Aurobindo's conception of Man and his destiny lies on the pivot of his evolutionary theory. We have seen that the cosmic principles have reached up to the stage of the Mind which is represented by Man. But, Man is only an apparent culmination but not the ultimate summit. He has to exceed himself. It is through the evolutionary process that Man is able to shed his present limitations and exceed himself. Aurobindo conceives that the world is the self-manifestation of Saccidananda. He conceives world-creation as a double process. It is, firstly, a descent of the Spirit into this world of names and forms and then it is also a corresponding ascent of the worldly forms into their original higher status. Ascent presupposes descent. Matter cannot rise to the status of the Spirit unless Spirit somehow has descended down to Matter. Involution should take place before evolution. So the process of creation involves both Involution and Evolution. The whole of creation may be said to be a movement between these two involutions. Aurobindo writes, "The whole of creation may be said to be a movement between two involutions, Spirit in which all is involved and out of which all evolves downward to the other pole of Matter, Matter in which also all is involved and out of which
all evolves upwards to the other pole of Spirit."  

INVOLUTION

Aurobindo conceives creation as the self-expression of the Absolute. It is an act of creation of the cosmos by the downward descent of Saccidananda into the lower principles. This downward descent of Saccidananda or creation is an involutionary movement of the Spirit into the ignorant and inconscient principles. The order of involution as sketched by Sri Aurobindo is as follows: Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss, Supermind, Mind, Soul, Life and Matter. The first four constitute the higher hemisphere and the last four constitute the lower hemisphere. The stages in the lower hemisphere constitute the subordinate forms of those in the upper hemisphere. Mind is a subordinate power of Supermind. Life is similarly a subordinate power of the energy aspect of Saccidananda. Matter is the form of substance of being which the existence of Saccidananda assumes when it subjects itself to this phenomenal action of its own Consciousness-Force. Soul is a subordinate power of infinite bliss but a power in terms of our consciousness and under the conditions of self evolution in the world. Aurobindo conceives Involution as a prelude to the evolutionary process. If the

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Spirit even remained in its supreme self-existence then there could be no possibility for evolution because the spirit is ever perfect infinite Consciousness-Force and Bliss. Aurobindo says that the Absolute is a Consciousness-Force which has the freedom to project itself and involve itself into the Ignorance and Inconscience. It is due to this downward movement of spirit into lower principles that there is any possibility for evolution. He writes in Savitri:

"I know that I can lift man's soul to God.

I know that he can bring the Immortal down."  

EVOLUTION

Evolution presupposes involution, in fact evolution is possible only because involution has already taken place. It is on account of the descent of the spirit in Matter, Life and Mind that these ascend to the higher regions of the spirit. Matter can evolve into life only because life itself has involved in it, life can ascend to mind only because there has been a descent of mind into life already. In short the entire lower hemisphere can ascend to the higher one only because the higher is already in the lower one. Sri Aurobindo feels this on the basis of the principle that evolution cannot proceed out of nothing, because

it cannot violate the principle of 'nothing out of nothing'.

In the descent into the material plane the 'lapse' culminates in a total Inconscience. The involved Being and Consciousness have to 'emerge' out of the total Inconscience by a 'gradual evolution'. This 'inevitable evolution' first develops Matter and a material universe. In Matter appear Life and the living, the physical beings. In Life are manifested Mind and the embodied thinking and living beings. Mind ever increases its powers and activities in forms of Matter and there must appear the Supermind or Truth-Consciousness. The Supermind appears by the very 'force' of what is contained in the Inconscience and the 'necessity in Nature' to bring it into manifestation. The appearance of Supermind manifests the Spirit's 'self-knowledge' and 'whole-knowledge' in a supramental living being. This is brought about here by the same law, that is, by an 'inherent necessity' and 'inevitability'. This is the significance of the 'plan and order' of the terrestrial evolution. It is this 'necessity' that determines all the 'steps and degrees', the 'principle and process' of evolution. Mind, Life and Matter are the 'realised powers' of the evolution. But Supermind and the 'triune aspect' of Saccidananda are the 'secret principles' which are not yet 'put in front' and have still to be realised in the
forms of the manifestation. They are not easily recognizable since we know them only by 'hints' and a 'partial and fragmentary action' which are still not disengaged from the lower movement. But their evolution too is part of the destiny of the soul in the Becoming. Aurobindo writes, "There must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above it, all that has descended indeed but is still concealed in earth-life and Matter".

Aurobindo conceives of an integral view of evolution. Integral evolution means that when the higher principle emerges the lower principles are also transformed. Evolution, as conceived by Sri Aurobindo, has a distinctive character of its own, which in a sense, comprehends all other forms of evolution. The nature of evolution has generally been conceived as repetitive or emergent or as mechanical or teleological. Repetitive theories of evolution suggest that evolution is a process in time that gives out more or less, the same kinds of forms. Evolution goes on bringing out the same kinds of entities-repeating the same kinds of beings of existence. As against this the theory of emergent evolution believes that at every stage of evolution something new emerges or comes out. Mechanical theories of evolution seek to explain everything in terms of antecedent

conditions, where as, teleological theories relate everything to some goal or purpose which the evolutionary process seeks to realise. Sri Aurobindo's Integral theory of Evolution comprehends the relevant features of all such accounts, and thus can claim to be more comprehensive and rationally satisfying than any of these theories. Aurobindo's evolution does not grow from the lower grades to the higher ones, superceeding and rejecting the lower ones as they are crossed. On the contrary it implies that the lower ones are uplifted and transformed. Integration in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo means ascent through descent. The higher descends into the lower and transforms it completely, in that way the lower ascends to the higher. For example, if we reflect upon the nature of matter prior to the evolution of mind and then upon its nature after the evolution of mind the whole becomes clear. When matter evolved into mind, in fact, the nature of 'the material' was also changed. Matter no longer could be viewed in the manner in which it was viewed before. S.K. Maitra tries to make the whole idea clear with the help of a very apt analogy when he says, "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 lines of communication with the base intact."
And we may compare Sri Aurobindo's conception of evolution with the march of an army which advances with the whole force, keeping all its lines of communication perfectly intact. One very important reason for emphasising this fact of integration is that only if evolution is conceived in this way one can talk about the possibility of a Divine life or Sarvamukti. It is quite possible for an individual aspirant to grow spiritually and to attain salvation, but universal redemption can become a fact only when evolutionary growth is conceived as a cosmic process integrating all its aspects and grades. Aurobindo conceives evolution as a triple process of widening, heightening and integration. This is the light and novelty of Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary theory.

TRIPLE PROCESS OF EVOLUTION

Aurobindo holds the view that evolution being a process out of a 'material Inconscience' into 'spiritual consciousness', there must be in the process a development of a triple character. It is, first of all, the process of widening of the field of the lower principle. For instance, Matter must undergo a process of complication, self-differentiation and subtle and intricate organisation in order that the higher principle of Life, may evolve in it. If matter remains a simple, hard and therefore an

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unadjustable stuff, Life can never evolve in it. If the principle of Life does not evolve from the stone, a piece of wood and a pen, it is because the matter of these substance is too hard and inflexible for the emergence of any higher principle in it. The process of widening of a principle means its increasing organisation, expansion and differentiation so that it may be capable for the evolution of higher principles from it and within it as a base. Sri Aurobindo describes the process of widening thus: "An evolution of forms of matter more and more subtly and intricately organised so as to admit the action of a growing, a more and more complex and subtle and capable organisation of consciousness is the indispensable physical foundation". The process of widening is, therefore, the first condition of the lower principle to evolve into the higher ones.

Secondly, evolution is a process of the heightening of the force of consciousness to higher and higher grades. Matter evolves into Life, Mind, Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind etc, till the Consciousness -Force becomes explicit and fully manifest. The process of intensification and heightening goes on in material nature till the Consciousness - Force which is present in it in an occult and hidden manner expresses itself in an entirely new direction with the result that the principle

of Life emerges out of it. Sri Aurobindo states the process of heightening in evolution thus: "An upward evolutionary progress of the consciousness itself from grade to higher grade, and ascent, is the evident spiral line or emerging curve that, on this foundation, the evolution must describe". The emergence of the higher principle from the lower principle is not only due to the heightening and intensification of the force of consciousness from below but is also due to the higher planes which help dominantly in the emergence of the new principle. The higher principles press the lower principles from above and assist evolution. Aurobindo says, "What is necessary is a working that brings the lower gradation of being to a point at which the higher can manifest in it; at that point a pressure from some superior plane where the new power is dominant may assist towards a more or less rapid decisive transition by a bound or a series of bounds - a slow, creeping, imperceptible or even occult action is followed by a run and an evolutionary status (saltus) across the border" (sic).

The third feature of the process of evolution is that of integration. When the new principle emerges, it forms an intimate integration with the lower principles. But for such an integration of the higher principles the lower principles have to

6 Ibid., p. 703.
7 Ibid., p. 711.
undergo a process of vital transformation in order to be adjusted with the higher ones. The process of integration is necessary for the harmonious relation and coordination of the higher principle with the lower principles of an individual organism or of the cosmos as a whole. Sri Aurobindo states, the evolutionary process of integration thus: "A taking up of what has already been evolved into each higher grade as it is reached and a transformation more or less complete so as to admit of a total changed working of the whole being and nature, and integration, must be also part of the process, if the evolution is to be effective". The emergence of the new principles is not an isolated ascent without any connection with the lower being but it means an integration of the higher principles with the transformed lower principles- which as a consequence of transformation become a fit receptacle and instrument for them.

