4.1 Introduction

The Absolute is the reality of all things. This Absolute is Existence and all the things in this world including finite selves are made of divine Existence. Everything in this world are involved forms of divine Existence. The Absolute is one and contains the infinite possibility in itself. The one Reality manifests in the many. So the One is all.

The use of the 'finite selves' in Aurobindo's work is not found. In general 'finite selves' mean the human being. Aurobindo conceives the manifestation theory, and for him the world is an unfoldment of the supreme Reality. Absolute is real, so its form also must be real. So Aurobindo tries to demolish the fundamental dualism of matter and spirit. Matter is the lowest manifestation of Reality. Aurobindo conceives different grades of manifestation. We have in between matter and spirit the principles of life, mind, higher mind, illumined mind, intuition, over mind, and super mind. Matter evolves into life, life into mind, mind into higher mind and finally into the Divine life. The world is a formation of finites out of the infinite, so the duality between spirit and matter is only apparent, not real. So Aurobindo’s philosophy may be described as integral non-dualism. So from the standpoint of Aurobindo’s philosophy, all the things of this world can be considered as finite selves. To Aurobindo man is a potential God. Now we are subject to ignorance, but within us there is a spark of divinity. Therefore it is our duty to take steps to awaken the real nature of our existence so that we can reach at the centre of divinity, which is within us.

The ancient scriptures of our country, the Vedas and the Upanishads are carried with these the faith in human destiny and his terrestrial existence. So the divinity in the universe and human being is not a new concept for Aurobindo. Aurobindo has revived the ancient teaching of Vedas and Upanishads.
An attempt is made in this chapter to depict a brief description of finite selves (human beings) and to discuss whether Aurobindo was really successful in attempting to describe the relation of one, infinite, eternal being with many, finite, becoming and to show that the Absolute and finite selves both are real.

4.2 Man (human being)

Man is the greatest among finite selves. Man is a miniature representation of the universe. Human existence is a limitation of bodily form, and the constituent of human existence are matter, life and body. According to Aurobindo man is a spirit using the mind, life and body for an individual and self manifestation in the Universe. So the question arises: Is there any relation of these terrestrial principles with the supramental one, because the constituent principles of the lower hemisphere are looked upon as like opposite in nature to Consciousness – Force, self-delight and truth consciousness. We call the world and the human being as undivine. So the emergence of superman or Gnostic Being is the culmination of the evolutionary process. And on the other hand according to Aurobindo the world of things are the manifested forms or modes of supreme Reality. The world and the individual beings are made of the Divine substance. The unitary Sachchidananda, embraces all reality and innumerable real selves are always conscious of their essential unity with Sachchidananda. The psychic being which is a portion of divine consciousness inhabits our mind, life and body. This distinction of divine and undivine has no significance for the impartial eye of a universal vision but has an insistent value from practical and relative point of view. Human beings make this distinction because they are struggling under the pressure of life and the difficulties of our conduct amidst its immediate problems and perplexities.

But as we know the Divine manifests Himself as this world. The Human beings and the things of this world are mutable forms or modes of Absolute substance which is immutable and imperishable. The so-called undivine is only an aspect of Existence- Consciousness-Force-Bliss and the creative aspect of Sachchidananda. Therefore the distinction between divine and undivine is only apparent, not real. The terrestrial principles of human existence are by some instrument separated in consciousness from the Absolute, but it is possible for man in his terrestrial life to attain complete divinity since human beings and its constituent principles have their
source in the ultimate Reality. Mind, life and body are the terrestrial principles of human existence and mind is the highest of these principles.

4.2.1 Mind

Mind is an evolute of the Supermind. So it is a subordinate of Supermind. Due to the separation from the Supermind it brings limitations and divisions. By nature mind measures, cuts, limits things into separate elements, whereas the whole is indivisible. It perceives, conceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession. It perceives the qualities of objects but fails to comprehend the things in-themselves. So mind can give us only a partial knowledge not universal knowledge. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself in a foreign element, where it can neither perceive nor conceive nor sense. Mind is an instrument of ignorance. So, the mind is only a subordinate and not really a separate working of the real idea. This separation between mind and Supermind in due to

"An exclusive concentration of consciousness, an exclusive self-identification of the soul with a particular temporal and spatial action which is only a part of its own play of being, it starts from the soul's ignoring the fact that all others are also itself, all other action its own action and all other states of being and consciousness equally its own as well as the action of the one particular moment in Time and one particular standing-point in Space and the one particular form it presently occupies"¹

The starting point of ignorance therefore is the exclusive concentration of consciousness. For ignorance mind fails to understand that all minds, all lives are form of one substance. The world is a flux of changes but mind considers this as fixed unit of matter. Mind does not know though it tries to know, the essential knowledge of Reality which remains unknown to it. Though mind perceives and possesses the finite objects it does not know the pure-existence, infinite consciousness. The identification of mind with body, all limitation and division is the result of ignorance. All these represent the surface of mind which can be ascribed as corporeal mentality. It is the illusion of body. But mind can be transformed to the supreme truth, because it is a fall from Supermind. The fall of mind from Supermind, means limiting avidya proceeds from the individualized soul considering everything from its own standpoint.

¹
Behind the corporeal mentality there is a life mentality, which is the illusion of life. This subconscious mentality enables to know that it is more than body. It is absorbed in and limited by it and identifies its being with life.

"It is still subject to the original act of ignorance by which the individualised soul regards everything from its own standpoint and can see the truth of things only as they present themselves to it from outside or else as they rise up to its view from its separate temporal and spatial consciousness, forms and results of past and present experience."2

For this dynamic mind we possess more forceful action of our surface mind. We can not meet in this stage also the gap in between mind and Supermind due to the fact that life-mentality is not beyond the influence of ignorance.

Behind the corporeal and life mentality there is a reflective mentality which is the pure thinker in us. Reflective mentality sees the world in terms of mind and knows mentality as itself. We sometimes mistake this higher mind for the pure spirit. This pure mentality is also not free from original error of mind because there is still exclusive concentration of consciousness remains. The rending of the veil in between mental and supramental action is not possible in this stage also. So reflective mentality is able to give us a glimpse of truth only. The veil created by avidya between the mental and supramental action is still there, so an image of the Truth is there, but not the Truth itself. With the rending of the veil, it can reach the supramental level.

The creation of mind is due to the self-absorbtion of the Supermind. In the process of concentration the infinite consciousness becomes limited to the finite consciousness; the eternal bliss is limited to apparent happiness. Supermind limits itself in its creation of mind and becomes engage in the limited knowledge and exercise of power. Mind remains unaware of its own existence as it is under the influence of darkness.

Mind itself gets back to the Supermind, because mind has aspiration to regain the unity with Supermind, what it has lost. When mind has transformed and illumined, it begins to have indivisible and all comprehending consciousness. Then mind loses its present status, we perceive the world as itself, we lose the exclusive self-identification and we come to know all as the universal and self multiplied one. So we enable to understand that mind is a subordinate power of truth consciousness. Mind is
not different from Supermind, it has the potency to become Supermind, it can raise itself to the supremely pure stage of truth consciousness. Mind is dependent on Supermind, because it is a final operation of truth-consciousness, so mind can not stand in the absence of Supermind. Mind and Supermind always remain together.

4.2.2 Matter

We generally regard the stuff which is common to all spatial things and which remains unchanged in the midst of changes occurring in these spatial things that is designated as matter. The view of scientific naturalism and dialectical materialism is like this. So they deny all kinds of supernaturalism, and assert that the movement of matter is determined mechanically. All philosophers beginning from the Greeks down to Descartes and Locke in the modern period have admitted the separate existence of matter. In modern philosophy Berkeley was the first philosopher who denied the existence of matter. Locke holds that we directly know the ideas of our mind. But he inferred the existence of matter as being the support of the perceived physical qualities. This matter, according to Locke, is unknown. Berkeley urges that if it is unknown, there is no justification of saying that it exists. To exist is to be perceived. What we perceive are only qualities. But we do never perceive any substratum of these qualities. So what we call matter is only a group of qualities and as a group of qualities is nothing but a group of ideas in the mind. Only reality is mind and its ideas. Berkeley thus dematerialized matter and reduced it to the idea of immaterial mind. But the advocates of dynamic theory of matter resolve matter into energy.

