge and world knowledge and a right consciousness and the right use of our existence in the universe. Sri Aurobindo further says: "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 creation of a supramental race and supramental life – this must indeed be the full result of its action in Nature." "The Supermind as at its source the dynamic consciousness, in its nature at once an inseparably infinite wisdom and infinite will of the divine knower and creator. Supermind is superman; a Gnostic supermanhood is the next distinct and

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32 ibid., p. 65
triumphant evolutionary step to be reached by earthly nature.... supermind is something beyond mental and his limits; it is a greater consciousness than the highest consciousness proper to human nature.”  

The nature of the supermind is always the same, a being of knowledge proceeding from truth to truth, creating or rather manifesting what has to be manifested by the power of a pre-existent knowledge, not by hazard but by a self-existent destiny in the being itself, and therefore inevitable. Sri Aurobindo says: “Supermind at its highest reach is the Divine Gnosis, the wisdom – power, light – Bliss of God by which the Divine knows and upholds and governs and enjoys the universe.”

According to Sri Aurobindo, there are three layers of the supermind corresponding to the three activities of the intuitive mind. “First is what I call the interpretative supermind. I call it Interpretative because what is a possibility on the mental plane becomes a potentiality on the supramental plane. The interpretative supramental puts all the potentialities before you. It shows the root

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34 ibid., p. 49
cause of events that may come true on the physical plane. When intuition is changed into supramental value, it becomes interpretative supermind. Next comes what he calls the Representative supermind. It represents the actual movements of the potentialities and shows what is in operation. When inspiration is changed into its supramental value then it becomes this representative supermind. Finally there is the Imperative supermind, which corresponds to revelation. It is always true as nothing can stand against it. It is knowledge fulfilling itself by its own inherent power. 35 The fundamental nature of this supermind is that all knowledge is originally knowledge by identity and oneness, and it makes numberless apparent divisions and discriminating modifications in itself. Still all the knowledge that operates in its workings, even in these divisions, is founded upon the sustained and guided by this perfect knowledge by identity and oneness. The second character of the supermind is that its knowledge is real because it is a total knowledge. The third character of the supermind, arising from the difference, which brings us the practical distinction between the two kinds of

knowledge, is that it is directly truth-conscious, a divine power of immediate, inherent and spontaneous knowledge. The supermind contains all its knowledge in itself. It is the highest divine wisdom in eternal possession of all truth and even in its lower, limited or individualised forms has only to bring the latent truth out of itself.

The perception which the old thinkers tried to express was that all knowing was in its real origin and nature only a memory of inwardly existing knowledge. The supermind is eternally and on all levels truth-conscious; it exists secretly even in mental and material being surveys and knows the things, even on scurest, of the mental ignorance and understands and is behind and governs its processes because everything in the mind derives from the supermind and must do so because everything derives from the spirit.  

The supermind is called by Sri Aurobindo “Real Idea.”

By giving it this name he wants to “emphasise the fact that it is a power of conscious force expressive of real being, born out of real being, and partaking of its nature, and neither child of the void nor


a weaver of frictions. It is a conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of its own imperishable and immutable substance."38 Sri. Aurobindo says that there are seven suns of the supermind. They are:

The sun of supramental truth – knowledge – power originating the Supramental creation. Descent into the *sahasradala*.

The sun of supramental light and will – power transmitting the knowledge – power as dynamic vision and command to create, found and organise the supramental creation. Descent into the *ājñā cakra* the centre between the eyes.

The sun of supramental word, embodying the knowledge – power, empowered to express and arrange the supramental creation. Descent into the throat centre.

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38 ibid., p. 177
The sun of supramental force dynamised as a power and source of life to support the supramental creation. Descent into the navel centre.

The sun of Life – Radiances (power – Rays) distributing the dynamics and pouring it into concrete formation. Descent into the penultimate centre.

The sun of supramental substance – energy and form – energy empowered to embody the supramental life and stabilise the creation. Descent into the *Mūlādhāra*. The supermind is the creator. It creates, sustains and upholds the world. It is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, all-inclusive, all-pervading and the lord within.