The triple processes of widening, heightening and integration are not independent and discrete processes, they are the indivisible processes of the single fact of evolution. Sri Aurobindo remarks that, "The process of Nature is not confined to a heightening of herself into a new principle; the new height is not a narrow intense pinnacle, it brings with it a widening and establishes a larger field of life in which the

8 Ibid., p. 703.
power of the new principle may have sufficient play and room for its emergence. The movement of evolution must bring about a sort of self-differentiation, plasticity, expansion, wideness, subtlety and complication before it evolves into the higher principle in it. The Consciousness-Force also becomes progressively intensified in the lower principle in course of such changes and consequently bursts open into a new form of expression in a higher mode or principle of Consciousness.

In Aurobindo's conception evolutionary movement is a process of an integral manifestation of the spirit in the individual as well as the cosmos. Both the individual and the cosmos evolve simultaneously. Each influences the other to ascend. As the individual realises the divine the world is also transformed into the divine. A divine being cannot emerge in an undivine universe. Nature ceases to manifest the divine in the individual and the individual soul divinely transformed remains ever engaged in divinising nature. In this way the individual and cosmos act and react reciprocally in their endeavour to realise the divine in each other. Finally the individual becomes universal and the cosmos becomes his divine supernature.

INDIVIDUAL EVOLUTION

Aurobindo conceives that individual evolution for the realisation of and union with the Divine is possible in two ways (1) through yoga and (2) through rebirth.

THROUGH YOGA

In practice three conceptions are necessary before there can be any possibility of yoga. God, Nature and the human soul or in more abstract language the Transcendental, the Universal and the Individual are the three necessary consenting parties to the effort. Sri Aurobindo says, "Yoga means union with the Divine—a union either transcendental (above the universe) or cosmic (universal) or individual or, as in our Yoga, all three together". He holds that in the right view both of life and of yoga, "all life is either consciously or subconsciously a Yoga". Because yoga is a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence that is partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos.

Yoga also means a process that leads to this union. It is a process of ascent of the human consciousness for self-


transcendence, spontaneous leap and plunge into the Infinite. It is a dynamic spiritual revolution which breaks the boundaries of mental consciousness, eddies of life and rigidity of the physical formula. *Yoga* brings about the transformation and supramentalisation of the entire elements of the individual. "Divinisation itself does not mean the destruction of the human elements; it means taking them up, showing them the way to their perfection, raising them by purification and perfection to their full Power and Ananda and that means the raising of the whole of earthly life to its full power and Ananda". So the aim of *Yoga* is an integral union of the individual with the Divine in a transformed body, life and mind rather than an isolated union of the soul with the Divine by leaving the lower parts in inconscience and ignorance. Aurobindo conceives that *Yoga* brings about the descent of the Divine. The Divine descends into the nature of man to purify his lower being and transform and divinise it. The *Sadhaka* has only to develop peace and tranquillity of mind and aspire for the descent of the Divine. He has to be open and receptive to the Consciousness-Force. The Divine Light leans down to transform him into a Divine being.

N.K. Gupta observes that, "All other *Yogas*, or spiritual discipline in the past envisaged an ascent of the consciousness,

its sublimation into the consciousness of the Spirit and its fusion and dissolution there in the end. The descent of the Divine Consciousness to prepare its definitive home in the dynamic and pragmatic human nature, if considered at all was not the main theme of the past efforts and achievements. 

FOUR AIDS OF YOGA

To attain Yoga-Siddhi, Aurobindo speaks of four main aids. They are Śāstra, Utsāha, Guru and Kāla. Before one sets out on the path one must know what the goal is, what the process is and what are the principles underlying the practice. This knowledge of God, Nature and Man as realised by the wise is Śāstra. The Vedas, the Hymns and the Darsanas may be included in Śāstra. But the Śādhu (aspirant) of the integral yoga depends essentially upon the Vedic secrets in the inner recesses of his heart. Aurobindo writes "The Supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being. The lotus of the eternal knowledge and the eternal perfection is a bud closed and folded up within us". When the mind gets in contact with the Eternal, this secret opens swiftly or gradually, ‘petal by petal’, through ‘successive’ realisation.


Aurobindo holds the view that nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature. He writes, "All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process". So also 'Guru' always need not be a person outside oneself. The true Guru is the inner being itself. "As the supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every man, so its supreme Guide and Teacher is the inner Guide, the World-Teacher, jagad-guru, secret within us". Again he writes, "One who is the Lord or Ishwara of the Yogic philosophies, the Guide in the conscious being (Caitya guru or antaryāmin), the Absolute of the thinker, the Unknowable of the Agnostic, the Universal Force of the materialist, the Supreme Soul and the supreme Shakti, the One who is differently named and imaged by the religious, is the Master of our Yoga".

It is this inner Guru who eliminates the inner darkness and distortion in our being. But only a rare few succeeded in awaking to this Presence within themselves and dynamising it in their life. Most need some power or personality outside themselves, especially in the early stages of yoga. Aurobindo writes, "There are rare cases in which none other is needed... the lotus of the knowledge discloses itself from within by the power of

15 Ibid., p. 48.
16 Ibid., p. 55.
17 Ibid., p. 56.
irradiating, effulgence, which proceeds from the Dweller in the lotus of the heart ... Ordinarily, the Word from without, representative of Divine, is needed as an aid in the work of self-unfolding; and it may be either a word from the past or the more powerful word of the living Guru".

Eventhough the true Śāstra and Guru are inside the aspirant themselves it is difficult for him to communicate with it in ordinary cases. They are not even aware of the Presence within. It is here that Aurobindo puts the importance of utsāha. With internal effort and struggle the individual will has to reject the darkness and distortions of the lower nature and to put itself resolutely and vehemently on the side of the divine Light. The personal will of the Śādхаka has first to seize on the egoistic energies and turn them towards the light and right. As he progresses, in his yoga, his will, effort, energy become no longer personal and separate, but activities of that higher Power and Influence at work in the individual. At the end of the progress, with the progressive disappearance of egoism and impurity and ignorance all in the individual becomes the divine working.

Personal effort as an essential requisite to yoga is a spiritual belief. But the personal effort alone, cannot do.

18 Ibid., p. 48.
Whatever effort the aspirant may put, it needs the instrumentality of Time or Kala. Aurobindo writes, "Time presents itself to human effort as an enemy or a friend, as a resistance, a medium or an instrument... To the ego it is a tyrant or a resistance to the Divine an instrument". As M.P. Pandit writes, "In all things there is a movement of time, a period of preparation, a period of exertion, a period of incubation, the hour of fruition. The seeker learns to wait upon the exigencies of time and sheds his immature impatience. He also learns how as long as the effort is egoistic, time fronts itself as a barrier and when one is surrendered, time becomes an instrument and a medium for the realisation". Therefore as long as the effort is personal Time is a resistance and when the divine working and the personal become one, it appears as a servant, an instrument.

BASIC REQUISITES OF YOGA

In order to practise Yoga, the individual has to observe the following indispensable condition viz (1) the call and the response (2) Rejection and (3) Surrender.

19
Ibid., p. 61.

20
CALL AND RESPONSE

"No yoga can be successfully undertaken and followed unless there is a strong awakening to the necessity of that larger spiritual existence". Before one takes seriously to any path of Yoga one must be sure that he has a call for it. And the call must be genuine, must proceed from the depths of the being. It is "an aspiration, vigilant, constant, unceasing - the mind's will, the heart's seeking, the ascent of the vital being, the will to open and make plastic and physical consciousness and nature". Aurobindo observes that the heart's aspiration is a momentous act which contains as in a seed all the result that the Yoga has to give. A superficial interest in the higher things of life or its deeper values is not enough. One must feel a real need to change the ordinary way of living into a higher. "It is said that one who has the true call feels like a fish out of water unless he changes the direction of his life and enters a path that assures a contact, a communion and eventually a union with the Divine". This aspiration for the Divine is the first step. It is a constant seeking in the being for a change of consciousness, for a leap from the ordinary human into a deeper or higher dimension of Divine Consciousness. Aspiration is to be distinguished from desire. Desire involves, binds. Aspiration originates from the


soul. This aspiration must be in the whole of one's being, not only in the mind and the soul, but in the life - being and the body too, to be reborn in the dynamic truth of the Spirit and to participate in the Divine's manifestation. M.P.Pandit writes, "the aspiration for Divine has to be active, growing, setting aflame each centre of the being so that in due course the whole system is one tongue of Agni reaching out to the Heaven's Supreme". It may formulate itself in the mind as aspiration for knowledge, in the heart as seeking for devotion, in the will as a push for dedication, consecration, in the physical as a movement for healthy growth. It is an inner drive towards Truth, the Reality. The many formulations of this central aspiration are legitimate in their own spheres. They are to be fulfilled, consistent with the demand of the central movement towards the Divine. All aspiration enlarges, liberates from limitations.

This aspiration presupposes sincerity and faith. By sincerity is meant a constant readiness and effort to lift up all the parts and all the movements of one's being in consonance with the truth of one's seeking. Faith is faith in the reality of the Divine, faith in the path that leads to the Divine, and faith in Grace, that carries one to the goal. Sri Aurobindo speaks of four kinds of faith. They are firstly, faith which dispels all doubts

and prepares for the true knowledge. Then, the vital faith which automatically repels onslaughts of the adverse forces and builds up an effective instrumentation of the divine will and action.

Thirdly, the physical faith which sustains the body amidst all its tribulations of suffering, illness and inertia and silently prepares for the reception of the higher consciousness in the material basis. And lastly the psychic faith which draws a direct tough of the Divine Influence and leads to a joyous surrender to an intimacy with the Divine.