Faraday regard atom as centre's of energy. Modern Physicists like Rutherford Planck, Millikan etc. maintain that an atom is dynamic, the ultimate elements of which are electrical charges. The difference of an atom of silver from that of gold, for example, lies not in their quality, but in the number, arrangement and motion of the units composing the atom.

But in Aurobindo's philosophy we find the idea of the spiritualization of matter. Matter is spirit. Matter is a lower form of spirit. Matter seems to be negation of spirit because it has the characteristics of inertia, inconscience and division. But this opposition is apparent not real.
"Substance is the form of itself on which it works, and of that substance if Matter is one end, Spirit is the other. The two are one, Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realize as Spirit."  

Matter is a form of divine Existence. It is a subordinate power of Sachchidananda. The existence aspect of Sachchidananda takes the form of matter when it involves itself to the phenomenal world. Matter is the form of substance of being. So matter is only a creation. The division between pure-Existence and matter is brought by the action of mind.

The world is an unfoldment of the supreme-truth-consciousness. The spirit descends from pure existence through Supermind into cosmic being. Matter seeks to evolve into life because it is a form of divine Existence. There is a descent of the spirit into matter, so the evolution of matter is possible. So Aurobindo says that both matter as well as spirit is real. Matter as an involved form of the existence of Sachchidananda assumes the form of matter when it subjects itself to this phenomenal action of Sachchidananda.

4.2.3 Life

Life is the dynamic play of a universal Force, which stands as a link in between mind and matter. The foundation of life is matter. As a dynamic movement it builds up forms, and stimulates them to maintain a continual process of disintegration and renewal of their substance. Disintegration of substance means death, so in the death of the body, life does not stop. Only the material of one form of life is broken up to serve as the material of other forms of life. The renewal of substance means maintenance of form. So life and death are not contradictory to each other rather the renewal and disintegration of forms, life and death can be considered as two aspects of same things, two stages of the same life process. Life is an incessant process in which nothing is destroyed, the same soul continues through different birth.

For Aurobindo life is all pervading. Life is everywhere. It may be manifest or unmanifest, evolved or involved. Life is universal and imperishable, only its forms and organisings are different. In the animal, in the plant, in the metal and even in the atom also the life exists. Ordinarily we consider that breathing, movement; eating, feeling etc are the symptoms of life. So when we speak of life we mean the animal life. But a great Indian physicist claim that, if we minutely observe then we find the
response to stimulus is there in metals as in the plant. This is a infallible sign of the existence of life. Aurobindo also says that similar to our liking and disliking, we find in the atom attraction and repulsion. In essence the animal and atom are same as they express a will and a desire, though they are different in appearance. The will and desire is inherent in nature either in the subconscious or in the unconscious forms. When this eternal nature is present in every material atom, it is inevitably present in everything which is the combination of material atom. Life is a manifestation of Consciousness-Force of Sachchidananda. So life attains the essence of will and desire from Consciousness-Force because it is an involute of Sachchidananda. This Force which is fundamentally Cit-Tapas of Cit-Shakti of Vedanta manifests itself as nervous energy in the plant, as desire sense and desire will in the primary animal forms, as self-conscious sense and force in the developing animal, as mental will and knowledge in man. The convenient explanation for the emergence of life is that the life is a descent from above. Evolution of life presupposes the involution of it in matter, because it can not violate the principle of "nothing out of nothing". The occult view of life admits that a pressure from above has assisted the emergence of life here. But this does not exclude that matter is the basis of life. The existence of a life world above the material is not only sufficient for the process of the emergence of life in matter, but also the life plane must exist in the unconscious matter for a later evolution and emergence.

In its revelation from atom to man, life is same in its essence. Life is a universal operation of Consciousness-Force. Three stages are mentioned by Aurobindo in this operation. In the lowest stage it acts subconsciously, it seems mechanical, in the middle stage it acts consciously and in the highest it develops in order to form a mentally perceptible sensation. In the middle stage life is apprehended as distinguished from matter. It is the middle term in between mind and matter. This conscious being work as an intermediate energizing principle. It supports the mutual link between matter and mind. Life provides this means of link in the continual currents of her nerve-energy. In the Indian system the nerve energy is known as prana or life force. This life force is present in every form. In essence the nerve-energy is same for atom to man because it is a universal operation of Consciousness-Force.
4.2.3 (a) Problem of life

Life as a manifestation of Sachchidananda under certain circumstance is infinite and absolute. But the dividing faculty of mind misrepresents this undivided Consciousness Force as manifold Reality, so the world appears as a conflict of opposing truth.

Life takes three appearances one after another. The first is material, second is vital and the third is mental. In the material, superficial action of a submerged Consciousness conceals itself and the form which represents force. As a result the act and form of Consciousness disappear. In the vital the Consciousness gets free in half from its imprisoned state. It shows its vital craving, satisfaction etc. In the third the Consciousness gets wholly free from its imprisonment in the act and form of its own force. This emerging Consciousness is an individual conscious, so it is not master of act and form. By its essence of division it creates opposite truths and arise the problem of life. But man cannot solve this problem due to some difficulties.

The first difficulty is that in the mental stage man appears as a part of universal Force. So he has no knowledge of universality, totality, generality etc. Man wants to know matter, life, mind, world in order to be master of these. Until man finds out the cause of his inner urge he cannot remain satisfied. The secret will of Sachchidananda does not permit man to take rest until man solves the problem of dissatisfaction. This aspiration can be fulfilled only by transforming himself to a divine being.

The second difficulty arises due to the separation in between individuality of man and the universal. For his separation of mind, body, and life man unable to know himself and his fellow-beings. Man tries to acquire knowledge by inference, observations. But true knowledge cannot be attained in this way. Unity with all is possible by the identical knowledge. But mind cannot make us know this unity due to the dividing nature of mental consciousness, this unity with all, and consciousness of oneness can be attained by entering into the Supermind, which brings out unity in diversity.

The third difficulty is the division between Consciousness and Force that is created by the evolutionary process of cosmic existence. As a result matter, life and
mind are divided from each other and works as their own law. The life in order to fulfill its longing is at war with body, and the mind at war with life and body. This clash among the matter, life and body is within the man because these are the constituent of human being. Mind cannot solve this problem. The conflict can be resolved at a level beyond mind, above mentality.

There is not only a division between mind, life and body but these three principles are divided against themselves. So there is a conflict between body with instinctive soul, life with impulsive soul and mind with intellectual soul. An attempt to fulfill the demands of this triple soul a set of opposition leads to ad infinitum. Conscious unity of all diversities is above in the Supermind in which will and knowledge, Consciousness and Force are in perfect harmony.

Man becomes aware of his limitations as he develops into a self conscious being. Man becomes aware of his discord and tries to arrive at unity of his triple constituent principle. But perfect harmony is possible by perfect mind, life and body. This perfection neither can be provided by divided mentality, nor by life and body because these are the frame of mind. True harmony is possible at the level of superconscious, which we attain by rending the veil of ignorance transforming ourselves to the Lord seated within, in which there is a reconciliation of power and knowledge.