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After the supramental transformation and the emergence of
the gnostic being, the evolution does not come to its close. Now
onward the evolution will be in knowledge and bliss. The
evolutionary process is the process through which that which is
secret and hidden becomes manifest and open. Saccidananda
through the process of involution, involves itself into the
supermind. And since the evolution is the reverse process of
involution, the supermind will evolve into Saccidananda. The one
and the many, immobility and movement, formlessness and form,
are under the logic of the infinite different attributes or views of the
absolute. When man receives this knowledge, he can look
backward to the mystery of involution and look forward to the
future of evolution and glimpse the cosmic spiritual evolution of
the spirit becoming itself. The Un-knowledge knowing itself as
Saccidananda is the one supreme affirmation of Vedanta: the
ultimate progenitor and sustainer of all is Brahman, manifesting
himself as Saccidananda, the true unity within Brahman of sat or
existence, cit or consciousness, and ānanda or bliss and the power
or force inherent in each manifestation.
Sri Aurobindo equates the nature of the universe with the nature of Reality. In other words, creation follows from the very nature of existence or being. Thus the problem of creation is the problem of existence. As pure existence, Brahman is unknowable to sense perception. He is unknowable because sense perception is limited or conditioned knowledge. It is conditioned by the aspects of space, time, and motion. It is undefinable and inconceivable by finite and defining mind. Also it is ineffable by a mind created by speech; it is desirable neither by our negations neti-neti, for we cannot limit it by saying it is not this, it is not that, nor by our affirmations, for we cannot fix it by saying it is this, it is that, iti iti, and yet though in this way unknowable to us. It is not altogether and in every way unknowable. It is self-evident to itself and, although inexpressible, yet self-evident to knowledge by identity of which the spiritual being in us must be capable. Brahman is the basis out of which becoming and movement are manifested. Brahman is the ontological base of existent beings. Aurobindo bases this concept in Vedāntic thought. Therefore, non-beings and beings are not opposites. Being transcends such mental constructions as non-being, the absolute Brahman of advaita as
well as the void or zero of the Buddhists. The way man arrives at knowledge of Brahman as pure existence is through the spirit and higher states of consciousness and intuition which are produced by evolution. Aurobindo’s treatment of intuition as being a higher form of knowledge is directly related to the Upaniṣads, Śankara, Rāmānuja and other Vedāntins.

The second part of the trinity of Brahman is *cit* or consciousness force. The word ‘consciousness’ means the forces that are inherent in creation and existence. Absolute consciousness, then, is creative force, which creates matter as a form of spirit. Matter is spiritual in its essence and is created by *cit*. Consciousness is rather a self-aware force of existence, of which mentality is a middle term; below mentality it sinks into vital and material a movement which Aurobindo calls the subconscient. It is one and the same thing which organises itself differently. Consciousness has a fourfold potential. The first is the normal consciousness, which is predominantly mental; it is the sphere comprising movements of which man is usually and habitually aware. The second potential is that of the inner consciousness. Its
characteristic is that the consciousness here is no longer trenchantly separative and individual, narrowly and rigidly egoistic. Certain more dynamic movements such as distant influence and guidance and controlling without any external means, well known in all yogic disciplines, are various manifestations of the power of this inner consciousness. Aurobindo calls the supreme form of superconscient consciousness-energy, the supermind. There are, of course, other layers and strata of super-consciousness leading up to the supermind which are of various potentials and embody different degrees of spiritual power and consciousness. As the superconsciousness is a consciousness-energy in height, the inmost consciousness is a consciousness-energy in depth, the deepest depth, beyond or behind the inner consciousness. As a matter of fact, it is this inmost consciousness that serves as the most powerful link between the higher and lower forms of consciousness, between the superconscient and the subconscient or inconscient. In the devotional language of the mystics that the inmost consciousness is the divine child, the superconscient is the divine father and the inferior consciousness is the great mother (magna matre). The inner and the outer consciousness are the field
of play and the instrument of action as well, of this divine trinity. Man is a bundle or dynamo of energy and this energy is nothing but the force of consciousness.