The call from us for the realisation of the Supreme and the response of the Divine are the characteristics of the present stage of evolutionary growth. The call from below also is a reflex of the call from the above. The aspiration of man is possible only because the Divine awakens us. Aurobindo writes, "He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the divine touch without which there is no awakening, no opening of the spirit; but once it is received, attainment is sure". The awakened soul invokes insistently and intensely the Divine descent. The sincere call guarantees the response of the Divine which is essential for his ascent to the Divine. R.S. Srivastava writes, "Without his grace and sympathetic response to our calls, no amount of human endeavour

can spiritually evolve him and make him a fit receptacle for supramental descent and manifestation”.

REJECTION

Calmness of mind is indispensable for any spiritual advance. This calmness is established by a progressive renunciation of desires and passions. So Aurobindo holds that side by side with aspiration for the Divine there has to be a “constant rejection, throwing out, Katharsis, of all that is not the true Truth of Divine”. In this Yoga, this stern rejection of what is opposed to one's deepest aspiration is the second step. In fact it is not a step that is successive to the first, but a simultaneous operation. Aurobindo writes, "These movements are indeed not always or absolutely arranged in a strict succession to each other. The second stage begins in part before the first is completed, the first continues in part until the second is perfected; the last divine working can manifest from time to time as a promise before it is finally settled and normal to the nature". Things that stand in the way of the fulfilment of the aspiration, movement that slow down or retard the progress towards the Higher Consciousness has got to be relentlessly rejected. Aurobindo writes, “A continual and always repeated refusal of the impulsions and falsehoods of the lower, nature is


28 Ibid., p. 81.
asked from us and an insistent support to the Truth as it grows in our parts; for the progressive settling into our nature and final perfection of the incoming informing Light, Purity and Power needs for its development and sustenance our free acceptance of it and our stubborn rejection of all that is contrary to it, inferior or incompatible". Rejection is different from suppression. By suppression a person pushes down the offending element by force and it sinks into his own nether regions of which he is not conscious or less conscious. Such suppressed elements live there waiting for a suitable occasion or opportunity to rise up and find expression. So the calmness acquired will be a negative one which is not sufficient. It is necessary for the individual to supplement it by a conscious opening and invocation to the spiritual calm.

Rejection is a separation of the unwanted from oneself. A rejected thing falls away from oneself and becomes foreign so that there is no subterfuge for its hiding anywhere in the being. This rejection is to be worked out on all the levels of the being. In the mind it proceeds by a steady elimination of ideas, thinking, beliefs and notions that hold one down to earthly bases. The mind has to unlearn its habit of referring every movement to its ego. Egoism, selfishness and tamasic obstinacy

Ibid., p. 80
are some of the diseases of the mind and they must be got rid of. Mental disposition to depressions is another habit that must be rooted out. All likes and dislikes, preferences and prejudices, which invariably interfere with the legitimate activities of the mind - for example, reasoning assessing, judging things - must be examined and set aside so that the mind is open more and more only to the reception and formulation of truth. Tendencies towards cynicism, suspicion, criticism, need to be discouraged and replaced by movements of understanding goodwill and charitable outlook. In short, all negative movements of the mind must be checked and positive ones encouraged. More is to be done in the field of emotions and feelings. As M.P. Pandit writes, "Each of us has what the Gita would call daiyi sampat and āsuri sampat, godly possessions and the titanic possessions. The Sadhaka has to cast his weight on the side of the former and firmly reject the latter". An intensive discipline of self control, self-observation and self-purification on the lines of Patanjali's vama and niyama is a must. This task is rendered easier if the effort on the mental levels and the emotional, is already on. With the support of the mind and the heart, the lower vital being and the physical being must need attention. There is a strong inertia and obscurity in the physical layers of our

being, opposing movement, progress, light and consciousness. Lethargy and lassitude seem to be innate in the body which has layer after layer of tamas, inconscience. A ceaseless effort is needed to release oneself from the stronghold of these nether forces of darkness and stagnation and assure oneself of a freer and higher movement of the physical. "To be calm, steady, fixed in the spirit, dhīra, sthīra, this quietitude of the mind, this separation of inner Purusha from the outer Prakriti is very helpful, almost, indispensable. So long as the being is subject to the whirl of thoughts or the turmoil of the movements, one cannot be thus calm and fixed in the spirit. To detach oneself, to stand back from them to feel them separate from oneself is indispensable".

SURRENDER

Aurobindo observes ‘surrender’ as the culmination of the process of consecration through personal efforts. And he describes surrender as an 'integral self-giving' and an 'all comprehending absolute surrender' to the Heighest. One must gather up all his movements and deliver oneself to the power with a complete submission to its Will and Command. He writes, "Surrender is giving to the Divine- to give everything one is or has to the Divine and regard nothing as one’s own to obey only

the Divine Will and no other, to live for the Divine and not for the ego". To submit one's will to the Divine Will on each level of one's being and be solely moved by that will is the way of surrender.

The Integral Yoga asks for an active surrender and a passive surrender. Active surrender is when we associate our will with the Divine and reject what is not the Divine and ascent to what is the Divine. Passive surrender is when we leave everything entirely to the Divine. Active surrender is seen in the early stages of sadhana. At the initial stages there is the need of personal effort which means an 'altitude' and an 'action' of constant vigilance and readiness always to be receptive to the right guidance and follow it. In the active surrender one should be ever alert to distinguish between the right and the wrong suggestion or impulsion. One should support the working of the divine Yogaśakti and in all ways identify oneself with the Divine Will.

At the more advanced stage of self-surrender, the individual becomes passive and allows progressive manifestation and luminous working of the Divine Force in him. The highest stage of surrender shows absolute absence of personal effort. "In the last
period there is no effort at all, no set method, no fixed Sadhana; the place of endeavour and Tapasya will be taken by a natural, simple, powerful and happy disclosing of the flower of Divine out of the bud of a purified and perfected terrestrial nature. The Divine descends in such fit and receptive human beings and works to uplift and Divinise his very being. God works in him and changes him to a Divine being. Here the Divine is the Sadhaka and Siddha, the Guide and the goal. This surrender is complete dedication, ungrudging, unreserved, integral and absolute. Sri Aurobindo says, "In the first the individual prepares himself for the reception of the Divine into his members. For all this first period he has to work by means of the instruments of the lower Nature, but aided more and more from above. But in the later transitional stage of this movement our personal and necessarily ignorant effort more and more dwindles and a higher Nature acts; the eternal Shakti descends into this limited form of mortality and progressively possesses and transmutes it. In the second period the greater movement wholly replaces the lesser, formerly indispensable first action; but this can be done only when our self-surrender is complete".

Aurobindo holds that the surrender must be on all levels, in all parts. An inward orientation of one's life in thought,

34 Ibid., pp. 79-80.
feelings, aspirations, activities is necessary before the detailed working of surrender becomes possible. He states, "All our nature must make an integral surrender, it must offer itself in every part and every movement to that which seems to the unregenerated sense-mind so much less real than the material world and its object. Our whole being-soul, mind, sense, heart, will, life, body - must consecrate all its energies so entirely and in such a way that it shall become a fit vehicle for the Divine". The mind must cease to play its own tune. It must forsake its habitual thinking and fancyings and build a silent base in itself for the Higher Truth to enter and stand upon. Similarly the emotional being's pet notion of what is right and what is wrong has to be given up. Its habit of responding to excitation-outer or inner - must be contained and the heart must learn to respond only to the impulsions of the Divine Power. And even more Vigilance and control is required when we come to the region of the vital which is normally driven by ego and desire. By enforcing on it an active surrender to the Divine, the vital can be turned into a powerful warrior for the Divine. All its strength and capacities are placed at the service of the Divine and the individual becomes more and more a channel for Sakti. Sri Aurobindo says, "You must keep the temple clean if you wish to install there the living presence". If the being .is to be

35  Ibid., p. 66.

surrendered entirely, the body also must give itself in every
detail. That calls for a continuous growth of consciousness,
awareness in the body, so that no room is left for other elements
to enter, that are not in line with the requirements of the
Divine Power. It is to be noted that all these movements of
surrender in the various parts of one's being stem from the basic
surrender of the psychic being deep within, to the Parent Divine.
The more one gets to the psychic depths and lives from there
outward, the easier it becomes for the other parts to surrender
themselves to the Divine.

The entire lower nature composed of mind, life and body of
the sadhaka surrenders integrally to Saccidananda so that they
may be fit receptacles for His descent. If the Consciousness-
Force, cit-sakti, is the Soul of our soul and the Life of our
life then a glad and loving surrender to Her Power is the best
way to realise our unity with the Divine. The surrender is as
natural as the surrender of water to the sea. The individual
enjoys and participates in the freedom and sovereignty of the
Divine. Further spiritual progress leads him from the universal
to the transcendent Mother, in whose arms of excessive Love he
will find his eternal rest. When united with Her universal aspect
he leads an immortal life upon earth, fulfilling Her will and
manifesting the Divine
This surrender is the most important process in Aurobindo's Yoga. Only an absolute surrender can assure progress in Yoga. To submit everything to the Supreme Purusha and annihilate even the last glimmer of ego, that is the message of Yoga. The ego ever resting at its sattvic aspect in the light of intelligence or buddhi and dwelling in comparative peace and purity maintains its constant sense of separation from others and emphases its personal desires, inclinations and preferences. The Yoga practised by the Sadhaka excites the limited and outward ego. It breaks the bond of egoism which results in the expansion of consciousness to the dimension of the all-embracing whole. Unless the ego is slain to the last extent, the Sadhaka cannot achieve union with the Divine. One must reject all that comes from the ego, from vital desire, from the mere mind, and its presumptuous reasoning, all that ministers to these agents of the Ignorance. One must learn to hear and follow the voice of the inmost soul, the command of the Master, the working of the Divine Mother. The consummation of surrender takes place by the extinction of our desire-soul and our opening to the true soul that lies within us. Sri Aurobindo says, "Our purpose in Yoga is to exile the limited outward-looking ego and to enthrone God in its place as the
ruling Inhabitant of the nature". The Śādhaka who progresses in integral Yoga through personal effort and surrender will surmount all difficulties and through the annihilation of ego will accomplish the final destiny at the god-intended time or Kāla.