4.2.4 Soul

Aurobindo has divided the central being of man into two strataums in his ‘lights on yoga’- the Jivatman and psychic being. The Jivatman is the particle of Sachchidananda. It is the spark of divine and is transcendent to individuality. It is eternal, omnipotent and perfect Reality. The Jivatman is the secret witness, and lies behind the manifestations of individual life. The psychic being is the representative of the Jivatman. It is the deputy of Jivatman. The Jivatman and psychic being are not different from each other. From the point of view of Jivatman we are one with Sachchidananda and as a psychic being we have the individuality in us. Jivatman is the spark while the psychic being is its flame.

The world is an expression of the divine. So the psychic being and Jivatman are forms of the Absolute. But the relation of Jivatman with divine is identical
whereas psychic being and divine related as identity in difference. This interpretation of Aurobindo has the similarity with vedantic formula Tat-Tvam-asi.

The Jivatman is the particle of Sachchidananda. It is the centre of the cosmos. Jivatmans are innumerable. So the centres of spirit in the cosmos are countless in number. Aurobindo describes that Jivatman manifested here as the individualized self or spirit. Jivatman as a form of Divine is inherent in all created beings. Jivatman is pure being and untouched by the changing movements of the world. Jivatman is transcendental immutable omniscient, omnipotent, perfect, eternal reality.

Jivatman is identical with Sachchidananda. It is transcendental and free from the affairs of the world. It is individual because it lies as a secret witness of individual life as well as universal in essence as it is the Sachchidananda itself.

The Jivatman is a portion of Paramatman and is an undivided centre of individual being. Jivatman has oneness with the spirit though our psychic being is not yet completely merged with the Jivatman. Psychic being supports all other beings, mental, vital and physical, and is also the basis of this superficial formation.

4.2.4 (a) The psychic being

Psychic being is the immanent principle, the deputy of Jivatman, which stands behind the manifestation in individual life and supports it. The psychic being is the representative of the Jivatman, it is the child, the son of God. The psychic being lies behind the ignorant veil of mind, life and body.

"...... This veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us, inextinguishable even by that dense unconsciousness of any spiritual self within which obscures our outward nature. It is a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge. It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine."4

The psychic being is different from life, mind and body though it inhabits our mind, life and body. Its place is behind mental-vital action. The psychic being transmutes our ignorance into knowledge. It exercises pressure and force for the

149
purification of our thought, emotion, and everything that is generally controlled by our lower nature. When the psychic being transmutes and purifies the lower elements, the spiritual consciousness and power starts to unfold itself that is in us.

Aurobindo says that we have double soul. But the double soul does not mean that we have two souls. This simply means that our central being is transcendent, universal and one with Sachchidananda, the inner being is that which is immanent and takes part in the activities of an individual. Pure, eternal being and its creative power mean two different character of the same soul. Jivatman aspect of soul indicates our unity with Sachchidananda and psychic being represents our individuality.

"The self has two aspects. One is static, a condition of wide peace, freedom, silence, the silent self is unaffected by any action or experience, it impartially supports them but does not seem to originate them at all, rather it stands back detached or unconcerned, udasina. The other aspect is dynamic and that is experienced as a cosmic. Self or spirit is that which not only supports but originates and contains the whole cosmic action - not only that part of it which concerns our physical selves but also all that is beyond it this world and all other world, the supra physical as well as physical ranges of the universe. Moreover, we feel it as one in all, but also we feel it as above all transcendent, surpassing all individual birth or cosmic existence."

So with Vedanta Aurobindo also maintains that the real self is beyond time and space, without name and form. It is featureless, blissful, pure conscious while the outer self is constantly changing. The Buddhists, the Pragmatists and the sceptics deny the inner self, and concentrate on the outer self. While the Advaitins negates the outer self, Aurobindo affirms that psychic being and Jivatman are two aspects of the same soul.

The central core of our being is psychic being. The status of the psychic being is equivalent to that of the ‘Sthitaprajna’ described in the Gita. A sthitaprajna is invariably connected with and in touch with the activities of the world, but indifferent of pleasure or pain and thus he is inwardly detached from those worldly affairs. Similarly the psychic being is above these distinctions of pleasure and pain, hope and despair. The psychic being is a pure power of light, full of love and joy and refined essence of being. Through this psychic being the divine principle bliss and existence act in us. It is open to the universal delight of things, but the surface soul is deprived of such delight due to its narrow walls and misinterprets the rasa or true touch of
things. Human being is unable to find out its own true soul which is the same as the world soul. Here lies the malady of human life.

Psychic being guides us towards the divine life. Awakening of the psychic being in us is an indispensable condition for the supramental change. The human being has to proceed from ignorance to knowledge and ascend to the supramental stage by acquiring knowledge through repeated births and deaths. Here we come across the principle of rebirth in Aurobindo's philosophy.

4.3 Rebirth

The notion of Rebirth is an indispensable part of cosmic evolution. The individual plays a very important role in the process of cosmic evolution. In the process of descent of the spirit into matter, the self is lost. It is, in individual that the supreme consciousness is to be realised in the process of evolution. In involution the ultimate spirit unfolds itself and takes the form of man and world. The supreme reality discloses His total existence in the individual. The individual purusa puts on a body in order to discover himself by the development of life, mind, body and ultimately the spirit in his terrestrial existence. Thus putting on a body, the birth is unavoidable machinery for the working out of a spiritual evolution. Evolution is real since ascent is a logical consequence of the descent of the spirit. In Aurobindo's philosophy Sachchidananda exists in each being and affirms Himself in the individual. It is in man that spiritual regeneration, release and evolution of soul that is recovery of the self is possible. But one birth is not sufficient for this purpose. So repeated births are necessary to reach the spiritual goal. Rebirth is an inevitable outcome of the very nature of our existence.

Human life is not a mere chance-product. He is a complex formation of two spiritual elements Jivatman and Atman. The two aspects of the individual the spiritual person and soul personality we get as a result of concentration of Divine Consciousness. As a spiritual person, individual is one with Sachchidananda, while as a soul personality, his own evolution must follow the law of cosmic evolution. The psychic personality is one in which the soul takes the control of mind, life and body of an individual. The psychic being is dynamic in nature and takes part in the activities of an individual and transmutes his lower nature into spiritual nature. The psychic being is the flaming consciousness, while the Jivatman is the spark of Divine. When
one realizes his psychic personality, it puts pressure on his terrestrial elements for the purification and transmutation, so that the psychic being identifies itself with the inner being that is the Jivatman. The psychic being is yet to be identified with the Jivatman, rebirth is the only way for such a soul evolution. The psychic being undergoes rebirth in order to union with the Jivatman. Jivatman is omniscient, divine, eternal, infinite, and immutable.

Rebirth presupposes a static as well as dynamic soul since in absence of either it is meaningless. The individual is real and so also is rebirth. The soul is not a by-product of body, life or mind and hence it can pass to the stages higher or lower in them. It may adopt different bodies according to its various manifestations.

"............... It evolves successive forms and successive strata of consciousness; for it is not bound always to assume one form and no other or to possess one kind of mentality which is its sole possible subjective manifestation. The soul is not bound by the formula of mental humanity; it did not begin with that and will not end with it; it had a pre human past it has a superhuman future".6

Aurobindo asserts that rebirth is an aspect of the general process of evolution or ascent. Evolution has reached the level of mental and is waiting for the next level that is supramental. The transition from lower to higher, from animals to man is too decisive to be reversed. It is possible only where the conversion has not been decisive. Thus the normal law is the recurrence of birth in new human forms. It is more so, since even after assuming human form the work has not been finished, as the soul has to realize yet higher possibilities. However, Aurobindo says that it is not possible to rule out the possibility of exceptions. The movement of nature is too complex to shut out completely such a possibility in extra-ordinary cases.