The manifestations of Existence in the world occur in the three aspects of Atman, Puruṣa, and Ṣvāra. These are self, conscious being or spirit, and God. Also, the power of consciousness appears to us in three aspects. In the first, it is the self-force of that consciousness conceptively creative of all things, which is māyā. In the second, it is prakṛti, which is nature or force, made dynamically executive and which works out all things under the witnessing eye of the conscious being. In the third, it is the conscious power of the divine being or śakti, which is both conceptively and dynamically executive of all the divine workings. Together, these three aspects and their powers base and comprise the whole of existence and all nature and reconcile the apparent disparateness and incompatibility of the transcendent, the cosmic universality and the disharmony of our individual existence.

The three aspects and their powers join to form the relation: ātman, māya, puruṣa-prakṛti and Ṣvāra-śakti. Aurobindo
sees the world as māya because it is not the essential truth of infinite existence, but a creation of self-conscious being. It is a creation not in the void, not a creation in nothing or out of nothing, but a creation in the eternal truth and out of the eternal truth of self-being. The second unity of the aspect with its power is puruṣa prakṛti; puruṣa is being behind the world, it is calm and central. It supports prakṛti which is active-becoming or the play of nature; purusa is the ground upon which prakṛti builds. The third unity is that of ṭīvara-śaktī. The ṭīvara in Aurobindo’s philosophy is supracosmic as well as intracosmic. ṭīvara is that which exceeds, inhabits, and supports all individuality. These three aspects and their powers taken together give a complete view of the relation of existence and consciousness force. The unity of these aspects in the universe shows itself as one Being and one Reality which, as self, bases, supports, and informs the universe. As puruṣa experiences the universe, ṭīvara wills, governs, and possesses the universe. Māya, prakṛti, and śaktī create and keep the universe in motion. The third part of the trinity of Brahman in ānanda or bliss. This knowledge of Brahman as ānanda is contained in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad. The Brahman is bliss. For truly, beings here
are born from bliss. When born, they live by bliss and into bliss; when departing, they enter. It is secret delight by which all things are created and sustained in existence. \textit{Ananda} in the world manifests itself in three ways: beauty, love, and delight in all things. \textit{Ananda} plays a very important role in Aurobindo’s philosophy because it is by delight that all things are created and sustained in the universe. He says “Delight in Existence, Delight is the secret of creation, Delight is the root of birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases.”\textsuperscript{40} That is the manifestation adopted by the divine to cure and transmute human ills-himself becoming a man, taking upon himself the burden of the evil that withers life and working it out in and through himself. Something of this truth has been caught in the Christian view of Incarnation. God sent upon earth his only begotten son to take upon himself the sins of man, suffer vicariously for him, pay the ransom and thus liberate him, so that he might reach salvation, procure his seat by the side of the Father in heaven. In the Hindu mythology, the \textit{avatār} means

\textsuperscript{40} R. N. Sharma, \textit{Contemporary Indian Philosophy}. (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors,1991) p. 133
a new revelation and the uplift of human consciousness into a higher mode of being. Aurobindo lays equal importance on both the aspects. The idea of ānanda is “to divinise the human, immortalise the mortal and spiritualise the material.” Its force of consciousness is capable of throwing itself into many forms and with an endless variation. Its self-delight is capable of movement, of variation, of revealing in the variety of forms. The object of the creative play of force is to enjoy its own self-movement and self-variation.

Together, sat, cit, and ānanda with their powers form Saccidānanda, which is, for man, the divine being. The divine being, Saccidānanda, is at once impersonal and personal. It is existence and the origin and foundation of all truths, forces, powers, existences, but is also the one transcendent conscious being and the all person of whom all conscious beings are the selves and personalities. For, he is their highest self and the universal indwelling presence. Saccidānanda, as the divine being,
is the creative power of the universe. Creation occurs when Brahman realises of variations and potentials and actualities himself in the creative plunge of delight. This is to say that delight is the ‘way’ of creation. It implies that Brahman is absolute perfection and is complete in him. The creation originates from delight or spontaneous joy. Just as the ecstatic dance of Śiva is an act of spontaneity, so is the act of creation. It is a creation from Ṣālā rather than creation from need or desire. Aurobindo holds that the absolute is beyond stability and movement as it is beyond unity and multiplicity. Brahman then, creates the world because of ecstatic bliss, not from reason. The question arises: if the world is the Ṣālā of Brahman and is a manifestation out of the bliss of Brahman, where then does evil arise. Evil exists as that which is a negation of the extrinsic elections of things and hostility toward the welfare of anything.