PSYCHIC PRESSURE AND GUIDANCE

The psychic being pushes our lower nature towards unity, harmony, beauty and bliss. It expresses itself in the aspiration of the individual for the Divine, self-surrender and sacrifice of works to God. But so long the ego has hold on us, it works from behind and does not come to the front. Its secret working from within us is not effective. But when it comes to the forefront, it helps the individual in his conversion. It guides and controls our lower nature, till it is completely offered to the Mother. It exerts its influence on the lower nature to surrender, to consecrate works and to open itself towards the Divine. It is Yoga which helps us to awaken this 'inner reality of our being' and brings it out to the forefront. The spirit must be liberated from its present veil of mind, life and body. For this Aurobindo recommends a threefold process which is the process of triple transformation. This includes (i) a process of psychicisation (ii) a process of spiritualisation and (iii) a process of supramentalisation. These three are conceived as three steps of

Integral Yoga or Pūrṇa Yoga. These steps are essentially inner. These three stages represent the three transformations which are essential for the realisation of Divine Life.

TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

According to Aurobindo the aim of human evolution is not only a revelation of the Spirit but a 'radical and integral transformation' of Nature. Not the spiritual man but the 'supramental being' shall thence forward be the leader of that Nature. For that the whole personality of man should be integrally transformed. This can be done not simply by the realisation of spirit but by the 'descent' of supramental principle in the human being. Aurobindo holds that, "as Mind is established here on a basis of Ignorance seeking for Knowledge and growing into knowledge, so Supermind must be established here on a basis of knowledge growing into its own greater Light". But it is not possible for spiritual- mental being to rise to the Supermind at one jump and to bring down its powers and light to the terrestrial existence. Because the 'gulf' between 'Mind' and Supermind has to be bridged and 'roads of ascent and descent' have to be created before the supramental descent takes place. Aurobindo maintains that, this can be done only by the triple

38 That is why at times, Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is described as Inner Yoga.

transformation namely the psychic, the spiritual and the supramental. These transformation would first require a complete and radical change of our terrestrial existence of material, the vital and the mental, and then it would require a final transformation resulting from the combined forces of one's own efforts and the light from above. In his own words, "There must first be the psychic changes, the conversion of our whole present nature into a soul instrumentation; on that or along with that there must be the spiritual change, the descent of a higher Light, Knowledge, Power, Force, Bliss, Purity into the whole being, even into the lowest recesses of the life and body, even into the darkness of our subconscience; last, there must supervene the supramental transmutation,- there must take place as the crowning movement the ascent into the Supermind and the transforming descent of the Supramental Consciousness into our entire being and nature".

THE PSYCHIC TRANSFORMATION

The awakening of the psychic being is what is called psychicisation or psychic transformation. Normally this 'psychic being' does not reach the surface-consciousness in a clear and distinct manner and it can exercise its power only in a 'limited' way. Because it is 'confined', 'veiled' and 'concealed' by the

40 Ibid., p. 891.
physical, vital and mental activities. In order to make the psychic being an 'active principle' of man's life and being we should first 'locate' clearly the soul-element in us and should follow its dictates. Therefore, Aurobindo feels that the integral transformation or the triple transformation, must start with bringing the 'hidden' psychic being to the surface consciousness. In other words the 'unfolding' of the psychic soul is the first step towards supramental change. The 'veil' which hides the inner being has to be removed. Aurobindo believes that unless and until the Psychic Being comes to the forefront to take control of our entire surface-formation, the supreme goal of our life, the development of mind into overmind and overmind into supramental Truth would not be possible. It is only when man 'awakes' to the knowledges of the soul and feels a 'need' to bring it to the front and make it the 'master' of his life and action that a quicker conscious method of evolution intervenes and a psychic transformation becomes possible. The psychic transformation of our being depends, for the most part on a 'feeling of necessity' on the part of the individual to bring the soul to the front and allow it to master his life, mind and body. The 'Supreme Victory' and revelation of the psychic being consist in an effective and complete 'conversion and transformation' of our lower 'natural
life' into a 'spiritual life'. The material, the vital and the mental should be changed. All these activities must be regulated by the light emanating from the psychic being. Describing the process of psychicisation Sri Aurobindo says, "Psychicisation means the change of the lower nature bringing right vision into the mind, right impulse and feeling to the vital, right movement and habit into the physical—all turned towards the Divine, all based on love, adoration, bhakti—finally, the vision and sense of the Mother everywhere in all as well as in the heart, her Force working in the being faith, consecration, surrender". In this step consciousness has to turn towards and it has to reform accordingly the physical, the vital and the mental. When the lower nature of the sādhaka is thus moulded by the psychic being, his life triumphantly and steadily marches to the Love and Light of the Supreme. He feels a boundless love for the Divine and all beings and his actions are delightfully dedicated to the Mother. The absolute surrender of the entire being to the guidance of the psychic being means also a surrender to the Divine Mother.

The soul gradually expresses and influences the surface-mind and body of the human being through the process of evolution. The psychic being in us does not emerge 'full-grown' and 'luminous' but it 'evolves' and passes through a 'slow development' and

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formation. At first its activity is very much 'hampered' and 'obstructed' by man's vital desires and hankerings, which are the fruits of ignorance. Ordinarily man is a slave to his passion, physical desires, habits and imperfect ideals. Hence at the first instance, he is not found to be very keen to accept any new concept, any higher ideal though they may be perfect. As a result of this tendency any new or higher thought, feelings and ideals coming from the psychic being of man to his surface consciousness, are 'twisted and moulded' by them according to his own choice. And ultimately he forms a very narrow, obstructed and partial view of it. Therefore Man has to overcome all these dangers and obstacles. He has to discard all kinds of egoistic desires, passions, prejudices, deficiencies and weakness. He has to 'surrender' himself to the Divine through mind, heart and will. Gradually as the psychic personality grows stronger, it begins to increase its communion with the psychic entity behind it and improve its communications with the surface. A first condition of the soul's complete emergence is a 'direct contact' in the surface being with the spiritual Reality. The touch through 'outer signs' and characters cannot entirely or most inwardly and profoundly change it. For such an inmost change, 'the direct contact' with the Reality itself is indispensable. In order to emerge successfully in the course of evolution and turn
the being towards the supreme Reality, the soul uses three
dynamic images of this Supreme Reality: Truth, Beauty and
Goodness.

Aurobindo also observes that if the soul would have been an
unveiled part of the human being, the human evolution would have
been a 'rapid soul-outflowering' and not the 'difficult',
'chequered', and 'disfigured' development as it now is. The soul
keeps in itself behind the superficial personality, gathering the
sense of man's physical, vital and mental experiences and
supporting the natural evolution of body, life and mind. But in
the early material and vital stages of the evolution of being,
there is indeed no consciousness of the soul. This does not mean
that the soul is absent from them. For "the soul does not reveal
its existence in matter. Similarly it 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 influences on our personality. It begins to take form and
puts forward or develops a soul personality called by
Sri Aurobindo, the psychic being or 'Caitya Purusha'. Thus
Aurobindo establishes that "bringing this psychic entity, this
true soul in us, into the front and giving it there the lead and
rule we shall gain all the fulfilment of our natural being that

42Ram Shankar Misra, *The Integral Advaitism of
Sri Aurobindo*, 1st ed. (Banaras: Banaras Hindu University, 1957),
p. 305.
we can seek for and open also the gates of the kingdom of the spirit".

As the crust of the outer nature cracks, the soul begins to unveil itself, the psychic personality reaches its full stature. Two principal results follow this emergence. First is an effective guidance and mastery which unmask and reject all that is false and obscure or all that opposes the divine realisation. Aurobindo observes, "A guidance, a governance begins from within which exposes every movement to the light of Truth, repels what is false, obscure, opposed to the divine realisation: every region of the being, every nook and corner of it, every movement, formation, direction, inclination of thought, will, emotion, sensation, action, reaction, motive, disposition, propensity, desire, habit of the conscious or subconscious physical, even the most concealed, camouflaged, mute, recondite, is lighted up with the unerring psychic light, their confusions dissipated, their tangles disentangled, their obscurities, deceptions, self-deceptions precisely indicated and removed; all is purified, set right, the whole nature harmonised, modulated in the psychic key, put in spiritual order".

The second is the positive result, a spontaneous influx of


spiritual experiences of all kinds. "The second is a free inflow of all kinds of spiritual experience, experience of the Self, experience of the Ishwara and the Divine Shakti, experience of cosmic consciousness". These experiences are the result of an opening outward of the inner and inmost being and nature. But even so, this psychicisation is limited because it is in ignorance. Man must not stop at just an awareness of his psychic but must push on towards a new transformation which will be spiritual in nature. In this transformation, man becomes a spiritual psyche.