"The movement of Nature is always sufficiently complex for us not to deny dogmatically such a possibility, and, if it be a fact, then there may exist this modicum of truth behind the exaggerated popular belief which assumes an animal rebirth of the soul once lodged in man to be quite as normal and possible as a human reincarnation."7

But normally the soul that has once assumed a human status has to go through repeated births in the new human formation till the spiritual task is performed and the spiritual goal is reached.
Here is a question arises that why is there a succession of births? For the purpose of the transition from lower to higher, from animal to man, human soul has to pass repeated births. Man has reached the mental level in the present birth. And for this also human soul has to cross repeated birth, and it is same in case of terrestrial goal also, because spiritual possibilities may not be exhausted in one birth. Human goal is to reach the super-mental level. Today man is imperfect, as the man is at present in mental level, so it is not the last stage of evolutionary process, so rebirth becomes an absolute necessity to fulfill the destined consummation, for the attainment of supramental level.

Thus rebirth is a necessary corollary of the law of Karma. It is indispensable machinery for the working out of a spiritual evolution. It must be noted here, that the problem of rebirth does not arise in theories as that of advaita Vedanta of Sankara or Buddhism since whereas in the former the world and the finite selves are mere illusion and the self is eternally liberated, in the latter there is no permanent self. The ascent, release, the evolution of soul, rebirth all are unreal if the Reality is changeless as it is in Mayavada or if it is all change as it is in Buddhism. But in Aurobindo’s philosophy Sachchidananda exists in each being and affirms Himself in the individual.

The transformation of an individual by the psychic being is a change in the present physical-mental-vital organization. Psychic transformation is an indispensable part to divinize an individual. But Aurobindo warns us that this should not be misunderstood to be adequate for the ascent into spirit. The development of the soul personality is not the last stage, higher realizations are yet to be achieved. It is Supermind alone who helps man to transform himself from spiritual status to the divine status. The Supermind must work and descend again and again in us for this purpose. Through the emergence of soul, personality is a step towards spirituality but it has not in itself the power to transform the man into the Divine. The power of the conversion of man into Divine being rests on Sachchidananda.

Mind is a limited and finite principle of consciousness and power. It can perceive only finite and limited object. Though mind knows only some of the aspect of ultimate Reality, it considers those aspects as the whole truth of the Eternal being. The nature of mind is to analyze and create division. The ultimate Reality is
incomprehensible for mind because it treats active and passive, silence and dynamic, mobile and immobile as two distinct realities. But beyond this movement of spiritual mind there is the unitarian consciousness of Supermind. All the opposites created by the mind disappear in the immanent aspect of Supermind. When the Supermind emerges in man, the knowledge illumines ignorance; the man will be transmuted into the superman.

So Aurobindo gives an actual status of the individual in his philosophy. In his integral outlook the desire soul or the ego, the physical-vital-mental organizations are not denied in order to establish the truth of ultimate Reality. He emphasizes that the ascent into the divine is to take place only in and through the terrestrial principle.

"But if there is an evolution of consciousness in an evolutionary body and a soul inhabiting the body, a real and conscious individual, then it is evident that it is the progressive experience of that soul in Nature which takes the form of this evolution of consciousness; rebirth is self-evidently a necessary part, the sole possible machinery of such an evolution."  

Aurobindo is a robust optimist. He is against all types of pessimism. Nothing is unreal, as everything is the manifestation of Absolute. And man can ascend to the superman. The body, life, mind, soul are all spiritualised and divinized.

4.4 Karma

An account of the problem of rebirth would be incomplete without referring to the problem of Karma. The summum bonum of integral philosophy of Aurobindo is the evolution of man. Hence Aurobindo does not admit the popular notion of the law of karma and the theory of reincarnation. To him these do not offer any foothold to the philosophic reason and is incapable to give any answer to a search for the true significance of life. The law, however, is admitted in a general sense that as a man sows, so he reaps. Man is the master of his destiny. Man has the power to select what he wants to become. Man makes himself,

"What I have become, I have made myself by the soul's past idea and action, its inner and outer Karma, what I will to be, I can make myself by present and future idea and action."
Like other Indian philosophers, Aurobindo also states that man’s past and present karmas determine his future birth. All actions good or bad produce their proper effects or consequences. If some good or bad actions are found to produce good or bad effects in the present life, it is quite reasonable to maintain that all our action-past, present and future-will produces their effects in their life or in another life of the individual doer.

Law of Karma governs the life and destiny of all beings. The law of Karma is the law of moral causation. A good action inevitably brings about a good consequence. A bad action inevitably brings about a bad consequence. A good action produces merit in the soul, and this brings about happiness. A bad action, on the other hand, produces demerit in the soul and this brings about pain and miseries. Actions good or bad leave behind them some potency, which is sure to produce pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow in future. The Law of Karma signifies the force or energy generated by an action and having the potency of bearing fruits. It is evident that a man’s past and present karma must determine his future birth and happenings. Past is the creator of the present and present must be the creator of what will happen in the future.

Although Aurobindo accepts the doctrine of Karma, he does not attach the importance usually given to this concept by the Indian tradition. He believes that unless the entire process is conceived as mechanical, this law cannot be the sole determinant of the operations of the universe. As contrary to fatalism, Aurobindo points out that it is not the Law of Karma which determines the destiny of the soul but rather the soul which uses the Law as one of its instruments. The basic core of our being is spiritual and not mechanical. So Karma does not violate spiritual freedom. The soul is the determinant of its own evolution and uses the Law of Karma as one of the processes for the realization of its goal. As we ascent in the chain of evolution, the mechanical law is gradually weakened and we arrive at more and more spiritual freedom.

“A real freedom comes when we get away from the mind into the life of the spirit, from personality to the Person, from Nature to the lord of Nature.”

Again he says mechanical power is absolute only over body and matter; the soul, the purusa, is the giver of the sanction, and even if ordinarily it chooses to remain a
witness and concede an automatic sanction, it can be, if it wills, the master of its nature.

The soul seeks self-expression and experience in the body and the development of the nature through cosmic experience. It is this intelligence which guides the law to which the psychic being ascends to Being and its will are more important than fate.

"It is not conceivable that the Spirit within is an automaton in the hands of Karma, a slave in this life of its past actions, the truth must be less rigid and more plastic. If a certain amount of result of past Karma is formulated in the present life, it must be with the consent of the psychic being which presides over the new formation of its earthly experience and assents not merely to an outward compulsory process, but to a secret Will and Guidance."  

The simple logic of correlation or the idea of retribution of Karma as a compensation for the injustice of life and nature is a feeble basis for the Law of Karma. Whatever may be the status of the Law of Karma, it has only a limited application. The Law of Karma has application only to those actions which are done under the influence of ordinary passions and desires. Actions motivated by desires for certain gains here or hereafter are governed by the law of karma. But this law has no application to disinterested and passionless actions. Virtue claims no rewards. For Aurobindo man is the master of his destiny. We can hope for a better future by improving ourselves now. Mechanical Law of Karma is not the sole determinant of our future evolution, there must a secret consciousness and will. This spiritual instrument guides and uses the mechanical process and works through the mind, life and body.

4.5 Man in the universe

So far our discussion has been about the categories of individual existence. The psychic being of our soul is beyond birth and death. So it demands to consider Aurobindo’s account of rebirth. We have now to deal with the relation of individual with the universe because both of them are revelation of the same Absolute Reality.

The integral Advaitism of Aurobindo affirms that the creation is the expression of one Reality, so the manifested world and individual are as real as Brahman. The world and the individual are the field through which the pure existence plays the game of self concealment and self-revelation. The formless Sachchidananda
assumes the form of the universe and individual for the purpose of manifestation. The infinite Pure Existence has gradually descended step by step covering itself veil upon veil till it disappeared completely under the mask of unconscious matter. It then takes the journey back step by step in removing veil after veil, from inconscient matter and proceeds towards self-realization. The universe and the individual stand by each other to help in their ascent. The universe is an embodiment of Pure Existence in infinite space and time, but the divine is hidden from us. The universe fails to realize this divinity which is inherent in it. The physical world proceeded from matter to life and from life to mind and intelligence in human beings. So the universe seeks the support of the divine being that is the self conscious concentration of all. This dependence of the universe on the individual being for its ascent towards the divine, in his words the Prakrti turns back to perceive Purusa, world seeks after self, God having entirely become nature; nature seeks to become progressively God.