Aurobindo recognizes the great truth that the east has given to man; that the ultimate reality is Brahman. He holds that the supreme Brahman is that which in western metaphysics is called the Absolute. This Absolute is one which takes all relativities in its
embrace. It is the consciousness that knows itself in all that exists, the force that sustains the power of God, Titan, and demon. He is the force that acts in man and animal and in the forms and energies of nature. He is the ānanda which is the secret bliss of existence and the ether of our being, without which nothing could live. Brahman is the inner soul in all, who has taken a form in correspondence with each created form. The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognise not only eternal spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which he weaves constantly his garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of his mansions. It is this essential indeterminability of the absolute that translated itself into our consciousness, through the fundamental negating positives of our spiritual experience, the immobile immutable self, the Nirguṇa Brahman, the Eternal without qualities, the pure featureless one existence, the impersonal, the silence void of activities, the non-being, the ineffable and the unknowable. On the other side it is the essence and source of all determinations, and this dynamic essentiality
manifests to us through the fundamental affirming positives in which the absolute equally meets us; for it is the self that becomes all things, the *Saguna Brahman*, the eternal with infinite qualities, the one who is the many, the infinite person who is the source and foundation of all persons and personalities, the lord of creation, the world, the master of all works and action; it is that, which being known, all is known; these affirmatives correspond to those negatives.

The sons of death have to know themselves as the children of immortality. It is this account that the human birth can be described as the turning point in the evolution, the critical stage in earth-nature. But this transformation of the 'sons of death' into the 'children of immortality' is to be effected by the divine *sakti*. But the interference of the divine *sakti* depends on the inward craving on the part of the individual himself. And it is here that the usefulness of *Yoga* is realised. *Yoga* paves the way for the dawn of divinity. The *Yoga* of Sri Aurobindo has for its object nothing else than this the preparation of the field, so that when the supramental light descends, it may find the soil fit to receive it. Aurobindo was
inspired by Sad Guru Brahmananda and Yogi Sri Vishnu Bhaskar. His integral yoga is a unique synthesis of all the main tenets of yoga. At the same time, it distinguishes itself from the ‘Yoga in particular’. The main endeavour of Yoga has been to realise mukti or transcendental freedom by rising above the limitation of the body, life and mind, which are supposed to be made of some alien or illusory stuff, and to rest permanently in that state of freedom on some lofty summit of spiritual attainment. But, contrary to this, the aim of the integral yoga is not simply the attainment of transcendental mukti or freedom, but an active participation in the creative joy of the divine and co-operation with it in the divinisation of the empirical world and of the whole embodied life here and now.

Rebirth is an inevitable part of cosmic evolution. It is in the Supreme Being that the supreme consciousness is to be realised. The eternal spirit has individualised itself in man for the delight of a novel experience. The individual purusa puts on a body in order to work for the gradual development of life, mind, and ultimately the spirit in this physical existence. Thus, the
putting on of a body, or being born, is a necessary assumption for the working of the divine plan, for the complete manifestation of the divine puruṣa on this earth. It is in man that the divine will first discovers itself, but one birth is quite inadequate for this purpose. In fact, repeated births are necessary to work out man’s release from ignorance and limitation. Rebirth, then, is an opportunity to work out man’s destiny, a complete manifestation of the spirit in a transformed body.

Although science has prepared mankind for an age of wider culture and made impossible the return of the barbarian mentality, it has encouraged another kind of barbarianism. That is barbarianism of the industrial, the commercial and the economic age. As Sri Aurobindo said, science has given rise on the one side to a large rationalistic and altruistic humanitarianism; on the other side, it has justified a goalless egoism, vitalism, vulgar will to gain power and success. It has drawn mankind together and given it a new hope, and at the same time crushed it with the burden of a monstrous commercialism. The development of emotion is therefore the first condition of a sound human evolution. "Unless
the feelings tend away from the body and the love of others takes increasingly the place of the brute love of self – there can be no progress upward. It is therefore not the struggle for life, or at least not the struggle for the life of others which is the most important term in evolution – for our children, for our family, for our class, for our community, for our race and nation, for humanity."