THE SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

Spiritualization is the second step of yoga and it is also described as the process of opening out. Psychic change prepares the ground by transforming the physical, the vital and the mental. Now, the mental must start its onward march by opening itself out to higher consciousness and to the superconscient. "The spiritual change is the established descent of the peace, light, knowledge power, bliss from above, the awareness of the Self and the Divine and of a higher cosmic consciousness and the change of the whole consciousness to that". Psychic change in a way is a change within the limits of natural aspects-surface and


subliminal. Spiritual change rises above and seeks to bring down into play the aspects of the higher realm. Aurobindo writes, "Between psychicisation and spiritualisation there is a difference. The spiritual is the change that descends from above, the psychic is the change that comes from within by the psychic dominating the mind, vital and physical".  

This 'opening out' can be effected by an ascent of the mind to the higher consciousness of the spirit and it can bring it down to the lower regions of our nature. This will be followed by the permanent descent of the Light, Power and Bliss of the spirit. "For the full spiritual transformation more is needed, a permanent ascension from the lower into the higher consciousness and an effectual permanent descent of the higher into the lower nature". The descending light of the spirit shall penetrate the lower nature, ie, the mental-vital-physical formation, and flood our entire being with 'divine ecstasy' and thereby establish a permanent contact with the super-conscient. Consequently a light and power and a knowledge and force are felt. These would first take possession of the mind and remould it and then take the life parts and remould that and finally take the little physical consciousness and enlarge it into the wide and the plastic and even the infinite. In this transformation the body, life and mind

47 Ibid., p. 1093.

of man will realise that their base is in spirit. The consciousness of mental creature will turn wholly into the consciousness of the spiritual being. Aurobindo holds this transformation as "uniting the manifested existence with what is above it, it is the middle step of three, the decisive transition of the spiritually evolving nature". Compared to the psychic transformation, the spiritual transformation is a movement upward through ignorance. But even if it is just a development in ignorance, it is a higher development than the psychic because the development of the psychic transformation has its beginning in a thought development whereas the spiritual transformation begins in a development of being and consciousness. In other words, spiritual transformation is growth and existence in the Spirit. As man grows in spirit, he becomes conscious of the truth of Saccidananda. Aurobindo states, "The fundamental truth of spiritual experience is one, its consciousness is one, everywhere it follows the same general lines and tendencies of awakening and growth into spiritual being; for these are the imperatives of the spiritual consciousness". This does not mean that just because man begins to grasp the experience of Saccidananda as one, all is reduced to one because the domain of pure spiritual realisation can contain great diversity.

49 Ibid., p. 914.

50 Ibid., p. 887.
The movement of evolution proceeds by an 'awakening' of the involved consciousness and force and its ascent from 'principle to principle', from 'grade to grade' and from 'power to power' of the secret spirit. This ascent is to be traced from the level of mind to the higher grades of consciousness and existence that lie between mind and Supermind. Aurobindo distinguishes a 'stairway' of four main ascents in this 'gradation' of the ascent of consciousness. They are the Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition and Overmind. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "These gradations may be summarily described as a series of sublimations of the consciousness through Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition into Overmind". These higher ranges serve as links between the mental and the supramental regions of consciousness. The ascent to the Supermind even from the spiritualised mind is so steep that it would not have been possible to negotiate it without these higher ranges of mind of which we are not aware of at the present level of our consciousness. These four ascending grades are not simply the ways of knowing the reality, rather they are each a level of the universal Consciousness Force constituting and organising itself into a higher status. All these steps are 'gnostic' in their principle and power. The human personality is transformed and transmuted by the knowledge and power gradually descending from these four higher grades of consciousness.

51 Ibid., p. 938.
universal Consciousness-Force. But its ultimate and fundamental transformation takes place by the descent of the Supermind.

THE HIGHER MIND

Sri Aurobindo calls the emergence of the Higher Mind as the emergence of an 'observing intelligence' that is conscious of 'its own' action. He describes the Higher Mind as "the spiritual parent of our conceptive mental ideation". It is the first step towards the Supermind. It is a mind of 'large clarity' of the Spirit and not of mingled light and obscurity. Unlike the normal mind, the Higher Mind does not depend on the limited sources of knowledge. At the present level our thoughts are woven out of doubtful materials indirectly acquired by our senses. But at the stage of the Higher Mind things altogether change. There is no need of a seeking and self-critical ratiocination, no logical motion step by step towards a conclusion and no mechanism of express or implied deduction and inferences. There is no dependence on second-hand information. According to Aurobindo all these limping actions of our reason are a movement of Ignorance. But the Higher Mind "is a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge. An all-awareness emerging from the original identity, carrying the truths (truth), the identity

held in itself conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudinously, formulating and by self-power of the Idea effectually realising its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge" (sic).

Higher Mind, therefore, is a self-aware activity towards integration. Its chief characteristic is that it is dominated by the luminous conceptual knowledge of the spirit. Aurobindo writes, "This higher consciousness is a Knowledge formulating itself on a basis of self-existent all-awareness and manifesting some part of its integrality, a harmony of its significances put into thought-form. It can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view; the relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth are not established by logic but pre-exist and emerge already self-seen in the integral whole". But the higher mind by itself is not capable of performing completely the integration of man's personality, as it is not totally devoid of ignorance, inconscience and inertia. Its light, knowledge and power are affected to a certain extent by mind, life and body. However, it does raise man to a higher status.

53 Ibid., pp. 939-40.

54 Ibid., p. 940.
Apart from this cognitive aspect of the Higher Mind, there is also the aspect of will and of the dynamic effectuation of Truth. In its cognitive aspect, the Higher Mind, gets a view of Truth and in its affective aspect it secures an all-round achievement regarding Truth. The feelings and actions that spiring from the Higher Mind become the 'vibrations' of a 'higher wisdom'. "It is in this way the first working proceeds; it charges the whole being with a new and superior consciousness, lays a foundation of change, prepares it for a superior truth of existence".

**ILLUMINED MIND**

The next stage into which the mind can ascend is the stage of Illumined Mind. It is free from the higher conceptual knowledge of the Higher Mind. It is "a Mind no longer of higher Thought, but of spiritual light". Aurobindo observes that this light is primarily a spiritual manifestation of the Divine Reality. It is illuminative and creative and the material light is a subsequent representation or conversion of it into Matter. In this descent there is a 'greater dynamic', a 'golden drive' a 'luminos entousiasmos' of inner force and power that replaces the comparatively slow and deliberate process of the Higher Mind.

55
Ibid., p. 941.

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Ibid., p. 944.
by a 'swift', a 'vehement', almost a 'violent impetus' of rapid transformation.

Our normal mind has to rely upon the knowledge acquired through thought process, and consequently it has to be content with only a glimpse of Truth. On the contrary, the Illumined Mind having acquired the spiritual light, does not work primarily by thought but by 'vision'. Aurobindo says that "thought is here only a subordinate movement expressive of sight". Thought only, creates a 'representative image of Truth' but Illumined Mind gets at the 'body itself of Truth'. Aurobindo writes, "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 only her figure". Thus, as the Higher Mind being a greater consciousness into the being through the 'spiritual idea' and its power of truth, so the Illumined Mind brings in a still greater consciousness through a 'Truth-sight' and its 'seeing' and 'seizing' power. It throws on the physical mind a 'transforming light' that breaks its limitation, its conservative inertia and pours 'luminosity and consciousness' into the very


58 Ibid., p. 945.
cells of the body. The human personality is moulded here again into a higher order and it now possesses greater consciousness and power. "In the transformation by the Higher Mind the spiritual Sage and thinker would find his total and dynamic fulfilment; in the transformation by the Illumined Mind there would be a similar fulfilment for the seer, the illumined mystic, those in whom the soul lives in vision and in a direct sense and experience". But even the Illumined Mind with its power and knowledge undergoes modification to a little extent as it is affected by the lower nature in its descending process. So even the Illumined Mind by itself fails to effect a complete integration of human personality. Hence the next higher stage is needed to lead it to a still higher spiritual plane called by Aurobindo 'Intuition'.

INTUITION

Aurobindo conceives, "Intuition is a power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original knowledge by identity; for it is always something that leaps out direct from a concealed identity". When the consciousness of the subject meets with the consciousness in the object, it sees, feels and 'vibrates' with the knowledge of that which it contacts. When the consciousness meets the Supreme Reality or the spiritual reality of thing and

59 Ibid., p. 946.
60 Ibid., p. 946.
beings and has a contactual union with it, then the 'spark', the 'flash' or the 'blaze' of intimate truth-perception is lit in its depth. Intuition probes into the realities underlying the appearance. It is more than sight and more than conception. It is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in it sight and conception as a part of itself or as its natural consequences. It is only by a reference to this intuitive mind that the above mentioned two stages of the ascent enjoy their authority and get their own united completeness.

"Intuition is always an edge or ray or outleap of a superior light; it is in us a projecting blade, edge or point of a far-off supermind light entering into and modified by some intermediate truth-mind substance above us". Sri Aurobindo says that Intuition in fact, is the beginning of knowledge as it brings message from the higher or spiritual realm. But a 'pure intuition' is a rare occurrence in our mental activity. When the mind is transformed by rising to the height of Higher Mind and Illumined Mind, it becomes free from all kinds of limitation to a considerable extent and becomes more fit to accept the pure, spiritual Truth coming from the higher planes. The ascent to the stage means that the consciousness and power of Intuition is coming down to the human organism and thus there takes place the

61 Ibid., p. 948.
integration of human personality in a higher form of consciousness and power. Describing its nature he says, "Intuition has a fourfold power. A power of revelatory truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervenation in our mental intelligence, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth,—these are the fourfold potencies of Intuition". It is obvious from this to incorporate in its nature all the characteristics that Indian seers of Truth in the past are said to possess. It is the capacity to see Truth and to hear it in its organised form in an act of direct and immediate revelation. He admits that Intuition can perform all the functions of reason and intelligence with the difference that its grasp of the object is direct and not mediate like that of reason. Therefore, in a rough way the process of integration starts in Intuition.