On the other hand the individual also require the universe for its realization. The individual in his physical aspect is possessed of all the three dominant principles matter, life and mind, which are also the categories of world existence. The universe is the base of his life and field of his activities. Though the individual is a member of the universe it has a separate identity. He preserves something within himself that sets up the mystery of his life which is transcendent and mysterious. The main aim of the evolution is to unfold this mystery of life. Here lies the true significance of the existence of individual and universe. The human being accomplishes this goal by adopting the way of universalization and impersonalization.

The impulse towards perfection, towards Godhead has been the earliest longing of man according to Aurobindo. As Aurobindo says the animal is satisfied with the fulfilment of its necessities, the gods are contented with their splendours in heaven, man alone is dissatisfied. He is seized with an urge to seek for perfection, something he has not yet reached. And because he is dissatisfied, he is the greatest of God’s creatures.

"Man the mental being in Nature is especially distinguished from her less developed creatures by a greater power of individuality by the liberation of the mental consciousness which enables him finality to understand more and more himself and his law of being and his development by the liberation of the mental will which enables him under the secret control of the universal will to manage more and more the materials and
Aurobindo finds a harmonious synthesis of the relation of individual and world in Divine. Individual salvation presupposes universal salvation. A realization in isolation of the world self, is a one-sided vision.

"The world-being includes always the individual being; therefore these two becomings the cosmic and the individual, are always related to each other and in their practical relation are mutually dependent. But we find that the individual being also comes in the end to include the world in its consciousness and since this is not by an abolition of the spiritual individual, but by his coming to his full, large and perfect self-consciousness, we must suppose that the individual always included the cosmos, and it is only the surface consciousness which by ignorance failed to possess that inclusion because of its self-limitation in ego."13

The basis of altruism is not philosophy but the realization of the Reality underlying all. Divine is not dead unity but a rich multiplicity. Hence, men and world may develop their individuality and yet maintain the common bonds.

4.6 Man and Ignorance

The ultimate destiny of the individual, according to Aurobindo lies in the realization of his unity with the ultimate Reality. So long as he is enveloped with the limitation of world; he has not reached his goal. The impediment on his way, as Aurobindo believes, is ignorance.

Ignorance for Aurobindo is not the absence of Knowledge but a power of knowledge. Ignorance does not indicate any weakness. What appears to be knowledge from one perspective is ignorance from another, higher point of view. Knowledge is the natural culmination of the state of ignorance. Thus ignorance is nothing but potential knowledge. Ignorance is not original and it emerges when spirit makes a plunge from the Supermind, when the mind is separated from its spiritual basis.

The status of human being on this world is a state of knowledge. But the human being separates itself from its own integrity and entire reality. Its boundaries are determined by this separative development of the consciousness, for it shuts us to our true self and to the true nature of things, and obliges us to live in an apparent
surface existence. A limited knowledge enveloped and invaded by ignorance and this
limitation, itself a kind of ignorance, a mixed knowledge-ignorance. Knowledge,
according to Aurobindo, is same as Brahman, the one, the eternal, the infinite and the
harmonious. The integral knowledge is already there in the integral Reality. It is not a
new or still non-existent thing that has to be created, invented or built up by the mind.
But it is not discovered due to ignorance. Human being under the influence of
ignorance always makes distinction between Absolute and world of multiplicity
between living and non-living and thus goes against the truth of integral reality.

"It is quite evident that we know ourselves with only a superficial knowledge, - the
sources of our consciousness and thought are a mystery; the true nature of our mind,
emotions, sensations is a mystery, our cause of being and our end of being the
significance of our life and its activities are a mystery; this could not be if we had a real
self-knowledge and real world knowledge."14

The ignorance is considered as a power of manifoldly self – absorbed and self
limiting concentration of the conscious being. Ignorance is a natural capacity of
variation in his self – conscious knowledge. The secret of our universal nature is shut
away from us. The present status of man is a composition of an awareness of the
immediate present, a portion of past as is retained in his memory, and of a future
outlook. Human beings are not aware of its actual nature for the inclusive
concentration of consciousness. Behind the surface being, fleeting consciousness of
individual, there is an oblivious of the sea and of which the human being is only a
narrow stream of selection.

"...... Behind this stream of energy there is a whole sea of consciousness which is aware
of the stream, but of which the stream is unaware; for this sum of surface energy is a
selection, an outcome from all the rest that is invisible. That sea is the subliminal self, the
superconscient, the subconscient, the intraconscient and circumconscient being, and
holding it all together the soul, the psychic entity"15

Human being is ignorant about this subliminal self, which is its secret nature though
the superconscient being is aware of this surface self and it is the integral force and
source of being.

The root of ignorance is a limited, self-oblivious exclusive concentration of
mind. The nature and action of human being is determined by the essence of various
experiences in past lives and also by the pull of his ultimate destiny and his
environment but man by its very nature is living exclusively in the present and forget
the past as well as the future. As a consequence human being completely identifies
himself with the present name and form that he has put on.

Ignorance is not an absence of knowledge. We can transcend all limitations
created by the present egoistic ignorance. So in any attempt to determine the nature of
knowledge one must proceed from ignorance to knowledge. Ignorance according to
Aurobindo, is sevenfold.

(a) The original ignorance- This is our ignorance of the true nature of the
Absolute who is the sole reality of all being and becoming. We concentrate on
‘objects’. Our embodied existence, the temporal relations obtaining in between things
and similar other entities as real due to this most fundamental, and basic ignorance.

(b) The cosmic ignorance – The cosmic ignorance is ignorance about the real
nature of the world. We take becoming, the space – time relations, mobile, mutable to
be the true nature of cosmos and forget about the whole truth working behind it.

(c) The Egoistic ignorance – We consider our ego as everything, and due to
which we identify the ego with true self. We forget our universal nature and of the
basic unity underlying all forms of being and becoming and regard everything other
than ego as not self.

(d) The Temporal ignorance – The temporal ignorance is ignorance about our
eternal nature. It leads us to imagine our present short span of life to be the whole
thing, forgetting the immortal nature of self which is beyond these spatial or temporal
dimensions.

(e) The psychological ignorance – Aurobindo says that normally we
concentrate on surface nature which is constituted by superficial aspect of our life and
behaviour. We do not realise the subliminal parts of our being and take the superficial
aspect of our existence as real portion of our being. We forget the level of
consciousness which is super-conscient, sub- conscient, intra – conscient and circum
– conscient. All these are constituent part of our total existence.
(f) The constitutional ignorance – Normally we think that body, life and mind – either jointly or separately constitutes the whole man, so we forget about the deeper aspect of our being which determine the terrestrial principle by their occult presence.

(g) The practical ignorance – All these Six types of ignorance lead to the seventh, the practical ignorance and we fail to acquire the true knowledge of life. This ignorance is responsible for our entire error, evil, falsehood and pain in this world. But Aurobindo says

“Our self – ignorance and our world – ignorance can only grow towards integral self – knowledge and integral world knowledge in proportion as our limited ego and its half – blind consciousness open to a greater inner existence and consciousness and a true self – being and become aware too of the not-self outside it also as self, on one side a Nature constituent of our own nature, on the other an Existence which is a boundless continuation of our own self being.”

Thus to obtain integral knowledge man must get rid of these seven types of ignorance. He must know the true nature of the Absolute, the cosmos, the self, the becoming of the self, the nature of the integral being and finally, the real use of our thought, will and action. The integral knowledge helps us to transform ourselves from the present egoistic state to spiritual state and finally integrates our nature with the truth of spirit. For we are not merely embodied minds; there is a spiritual being, in us which helps us to widen our range of being and our field of action for greater ends, in the light of the spiritual truth of existence.