The Buddhist elevation of universal compassion, karunā, and sympathy (vasudhaiva kutumākam, ‘the whole earth is my family’) as the highest principle of action, the Christian emphasis on love, indicate this dynamic side of the spiritual being.

We may summarise Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of evolution, thus:

Sri Aurobindo conceives of divine evolutionism. In evolution, the spirit is gradually revealed, manifested, unfolded. Evolution is the process of spiritual manifestation in the cosmos. Creation and evolution differ from each other. Creation means that the Spirit involves itself in matter, and evolution signifies the manifestation of divine consciousness, existence and force.

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Evolution is a double process of ascent and descent. Evolution is a double process in which the lower principles ascend to unite with the higher principles and the higher emergent reality descends in the former ones. Transformation is an essential feature in evolution. When the higher principle descends in the lower ones, there takes place transformation in them. The higher emergent reality exerts pressure in the transmutation of the lower ones. Sri Aurobindo propounds the emergent and creative theory of evolution as against the continuous, logical and idealistic process of evolution in Hegel that mind is incapable of visualising the entire process of evolution. Secondly, evolution is discontinuous and creative. Mind cannot perceive and predict the future course of cosmic evolution. In Hegel, we find continuity in evolution, the stages of which are determined by his reason. Just as, when we press an electric switch and one by one in serial order, the bulbs get lighted, if so arranged and pre-determined, all the realities spring up one by one in course of cosmic evolution. Sri Aurobindo says that the ways of divine evolution are not open to the mind. Unless a human being is identified with the divine, the cosmic evolution remains unknown to him. Sri Aurobindo discards the
triadic course of evolution in terms of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It is polyadic and free. The divine evolution cannot be chained to the limited triadic movement. The process of evolution is the divinisation of the individual and the universe. The world is rushing for its union with God. God has no purpose except the joy of expression that creates the universe. God has not to fulfil himself because He is ever perfect; He is eternal truth, and bliss. The cosmic evolution is, for God, like a game. Sri Aurobindo speaks of three stages of cosmic evolution. The inconscient, the ignorant and the supramental are the three stages of the evolution of nature. At the beginning of creation we have only the material elements, earth, fire, water, etc., and there is no life or consciousness in them. At the second stage, we have the evolution of life. The stage of evolution that nature has reached to-day is that of mind. Mind is the highest emergent principle of nature. We talk of reason, science, industrialisation, rational culture, civilisation and mechanisation, because reason is the highest principle of working in man.

The stage of mind is not of knowledge. Man is still ignorant. His intellect is weak, finite, limited, erroneous and
ignorant. This is the stage of ignorance. But cosmic evolution will lead nature from ignorance to knowledge. The ultimate destiny of evolution is the conversion of entire nature into divine nature or God Himself; this is the evolved and imperfect cosmos. It has death, disease and torture. The perfect divinised universe will have only bliss, joy, perfection, immortality and divinity explicit on earth.”

Sri Aurobindo established his organisational centres around the world and his followers have now launched a programme of a Massive Auroville City at Pondicherry. This is to sustain the religious preachings of Sri Aurobindo and his doctrines of reality and Yoga, and continue to guide mankind at home and aboard. An ongoing religion and forward-looking faith cannot rest upon the sandy foundation of fear and threats; it must be grounded on the sound pillars of knowledge, reason and discovery of truth. The Upaniṣadic thinkers declared this phenomenon by saying that ‘satyam sraddhayam juhuyat’ that is the faith must be accompanied by truth-seeking. And Manu had proclaimed that yastarkena

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anusaddhatte sa dharmam ved netarah, one who follows the path of reason discovers the faith not by blind following. And the Buddha warned his followers against following him blindly and said 'test every proposition for yourself'. In contrast, the compassionate Sri Aurobindo arduously thinks and reasons for his disciples and offers a well-planned path to liberation.