In order to find out a link between Mind and Supermind Sri Aurobindo develops the concept of intuition. But he contends that intuition cannot serve as an appropriate link, for it is not altogether free from mental influence. S.K. Maitra observes, "It is too flashy, too stable, too much under the influence of masses

of mental stuff that penetrate into it, to be able really to serve as a link between Mind and Supermind". Intuition firstly is clouded by the intervention of mental faculties. Reason and intelligence distort it in such a manner that it is not normally possible to have pure intuition absolutely free from the mental stuff. Secondly, Intuitive flashes are so sudden, quick, brief and short-lived that it becomes difficult to understand the messages that they bring. Thirdly, before intuitive apprehension gets a chance of being expressed in imitative ways of reason, it is either intercepted or replaced. These defects of Intuition are there chiefly because Intuition is the culmination of mental effort, and by effort alone pure knowledge cannot be attained. For that it is essential for spiritual light—for higher powers—to descend. Therefore the next stage of development must be a faculty which while possessing all powers of Intuition and of other preceding stages, must be capable of receiving the light from above.

**THE OVERMIND**

The next higher step in evolution, the faculty into which Intuition has to develop, is called by Sri Aurobindo, 'The Overmind'. This is the step preceding the Gnostic Being. Aurobindo regards the overmind as "a power of cosmic

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consciousness, a principle of global knowledge which carries in it a delegated light from the supramental Gnosis". It is only through the overmind that the supermind can act in this world of ignorance. Intuitional change can only be an introduction to the higher overture. 'The ignorance' is not able to bear the direct touch of the supermind. So the supermind sends its secret dynamism to the hidden energies and potentialities of ignorance through the channel of Overmind. The overmind is the 'first parent of ignorance'.

With the advent of the Overmind, the predominance of the centralising ego-sense is entirely subordinated. It is lost in its largeness of being and finally abolished. And a wide cosmic perception and feeling of a boundless universal self and movement replaces it. The overmind change of consciousness is felt as a consciousness of spiritual Light and Truth different from and far more exalted than any spiritual realisation. The Overmind consciousness is the 'highest power of the lower hemisphere'. The characteristic feature of this consciousness is that it is, "an identification with the All, - the extension or the identification constituting a cosmic being, a universal individual". The centralising action of the Overmind is directed towards the mighty task of discovering the 'true individual' replacing the dead ego.


66 Ibid., p. 951.
Sri Aurobindo describes it as a 'superconscient cosmic mind in direct contact with the supramental consciousness'. Such a description of overmind emphasize the two sides of its nature— it is a kind of cosmic consciousness and it is in contact with the Supermind. The expression cosmic consciousness implies that the consciousness which has been ascending through the three previous stages now expands and widens itself. To 'the vertical ascent' is added a vast horizontal expansion of consciousness. The previous stages including the stage of Intuition are not cosmic in nature, but the knowledge of overmind becomes 'global' and cosmic by going beyond the representation of consciousness in particular centres. In this stage even Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition enlarge themselves and become wider and more comprehensive. Sri Aurobindo describes the stage thus, "The overmind... is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation; it is the highest possible status-dynamis of the Spirit in the spiritual-mind plane. It takes up all that is in the three steps below it and raises their characteristic workings to their highest and largest power, adding to them a universal wideness of consciousness and force, a harmonious concert of knowledge, a more manifold delight of
being”. This is possible on account of its second characteristic - its closeness to the supermind. It is capable of receiving the light from the Supreme Truth-Consciousness. In fact, overmind is the proper link between mind and supermind, it performs the mental activities in a spiritual manner, and its cosmic consciousness is a result of its affinity with Supermind. Its comprehensive nature and its global or cosmic character would not have been there, had it been limited to individual consciousness. It is due to this limitation that Intuitive Consciousness does not have a universality above it. Overmind is capable of reflecting the universal light, and therefore its consciousness is cosmic. It attempts to reconcile differences.

Overmind gives a universal touch to the individual mind. It can unite the individual mind with the cosmic mind on its highest plane and equate the individual self with the cosmic self and it gives to its nature an action of universality. However it has certain limitations which prevent it from being the final possibility of the spiritual evolution. The Overmind fails to guide the mind beyond itself as it lacks the integral unity of the Supermind. The principal tendency of the overmind is towards separation. It keeps the unity of the background and makes one to express itself as many. Using the concept of Prakriti and Purusha

Ibid., p. 952.
as his illustration, Sri Aurobindo says that such a dichotomy or distinction is also a creation of the Overmind. "To supermind, Purusha and Prakriti, conscious soul and executive force of Nature are two-aspected single truth. The opposition between One and Many, Being and Becoming of the reality, is dissolved in the supermind. The cleavage comes with the origin of the Overmind". To its consciousness, these two would appear as irreconcilable realities. That is why Sri Aurobindo goes to the extent of saying that, in a sense, the stage of the overmind is also the stage of Ignorance. Speaking in terms of evolution, this is the last stage in the lower hemisphere that mind can attain before taking its leap into the higher realm. Speaking conversely in terms of the process of Descent or Involution, it can be said that with it (the overmind stage) the realm of ignorance begins. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says, "It (overmind) is a power, though the highest power, of the lower hemisphere; although its basis is a cosmic unity, its action is an action of division and interaction, an action taking its stand on the play of the multiplicity. Its play is, like that of all Mind, a play of possibilities; although it acts not in the Ignorance, but with the knowledge of the truth of those possibilities, yet it works them out through their own independent evolution of their powers". Consequently Purusha is


viewed as a separate reality and Prakriti as another reality. The integral view is completely missed. Still the overmind change has its special importance in so far as it "having carried the consciousness to the point of a vast illumined universality and an organised play of this wide and potent spiritual awareness of utter existence, force-consciousness and delight, could only go farther by an opening of the gates of the Spirit into the upper hemisphere and a will to enable the soul to depart out of its cosmic formation into Transcendence".

Therefore, like other mental grades, the Overmind also is not able to effect an integral transformation of nature by its descent into the human organism. It cannot radically transform the effects of Inconscience. There is every possibility of regression and disintegration of the terrestrial process due to the pull from the inconsciousness and ignorance. All that it can do, could be to transform in each man it touched, the whole conscious being into 'its own stuff' and impose that upon the Ignorance illumining it into cosmic truth and knowledge. A basis of Nescience would still remain. Only the emergence of Supermind on the earth-consciousness can give a secure basis to the divine or gnostic evolution and can liberate it from the pull of inconscience. So far there is no security against the 'downward

70 Ibid., p. 953.
pull' or 'gravitation' of the Inconscience which dissolves all the formations that life and mind build in it. "The liberation from this pull of the Inconscience and a secure basis for a continuous divine or gnostic evolution would only be achieved by a descent of the Supermind into the terrestrial formula, bringing into it the supreme law and light and dynamis of the Spirit and penetrating (with) it and transforming the inconscience of the material basis. A last transition from Overmind to Supermind and a descent of (the) Supermind must therefore intervene at this stage of evolutionary Nature" (sic). Because of the diminishing native light and power of the overmind, it is unable to do fully what is needed and has to call in a 'greater power', the 'Supramental force' to liberate and fulfil it. "As the psychic change has to call in the spiritual to complete it, so the first spiritual change has to call in the supramental transformation to complete it". Again he writes "The whole radical change in the evolution from a basis of Ignorance to a basis of Knowledge can only come by the intervention of the supramental Power and its direct action in earth-existence". The descent of the 'gnostic Light' would effectuate a complete transformation of the Ignorance. Then the supramental consciousness and force would take up the transformation directly into its own hands and reveal to the terrestrial mind, life and bodily being their own

71 Ibid., p. 954
72 Ibid., pp. 917-18.
73 Ibid., p. 918.
'spiritual truth' and 'divinity'. Finally it would pour into the whole nature the 'perfect knowledge', power and significance of the supramental existence.

**THE SUPRAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION**

Sri Aurobindo says that psychic transformation and spiritual transformation uplift man to the higher reaches of consciousness. But if the soul is left only with these, there will only be a vision of a unity above us, not a realisation of it. Therefore, the vision must be transformed into a realisation. For that it is necessary that there takes place a descent of the higher consciousness "The Truth-consciousness, finding evolutionary Nature ready, has to descend into her and enable her to liberate the supramental principle within her". The summit of realisation is not mere transformation of the lower principles and the revelation of soul. A third step of supramentalisation is needed for the absolute oneness of the individual with the Divine. The final ascent to the supermind is possible only by the supramental descent. The psychical and spiritual changes are the preparatory stages for the supramental transformation. The four intermediary stages from mind to supermind are but stages of ignorance. The final stage of pure knowledge is only possible

74 Ibid., p. 918.
when there is a corresponding descent of the latter. The preparation from below and the grace from above are essential requisites for the radical transformation of the world process into divinity "The supramental transformation can only come when the lid between the lower and, the higher hemisphere or halves of existence is removed and the supermind instead of the overmind becomes the governing power of existence".