4.7 Destiny of man

The destiny of man is to become a divine being. When an individual incarnates as a God in this world, when he becomes a superman; he attains his consummation and perfection. The realization of an individual as an omniscience, omnipotence, blessedness as a super man is not possible by mental faculty, but by experience. The terrestrial principles here are to be enlarged and improved in the course of evolution. It is only on the analogy of the transition from intellectual to spiritual level that one can guess the stage of superman that it transcends man. Philosophy is only of little help here, though the truth is sometimes grasped by mystic experience. Here philosophy joins hands with yoga.
Integral yoga of Aurobindo starts with an idea of integral Divine. To be a superman is to be a God on earth. It is to be like a God and to possess the Divine consciousness, power, truth, blessedness etc. The man has to evolve himself into the Divine man. Human beings have to know themselves as the children of immortality. So, human birth can be described as the turning point in the process of evolution. Yoga means union. So the fundamental principle of yoga is the realization of the unity. The yogin ascends in his experience. So he tends to arrive at more and more perfection in his vision. The aim of yoga is the restoration of the original unity of the finite with the infinite. Yoga is

“A methodized effort towards self perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of individual with the universal and transcendent Existence, we see partially expressed in man and in the cosmos.”

The transition from mind to Supermind is a passage from nature to supernature. The very purpose of evolution is to attain supramental state in our material existence. The evolution is preparing for a leap into the spiritual level, where man can enlarge himself into a higher status where he can realize the spiritual and universal delight of existence. But the present state of human being dominated by ego, the stumbling block in the process of human progress, the dark veil between human and divine being. Aurobindo says that this veil can be removed through practicing yoga. But at the same time Aurobindo admits that man can by his own efforts change himself into a supramental spirit. A descent of the divine nature is an unavoidable condition to make man, a superman. Aurobindo further emphasizes that supramental light cannot descent automatically to transform man into superman. Man must be prepared himself a fit receptacle for the new light that is coming from above. Aurobindo states that though the terrestrial existence has limitation yet mental man can rise beyond him and call down a supramental light, truth and power to work in him. So yoga is needed for the individual if he intends to become a part of divine being.

Yoga according to Aurobindo is the realization of divinity here and in our terrestrial existence. It does not mean the destruction of body, life and mind of the individual. It is a process in which the mind, life, body and soul get divinely transformed. As evolution aims at transfiguration and exaltation of the lower, so also the integral yoga leaves nothing, but exalts all and transfigures all. It is not a state of
freedom, or escape from life but an active participation and co-operation with the Divine for the divinization of the world and the whole embodied life. It is a state to become a superman, to become a God on earth, in which the body become luminous, the mind omniscient the life immortal and the soul in union with the Supermind.

Aurobindo’s yoga differs from other yoga as regards its main standpoint and the totality of its method. His yoga is an inner yoga which can be followed by everybody for the realization and manifestation of the divine in the world and for the purpose to bring down the supermind. Aurobindo neglects the outward forms that is breathing or postural exercises of Hatha yoga, or the Patanjali’s Asana and Pranayama. In contrast to the negative attitude of other systems towards the world Aurobindo’s yoga aims at the spiritualization of even the not-self. Aurobindo put emphasis on the transformation and spiritualization of the material existence of human being without rejecting that. Thus the integral yoga seeks to transform and integrate the entire being of man. The practicing of yoga has shifted the centre from ego to real self which is one with Absolute. But this requires an all receiving concentration which leads to a realization of supreme Reality. Yoga means a concentration which culminates in a living realization and the constant sense of the presence of the one in our-selves and in all of which we are aware.

The perfection in yoga includes perfection of the fundamental soul powers, the perfect surrender of our instruments and action to the divine mother, together with complete-faith in the divine. But this can be done only by bridging the gulf between mind and Supermind. Yoga is the effort to move the mind in the process of ascent towards Supermind. This requires a threefold process, a triple transformation – psychic, spiritual and supramental.

4.8 Triple transformation

The psychic being is the soul in us. The psychic being is the real centre of our individualization as it takes the control of mind, life and body of an individual. Our surface being only a small part of our total inner being is the chaitya purusa which is a flaming consciousness. But due to veil of ignorance that soul is not working in us, we are not aware of this psychic being. The psychic being
"Does not manifest itself outwardly in the animals and undeveloped men. But as the evolution proceeds, the soul or psychic entity begins to exert its influence on our personality. It begins to take form and puts forward or develops a soul personality called by Sri Aurobindo the psychic being or chaitya purũṇa."  18

The remove of the veil which hides our psychic being is the first necessary condition for the triple transformation. The psychic being is imperishable and immutable; we get the glimpses of this inner being, as the psychic being influences our conscious activity. But this is not enough for the full development of psychic being. We have to awaken our inner being which leads to a transformation of terrestrial principles. The activities of the material, mental and vital must be regulated by the light emanating from this psychic being.

Aurobindo admits that when the soul is open, manifest and explicit it expresses itself in the activities of an individual and transmutes his lower nature into the spiritual nature. When one realizes his psychic personality, it exerts pressure on the lower nature for the purification and transmutation, so that they can work as a mere instrument of the soul. Soul’s complete emergence demands a direct contact in the surface being with the spiritual Reality, because it comes from the psychic element; which is in us. It always turns towards whatever is phenomenal. Aurobindo says that normally the process of transformation is very slow. It can be rapid by the knowledge of the soul and when man feels a need to bring the soul to the front and allow it to be the master of his life, mind and body.

But the awakening of the soul in us and the development of the ways and activities of the soul is not enough for the total transformation of our terrestrial principles.

"A highest spiritual transformation must intervene on the psychic or psycho spiritual change, the psychic movement inward to the inner being, the Self or Divinity within us, must be completed by an opening upwards to a supreme spiritual status or a higher existence."  19

And this is possible by an ascent of the mind to the higher consciousness, over mental consciousness and brings it down to our lower nature. This will be followed by a permanent descent of the spirit. The descending light, power, and bliss of the spirit shall enter into our lower formation and flood our entire being with divine
consciousness, force and bliss, light, power and boundless ecstasy and thereby establish a permanent contact with the supreme Reality.

But even the spiritual transformation is also not enough, because this does not give us the integral transformation. So for that the supramental transformation is necessary which a transformation by Supermind. The final change of the material – mental and vital principles can be brought about only through the intervention of supramental consciousness. But for this the psychic and spiritual changes must be complete in every respect. The supramental transformation brings a radical change in the whole lower nature. In this stage the lower nature ascent to the Supermind. The supramental change is something radically different and is beyond the grasp of the mind.

The ascent to the Supermind is made possible by a descent of the latter. But for the supramental descent, certain preliminary condition must be fulfilled. At first there must be a direct and unveiled intervention from the above. And secondly the emergence of the Supermind will be possible not only by the pull from above but a complete rejection of all the old habits and complete surrender of the lower consciousness. The descent of the higher consciousness gradually transforms the entire being and establishes it on a higher plane. This is not done by a sudden leap but by a gradual process since there are numerous intervening difficulties. The various intermediary steps involved in the ascent from mind to the Supermind are – Higher mind, Illumined mind, Intuition and Over mind.

But the overmind is not Supermind. Though it is superconscient and cosmic in nature it lacks the integral nature of super mind. So even after overmind is attained, the consciousness has to pass through certain self – transmutation, when descent of the Supermind takes place the divine seizes every centre of individual consciousness. And with the descent of the Supermind, his light, consciousness and bliss transforms the physical, vital and mental existence of an individual and he becomes transformed into Gnostic being. The Gnostic being can comprehend the real nature of Supermind that Supermind starts from unity not division. All is developed in unity and as one, as all is forms of divine existence and not in any degree separate existences.
4.9 The Gnostic Being

The final stage of the triple transformation is the descent of the Supermind. This transformation will bring a radical change in the entire nature of matter, life and mind. The life of human being will fill with illuminating light and infinite power of the spirit and man will act on knowledge, and he will become transform into Gnostic Being.

Aurobindo believes that it is very difficult to describe the nature of supramental existence as we reach the evolution of overmind through Supermind. Aurobindo observes that it is difficult for mental thought to understand and describe the supramental nature because of the sharp contrast between the two. Mental nature is based on a consciousness of the finite while supramental nature is based on consciousness of the infinite.

“Supramental nature sees everything from the standpoint of oneness and regards all things, even the greatest multiplicity and diversity, even what are to the mind the strongest contradictions, in the light of that oneness, its will, ideas, feelings, sense are made of the stuff of oneness, its actions proceed upon that basis. Mental nature on the contrary, thinks, sees, wills, feels, senses with division as a starting point and has only a constructed understanding of unity; even when it experiences oneness, it has to act from the oneness on a basis of limitation and difference.”

So it is impossible for mind to forecast in detail what the actual nature of supramental change is. The evolution proceeds towards the realization of integral nature of ultimate reality. And the overmind is known as a delegate of supreme consciousness. So supramental nature must be a consummation of spiritual nature and experience. And the aim of evolution is also total spiritualization of our terrestrial existence. Though the evolution does not stop with the emergence of Supermind but when Supermind emerges, as a result of radical change in the character of evolution human beings will be transformed into Gnostic beings.

The Gnostic being is the man of knowledge. The entire existence of a Gnostic individual is governed by the power of a universal spirituality. It is not the superman of Nietzsche, Aurobindo says
“He presents to us sometimes a superman who fiercely and arrogantly repels the burden of simple sorrow and service, not one who arises victorious over mortality and suffering, his ascension vibrant with the triumph-song of a liberated humanity.”21

The Gnostic being will be the consummation of the spiritual man. The entire being, thinking, living and action of the Gnostic being shall be governed by the universal spirit. He would feel divine everywhere, in all parts, all actions of his own being. Everywhere he sees his own self, in beings as well as in nature. He would feel the presence of the Divine in every vibration of his life force, in every cell of his body. He would be universal but free in the universe. He is an individual but not limited by a separative individuality. He shall be a perfect individual fulfilling individuality and essentiality in their harmony. He will have complete self-knowledge and complete self-mastery. His awareness, will and action shall be in union with the Absolute. He would utilize the occult powers which come to all who practice yoga. These powers would be quite natural at the supramental stage.

Now the question is, will the race of Gnostic beings be all of one type? Aurobindo answers in the negative. The Gnostic being is the man of knowledge. But the levels of knowledge are not always same in respect of all Gnostic beings; some may attain intuitional knowledge while another is in the stage of higher or over mental level.

“In the lower grades of Gnostic being, there would be a limitation of self-expression according to the variety of the nature, a limited perfection in order to formulate some side, element or combined harmony of elements of some Divine Totality, a restricted selection of powers from the cosmic figure of the infinitely manifold One.”22

The question regarding the types of Gnostic beings has relevance from another context also. The real Gnostic individual is the supramental Gnostic being. But at the stage of supramental also Gnostic beings cannot be cast strictly according to a single type of individuality. The Supermind has three poises, so law of Supermind is unity in diversity. So in this stage also there has at least a difference of degree though they are same in kind.

Aurobindo believes that Gnostic being acts in a sense of harmony of his own self with the universal self, of his individual will with the total will, of his individual action with the total action. A normal man due to his ignorance about the true relation
of himself with the world and others suffers in imperfection and disharmony with the totality of things. He fails to arrive at any solution of the conflict between the self and the world. The barriers between us and other selves of the world are due to our ego. Our ego creates a separation wall between ourselves and others. But this is not the case with the Gnostic being.

"............ For the supramental being living in a cosmic consciousness the difficulty would not exist, since he has no ego, his cosmic individuality would know the cosmic forces and their movement and their significance as part of himself, and the Truth - consciousness in him would see the right relation at each step and find the dynamic right expression of that relation."

The Gnostic being is completely divinized spirit. The Gnostic being performs his activities in a joyous spirit and seeks the delight of divine manifestation in himself and the delight of divine in all. Delight is the nature of Gnostic being. He has no desire, no wants though he brings delight to others, because their joy is a part of his joy of existence. There will be no contradiction in his good and the good of others. For him all knowledge is self - knowledge of being, all action the self - force of being, and all delight a universal delight of self - existence.

The Gnostic being will have a complete knowledge. His whole way of being, the three aspects of our psyche, namely, cognitive, conative and affective would be governed by the power of universal spirituality. The consciousness of the Gnostic being is integral, so the Gnostic being will have the sense of integral unity in diversity. The Gnostic being likes the karmayogin of Gita, work for the benefit of humanity in the spirit of perfect detachment, disinterest, selflessness with no desire to reap the fruit, the Gnostic being alone, not the ordinary individual is capable of doing so.

The supramental change carries with it the corresponding change in body, life and mind. This change transforms them, into a greater and higher being. In the Gnostic individual the power and ways of body, life and mind are not suppressed or abolished but perfected and fulfilled by the self – exceeding process. The transformation of consciousness brings a new relationship between life and mind and between body and spirit. In ordinary individual, body works as an instrument of the action of soul. The body has a law of its own action which the soul fails to control.
The body limits the soul's action and always proves an obstruction on the way of progress in the lower level of consciousness. But in Gnostic being the body is transformed in such a way that it works as an instrument of spiritual activity without creating any hindrance.

"......In the gnostic way of being and living the will of the Spirit must directly control and determine the movements and law of the body. For the law of the body arises from the subconscient or inconscient: but in the gnostic being the subconscient will have become conscious and subject to the supramental control, penetrated with its light and action; the basis of inconscience with its obscurity and ambiguity its obstruction or tardy responses will have been transformed into a lower or supporting superconscience by the supramental emergence."  

The new relation between the soul and the body will bring about the spiritualization of the physical being. One question concerning the Gnostic being we must mention here that do pain and suffering exist for him. Aurobindo answers: no. The cause of suffering is the weakness and incompleteness of Consciousness Force manifested in the mental, vital and physical being, But during spiritual ascent the power of Consciousness increases immensely and that can change the vibrations of pain into those of ananda. This shows the possibility of a complete reversal of the rule of ordinary consciousness. Supramental transformation completes this reversal process, because the essence of the spirit (Existence – Consciousness Force – Bliss) is inherent in Gnostic being.

Finally one more question concerning the Gnostic being is that what the place of personality is in the Gnostic being. If we think of the self as the separate ego and if it has to disappear in the transcendental consciousness then the ego ceases to exist. If the individual is altogether extinguished, the personality would be finally lost. On the other hand supramental Gnostic being is the spiritual person. The existence of Gnostic being is the consummation of mind and remains in the terrestrial existence that is spiritualised and transformed. Aurobindo tries to find a solution in the light of the supramental consciousness.

"A supramental gnostic individual will be a spiritual Person but not a personality in the sense of a pattern of being marked out by a settled combination of fixed qualities, a determined character; he cannot be that since he is a conscious expression of the universal and the transcendent. But neither can his being be a capricious impersonal flux
throwing up at random waves of various forms, waves of personality as it pours through Time.\textsuperscript{25}

In Gnostic being, an inner person is unveiled. He is not a surface personality having the need of a carved expressive mask. He is an infinite being and expresses in finite various forms. So in his consciousness, personality and impersonality are not antagonistic principles.