In this process consciousness is fully divinised and the entire point of view changes. All forces of disunity and duality are superseded and the vision of complete unity emerges. When the Purusha is unfolded, the higher stages of the individual evolution take place by the Divine's own effort. Sri Aurobindo says, "The Shakti, the power of the Infinite and the Eternal descends within us, works, breaks up our present psychological formation, shatters every wall, widens, liberates, presents us with always newer and greater powers of vision, ideation, perception and newer and greater life-motives, enlarges and new-models increasingly the soul and its instruments, confront us with every imperfection in order to convict and destroy it, opens to a greater perfection, does in a brief period the work of many lives or ages". Supramentalisation brings about two changes—universalisation, which is nothing but expansion of consciousness


and transcendentalisation, which is nothing but the knowledge of
the identity of the Divine. The supramental light, radiates our
being as we go on ascending in the evolutionary ladder.

The descent of the Supermind into the terrestrial existence
marks a radical change in the evolutionary process. The Supermind
is present in a potential form in nature. It arises due to the
push or dynamism in the evolutionary nature itself and also due
to the pressure from the higher plane of supernature. The
function of the Supermind is to actualise and reveal its
potential powers of Saccidānanda. It is an intermediary principle
between the Absolute and the world. It is the creative aspect of
Saccidānanda. As a consequence of the emergence of the supermind,
a supramental change takes place on the entire substance of the
being. The spiritual being will be transformed into the gnostic
being, and there will be a fundamental change in the working of
the mind, life and body of the human personality “The lower
nature or Aparā Prakṛiti is transformed into the higher nature or
Parāprakṛiti or cit-śakti”. Aurobindo writes, “The supramental
transformation, the supramental evolution must carry with it a
lifting of mind, life and body out of themselves into a greater
way of being in which yet their own ways and powers would be, not
suppressed or abolished, but perfected and fulfilled by the self-

77 Sri Aurobindo unlike Hegel, does not believe in the
process of continuity but in emergence. He advances an emergent
theory of evolution.

78 Ramesh Chandra Sinha, Concepts of Reason and Intuition
So when the supramental consciousness emerges, discursive reason is not abnegated but absorbed and transformed into the spiritual reason. But the working of the supermind remains beyond the ken of ordinary reason. Sri Aurobindo observes, "As the summits of human mind are beyond animal perception, so the movements of Supermind are beyond the ordinary human mental conception: It is only when we have already had experience of a higher intermediate consciousness that any terms attempting to describe supramental being could convey a true meaning to our intelligence; for then, having experienced something akin to what is described, we could translate an inadequate language into a figure of what we know".

When the supermind descends, the Divine seizes every centre of individual consciousness. The individual becomes a free, gnostic being, and his vital, material and mental aspects are all Transformed. The integral view would be possible only when the veil separating the two hemisphere is removed and there is a final leap into the status of the Supermind. At the supramental stage, the process of knowledge undergoes a fundamental change. In the ordinary human personality, the senses and reason are important sources of knowledge. But in the gnostic personality, reason is supplemented by a synthetic vision of unity or


Ibid., p. 920
identity. Reason comprehends the phenomena as not-self which is totally different from and independent of the self. But to gnostic consciousness or supramental consciousness, the so-called not-self is not really opposed to the self but is only a part of the self. The phenomenal world is the projection of reality in the order of space and time. The gnostic consciousness will at once intimately and exactly know its object by a comprehending and penetrating 'identification with it'. Thus, supramental consciousness is the cosmic vision which is all-comprehensive and all-pervading. It is the integral knowledge of the essentially non-dual character of reality. In this comprehensive knowledge there is no independent centre of existence and no individual separated ego. The whole of existence is to its self-awareness an equable extension, one in oneness, one in multiplicity and one in all conditions and everywhere.

It is true that the individual is the instrument and the first field of transformation but an isolated individual transformation is not enough nor wholly feasible. This transformation takes place finally on a cosmic level. Aurobindo writes, "the individual change will have a permanent and cosmic significance only if the individual becomes a centre and a sign for the establishment of the supramental Consciousness-Force as
an overtly operative power in the terrestrial workings of Nature,—in the same way in which thinking Mind has been established through the human evolution as an overtly operative power in Life and Matter. This would mean the appearance in the evolution of a gnostic being or Purusha and a gnostic Prakriti, a gnostic Nature". Due to the supramental evolution, not only the human personality but the entire Nature will attain spiritual perfection. The supramental principle and its cosmic operation establish the principle of a divine life in terrestrial Nature. The human evolution is still in an imperfect stage. Aurobindo conceives that the course of evolution will continue even after the descent of the Supermind. But after the supramental descent, it will continue through knowledge. After the supramental transformation, the evolutionary process will continue and manifest the bliss of Saccidananda in the earth consciousness. The supermind itself in the involution or descent emerges from the ananda or bliss and in the evolution or ascent into the ananda. The realisation of self in supramental consciousness culminates in the bliss of Brahma. Sri Aurobindo says that with the dawn of gnostic consciousness Nature is transformed into Supernature. Nature or becoming will no more appear as something undivine and will no more suffer from darkness, ignorance, and inconscience. On the other hand, it will shine with the light and

81 Ibid., p. 962.
consciousness of the Divine and will permanently enjoy itself in its movement and further evolution in knowledge, the power and bliss of Saccidananda. Men then will no longer move in ignorance, they will act on knowledge. They will become gnostic beings and Life in that state will become a Divine life. The complete effects of this transformation can be calculated only when an account of Sri Aurobindo's conception of 'Gnostic being and Divine life' is understood.

THE FOUNDATION OF SADHANA

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga prescribes effortful exercises of "stilling the storms and tumult in our mental life". They are Quiet (acañcalatā), Calm (sthiratā), Peace (śānti) and Silence (Nirvata). Sri Aurobindo says, "It is not possible to make a foundation in Yoga if the mind is restless. The first thing needed is quiet in the mind". A quiet mind does not mean that there will be no thoughts or mental movements at all. But quiet means a state of mind in which there is no restlessness, no movement of anxiety or similar emotion which keeps a constant tenseness in the being and to that extent interferes with the opening of the being to the Higher Consciousness and obstructs the smooth and conscious reception of the incoming vibrations of

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the Higher Force or the outflowings of the soul within. Sri Aurobindo says, "by a quiet mind I mean a mental consciousness within, which sees thoughts arrive to it and move about but does not itself feel that it is thinking or identifying itself with the thoughts or call them its own. Thoughts, mental movements may pass through it as wayfarers appear and pass from elsewhere through a silent country - the quiet mind observes them or does not care to observe them, but in either case, does not become action or lose its quietitude". This quietitude of the mind, acañcalata, is to be acquired with vigilance and will.

This first step leads to the next, the Calm, Sthirata. Calm is a more positive state in which there is a kind of tranquillity which is not disturbed by movements on the surface. Sri Aurobindo says, "Calm ... is the very nature of the Sat-Purusa and the positive foundation of the divine Consciousness. Whatever else is aspired for and gained, this must be kept. Even Knowledge, Power, Ananda, if they come and do not find this foundation, are unable to remain". Again he writes, "Calmness is a more positive condition, not merely an absence of restlessness, over-activity or trouble. When there is a clear or great or strong tranquillity which nothing troubles or can trouble, then we say that calm is established". A still more positive condition is when there is

84 Ibid., p. 636.
85 Ibid., p. 640.
86 Ibid., p. 643.
the entry of Peace, Santi in the being. It carries with it a sense of solidity, harmony and deliverance with a quiet Ananda permeating its vibrations. Aurobindo writes, "Peace is more positive than calm - there can be a negative calm which is merely an absence of disturbance or trouble but peace is always something positive bringing not merely a release as calm does but a certain happiness or Ananda of itself". In such a state there can be no real disturbance which can affect the secure poise of the being.

Aurobindo says that it is the 'silent mind' that the true consciousness can build. "Silence is more than quietitude; it can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind keeping it voiceless or quiet outside; but more easily it is established by a descent from the above - one feels it coming down, entering and occupying or surrounding the personal consciousness which then tends to merge itself in the vast impersonal silence". A repeated suspension of the thoughts-movement, and an increasing awareness of the Silence behind, effects the needed opening and the silence begins to take hold of the mind. It is in this condition that Calm and Peace settle themselves. These four are not qualitatively different stages - they represent progressively the stages through which mind is completely freed from all disturbances.

87 Ibid., p. 643.
88 Ibid., p. 636.
THE TRIPLE PATH

The triple path is the three lines on which this yoga can be pursued. The triple path of Integral Yoga tries to integrate the separate ways of raja yoga, karma yoga, jñāna yoga and bhakti yoga. They are the path of wisdom and knowledge, of love and devotion and of good deeds and works. The sādhaka of the Integral Yoga can begin the sadhana in any part of the being that is more awake than the others and seeks a higher direction. In some it is the heart that is astir and longs for the Divine Beloved. For them the most natural way is the Way of Love and Devotion. In some it is the mind that is ardent and searches for a Truth that is more satisfying than any it has known hitherto. For them is the Way of Meditation and Knowledge. In others it is the will, the life - dynamism that is dissatisfied with the normal round of activity and seeks to yoke itself to a higher purpose and serve the Lord of All. For them is the Way of Works. But in actual practice it is found that these different processes are not exclusive. Each one as it proceeds, touches and sets into motion the other processes also. The human being is complex and what moves one part or one power of it has its repercussions on the others in varying degrees. Thus along- side the main current of
advance and progress, though in a lower key, other parts begin to respond in a contributory way and slowly gather strength to function on their own.