4.10 Critical analysis

The integral method of Aurobindo’s philosophy rejects nothing but takes all in its higher synthesis. Aurobindo emphasizes the Absolute reality together with its manifestation as man, world and God. The generating insight behind Aurobindo’s Philosophy is the integral experience of Sachchidananda. The concept of Sachchidananda indicates that Aurobindo’s Philosophy is a return to the Upanishads. But Aurobindo’s concept of the indeterminability of the Brahman, the static as well as dynamic, one as well as many, being as well as becoming aspects of Brahman, the method and process of self manifestation of Brahman, gradations of consciousness, and the relationship between different categories of reality in the whole process of evolution and involution, all these give the originality of his philosophy. Aurobindo admits that the Sachchidananda descends into mind, life and matter. The descent of the Divine is called involution and is the result of the self concealment of the Divine. So Aurobindo conceives the finite beings and the world to be real. The different forms of the infinite, i.e. the individuals and the world are God. The special form of descent of the spirit which Aurobindo mentions is the Avatara of the Bhagavad Gita. But for Aurobindo the main significance of the conception of Avatara is the birth of man into the God head, not merely the preservation of Dharma. The Avatara shows that man has the capacity of becoming; he can become God without even leaving his body. Aurobindo has accepted the concept of yoga from the Gita. But Aurobindo’s integral yoga synthesizes all other types of yoga and advances upon them to arrive at a complete technique to realize reality in its integrity. The aim of yoga is the salvation of individual as well as cosmic, not only release but psychicisation, spiritualiza and supramentalization. Through first -hand knowledge and experience Aurobindo has synthesized the opposite outlook of east and west and unified them in his intergral system of philosophy.
"Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy provides two great needs of the time, namely, a virtual synthesis of east and west looking towards a philosophy acceptable to all mankind and second, a rich full interpretation of Indian thought correcting the abuses and aberrations, thus providing a point of view."

Aurobindo has grasped the deep spiritual experience of the east and the humanistic attitude of the west and brought them closer to each other in the life of humanity, a unified common culture for the world. He put emphasis to the life on the earth and well being of society. Man is as much real as God; everything is real, since nothing is outside the Absolute. Human love is a stepping stone to divine love. The finite beings are limited manifestation of Brahman. Our soul can unite itself with supreme reality, so salvation does not mean soul’s escape or freedom from the cage of body, life and mind. Salvation means divine birth of man into God. It is to have a perfect life on earth with omniscience, omnipotence and blessedness. In this stage an individual is converted into superman, the jivanmukta puruṣa of Gita.

“It is quite otherwise, however, with Sri Aurobindo whose superman is the God – Man who excels man not in physical Strength or in the power to rule and to conquer, but in things of the spirit.”

So the state of superman is the true destiny of man. The emergence of Gnostic being is an upliftment of the physical vital and metal being.

“Sri Aurobindo may be regarded as an existentialist.”

In Aurobindo’s philosophy there is an integral relation between Absolute and finite beings. There is no fundamental opposition between Spirit and beings, Brahman and world. Finite beings are lower forms of supreme reality, so the world is divine. Aurobindo solves the problem of the relationship between Being and beings, which is a problem of philosophical anthropology that is faced by the Existentialist of Europe. As Max Scheler has stated

“Through his process of becoming man has proved himself to be a being of enormous plasticity. It is therefore of the greatest danger for any philosophical opinion to formulate the idea of man too narrowly to derive it from any one naturalistic or only historical form …….. The idea of “animal rationale” in the classical sense was much too narrow, the “homo faber” of the positivists, the “deonysian Man” of Nietzsche, man as “the disease of life” of the new panromantic teachings, the “superman”, the “homo sapiens” of linne, the “I home machine” of lemettries, the merely “Power” – the merely “libido” – the merely
"economic" – man of Machiavelli, Freud and Marx, the fallen creature Adam – all these representation are much too narrow, since they are required to comprehend the whole man. Further, they all are at the same time ideas of things.  

Human beings have immense possibility. Man has existence as he has freedom of becoming. Man can transmute himself into God, the Gnostic being. In the Gnostic individual the power of lower elements are not suppressed or abolished, but perfected and fulfilled. The human being becomes omniscient and omnipotent by the spiritualization and divinization of body, life, mind, soul and the lower grades of consciousness. Aurobindo says.

"........ It is inevitable that for him too the working of his energies should not be cut off abruptly but must bear their consequence at some time in his continuous and developing existence. Man's being nature, circumstances of life are the result of his own inner and outer activities, not something fortuitous and inexplicable: he is what he has made himself, the past man was the father of the man that now is, the present man is the father of man that will be."

Existentialists describe man as eternal potentialities. Existence manifests itself through different potentialities. Man creates his own destiny; his existence is his own creation. This concept of existentialism energises human mind. So according to Sartre, existentialism is a form of humanism. But the existentialist philosophers have not succeeded to establish any satisfactory relationship between man and ultimate reality. An individual choose a particular line of development from among many possibilities. Then and then only we can understand what he wants to become. But his choice does not end as final because his existence is always indeterminate. No doubt man has no control over his bodily structure. He may be beautiful or ugly; he may be the son of a rich man of otherwise. His birth – place is not of his own choice. Man cannot change any of these things. But beyond this there is another aspect of man, the genetic evolutionary, which locates man in the cosmic evolution process and determines his destiny. Aurobindo supplements the phenomenological point with the above mentioned evolutionary standpoint.

The integral advaitism of Aurobindo conceives that human beings are nothing else than the limited manifestations of the Absolute. The imperfections of human beings are temporary and disappear in course of evolution. It is because the Absolute has not manifested itself fully in us so human beings seem quite opposed and
different. But in course of evolution man becomes a divine being. Existence is obviously present in all, from soul to matter. Salvation is not the cessation of worldly existence. It is a state of divine birth of man into the supramental being. The Gnostic being changes his destiny as well as the destiny of the universe and endeavours to divinize the entire living beings on earth. Such a consummation is possible only when there is descent of Sachchidananda. The Supermind descends in an individual and divinizes the whole universe, and the individual prepares the field for the reception of the divine light through the method of yoga. So the entire philosophy of Aurobindo is an attempt to show the way that man can become a divine being.

4.11. Conclusion

In Aurobindo’s humanistic philosophy the man and his terrestrial life have got their complete significance for the first time. His theory of evolution is a reconciliation of terrestrial principle and spirit. Like matter, life and body are not different from the Absolute. These are only different aspects of the one omnipresent Reality. Aurobindo considers man as a key of the evolutionary process and claims the divinity as certainty, because man and the universe are different forms of the supreme Absolute. So it is said that the Absolute will gradually express in finite forms in the course of evolution.

Aurobindo’s integralism successfully solves the problem of relationship between the Absolute and finite selves, where the existentialist philosophers fail. The existentialists give prominence to individual existence not to essence so they are at war with Hegel who advocated that the Absolute which is pure thought is the only perfect reality. Aurobindo solves this problem by saying that

"The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of Consciousness – Force and Bliss and the creative medium of Supermind into cosmic being; we ascend from Matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of Supermind towards the divine being." 31

So the Absolute and finite selves stand in close relation to one another.

All the systems of Indian philosophy, except the Carvaka, accept the idea of liberation as the highest end of life, though they differ among themselves with regard to the nature of the state of liberation. But Aurobindo’s concept is more
comprehensive as he says that liberation means to become divine, without nullifying relation with life, mind and body. It is an upliftment of the physical, vital and mental being, not the rejection or supersession of the lower ones. In Aurobinso’s word

“Even when the being turns towards cessation, it is a cessation, not in non existence but into some vast ineffable of spiritual being or the plunge into the incommunicable superconscience of the Absolute.” 32

So salvation is not the attainment of a new and other plane of existence. It is an emergence of a race of Gnostic beings representing the culmination and fulfillment of human beings.
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