The triple path of devotion, knowledge and works attempts the province which other *yogas* leave unoccupied. It does not occupy itself with the elaborate training of the whole - mental system as the condition of perfection, but seizes on certain central principle, the intellect, the heart, the will and seeks to convert their normal operations by turning them away from their ordinary and external preoccupation and activities and concentrating them on the Divine. The Path of Knowledge aims at the realisation of the unique and supreme self. Sri Aurobindo says that it proceeds by the method of 'intellectual reflection, *vicāra*, to right discrimination, *viveka*. But the inevitable result of this path should not be, as ordinarily followed the rejection of the phenomenal worlds from the consciousness as an illusion and the final immersgence without return of the individual soul in the Supreme. Aurobindo writes, "the method of Knowledge may lead to an active conquest of the cosmic existence for the divine no less than to a transcendence. The point of this departure is the realisation of the supreme Self not only in one's own being but in all beings and, finally, the realisation
of even the phenomenal aspects of the world as a play of the
divine consciousness and not something entirely alien to its true
nature. And on the basis of this realisation a yet further
enlargement is possible, the conversion of all forms of
knowledge, however mundane, into activities of the divine
consciousness utilisable for the perception of the one and unique
object of Knowledge both in itself and through the play of its
forms and symbols. Such a method might well lead to the elevation
of the whole range of human intellect and perception to the
divine level, to its spiritualisation and to the justification of
the cosmic travail of knowledge in humanity”.

The Path of Devotion aims at the enjoyment of the Supreme
Love and Bliss and utilises normally the conception of Supreme
Lord in His personality as the divine Lover and enjoyer of the
universe. The World is then realised as a play of the Lord, with
our human life as its final stage, pursued through the different
phases of self-concealment and self-revelation. This path also,
as ordinarily practised, leads away from world-existence to an
absorption in the Transcendent and supra-cosmic. But here also
the exclusive result is not inevitable. Aurobindo writes, “The
yoga itself provides a first corrective by not confining the play
of divine love to the relation between the supreme Soul and the

Sri Aurobindo, The Synthesis of Yoga: Parts One and
individual, but extending it to a common feeling and mutual worship between the devotees themselves united in the same realisation of the supreme Love and Bliss. It provides a yet more general corrective in the realisation of the divine object of Love in all beings not only human but animal, easily extended to all forms whatsoever ... this larger application of the yoga of Devotion may be so used as to lead to the elevation of the whole range of human emotion, sensation and aesthetic perception to the divine level, its spiritualisation and the justification of .the cosmic labour towards love and joy in our humanity".

The Path of Works aims at the dedication of every human activity to the supreme Will. It begins by the renunciation of all egoistic aims for our works, all pursuit of action for an interested aim or for the sake of a worldly result. To that our works as well as the result of our works are finally abandoned. Aurobindo writes, "Karmayoga is used, like the other paths, to lead to liberation from the phenomenal existence and departure into the Supreme. But here too the exclusive result is not inevitable. The end of the path may be, equally, a perception of the divine in all energies, in all happenings, in all activities, and a free and unegoistic participation of the soul in the cosmic

90 Ibid., p. 34.
action. So followed it will lead to the elevation of all human will and activity to the divine level, its spiritualisation and justification of the cosmic labour towards freedom, power and perfection in the human being".

In fact in the integral view of things, these three paths are one. Aurobindo says, "Divine Love should normally lead to the perfect knowledge of the Beloved by perfect intimacy, thus becoming a path of Knowledge, and to divine service, thus becoming a path of Works. So also should perfect Knowledge lead to perfect Love Joy and a full acceptance of the works of That which is known; dedicated Works to the entire love of the Master of Sacrifice and the deepest knowledge of His ways and His being. It is in this triple path that we come most readily to the absolute knowledge, love and service of the One in all beings and in Its entire manifestation". Sri Aurobindo claims that his yoga is integral or synthetic because firstly, it comprehends all forms of yoga and secondly, it emphasis such aspects of yoga-discipline that are missed by other forms of Yoga. There is, for example, Hathayoga which recommends the various disciplines of the body; Rajayoga concentrates on mind, Jñāna yoga, Bhakti yoga and Karma yoga recommend the ways of knowledge, devotion and action respectively. Different religions of the world emphasise

91  Ibid., p. 35.

92  Ibid., p. 35.
either one or the other of these ways. Sri Aurobindo feels that all these ways emphasise only different aspects of the whole process and neglect the other ones. Knowledge and Devotion, for example, are not opposed to each other and yet Jñāna Marga and Bhaktiyoga assert and lay emphasis on their own ways. Sri Aurobindo feels that what is needed is an all round and total development. The growth of knowledge alone, or the perfection and control of only the body or the way of intense devotion will not bring about the change. What is needed is total transformation of all the aspects of being - the mental, the vital and the physical. Therefore, only that process can be Pūrṇa Yoga, which will aim at the complete transformation of every aspect of being. This is the aim of Sri Aurobindo's yoga and that is why it is called integral. "In brief, the integral yoga endeavours to unite into one philosophical, moral and technical system most of the positive ideas and techniques of all the other yogas as well as Eastern and Western philosophies, Science and techniques".

Thus through yoga the individual evolves into the light, knowledge and Bliss of the Divine and keeps a conscious co-operation with the power of spirit. The integral and complete union is a union of the individual with Her dynamic law of action

(sādharma), immutable being as pure consciousness (sāvuiya) and an expansive urge of love and delight (sālokya). Yoga helps and expedite the process of ascent, which is nothing but a process of widening, heightening and integration. Aurobindo's integral yoga helps all these aspects of evolution.

THROUGH REBIRTH

Aurobindo observes the process of rebirth is a means of individual evolution. He says that rebirth is as essential as birth. In the absence of rebirth, the aim of birth will remain ever incomplete. The result of birth imparts the clue of something that was prior to it. It provides also a sign of universality, of a uniformity of life which, indicates an, anonymous or unperceived future. Aurobindo writes, "All the known circumstances and results of birth presuppose an unknown before, and there is a suggestion of universality, a will of persistence of life, an inconclusiveness in death which seem to point to an unknown hereafter". Again he writes, "The very nature of our humanity supposes a varying constituent past for the soul as well as a resultant future". Certain modern ideas and discoveries conceive that rebirth is either 'unnecessary' or else 'illusory'. In the Buddhist theory rebirth is 'imperative' because of the compulsion of Karma and not of a soul. In the Advaita view birth


and rebirth are part of a cosmic illusion. In Aurobindo's view the theory of rebirth is one that 'affirms' the involution and evolution of the Spirit in Matter as the significant formula of this terrestrial existence. He conceives rebirth as an 'important fact' in this universe and an aspect of the general process of evolution and ascent.

Aurobindo ties up the principle of rebirth with the status of the individual. He is of opinion that since the individual is real, rebirth also is real. Aurobindo conceives the soul as that which is the core of man, that which is the real of man and because it is the real it is that which is reborn. He is of opinion that the soul is reborn in a material body as a 'natural result' and an 'innate law' of the evolutionary process. The very fact of involution of Saccidananda in the individual being expresses the inevitable ascent and spiritual conversion of the individual with a destiny to become the Divine. Aurobindo writes, "If it is once admitted that the Spirit has involved itself in the Inconscience and is manifesting itself in the individual being by an evolutionary gradation, then the whole process assumes meaning and consistence; the progressive ascent of the individual becomes a key-note of this comic significance, and the rebirth of the soul in the body becomes a natural and unavoidable
consequence of the truth of the Becoming and its inherent law". Thus Rebirth is 'an indispensable machinery' and the only mode through which spiritual manifestation is accomplished in this material universe. Rebirth furthers the cause of spiritual evolution and consummation of the highest goal of the individual. "If there is an evolution of consciousness in an evolutionary body and a soul inhabiting the body, ... then it is evident that it is the progressive experience of the 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. It is as necessary as birth itself".

Aurobindo says that one brief human life upon earth is insufficient for the evolutionary purpose. If the soul is developed, it gets the power of self-transformation to other worlds. If it is not sufficiently developed, it takes repeated births. The birth of an imperfect being in a material body gathers its motivation and guarantee of spiritual perfection from rebirth. Each birth is an advance and a progression over the preceding ones. In a new birth man does not pull on the same personality which it has discarded in the past and does not repeat the same formation of nature. In each new birth, it eliminates unnecessary habits of the past life. There is always,

97 Ibid., p. 764.
"a new ordering of the development of the past and a selection for the purposes of the future" Without this selection and transgression evolution will not prolong and there will be no meaning of ascent with uniqueness and originality. Growth or progression is the significance of rebirth. In Aurobindo's words, "Each birth is a new start it develops, indeed from the past, but is not its mechanical continuation: rebirth is not a constant reiteration but a progression, it is the machinery of an evolutionary process". Aurobindo says that it is the Psychic Being and not the Jīvātman which is subjected to rebirth. In the beginning it is only a spark of the Divine Splendour, but it becomes stronger and stronger as it passes through repeated births or the series of soul-experience. The Psychic Being discards all the sheaths retains the essence of the last personality in the latent memory, progressively passes through the other worlds, decides the next incarnation and takes fresh birth. In each fresh birth the Psychic Being changes its personality which is a new physical-vital-mental formation. Thus Aurobindo establishes that rebirth is not an extension or continuation of 'illusory individualities' as supported by some schools of thought. Rather it is a 'Spiritual necessity' for realising the spiritual destiny of a real individual. As

98 Ibid., p. 802.

99 Ibid., p.802.
Srivastava writes, "Rebirths are not haphazard wanderings of the soul but are a steady progression and continuous ascent in the realm of the Spirit. They serve as milestones for such an upward movement of the individual from grade to grade in his successive conversions into hierarchical modes of the Divine. Each spiritual conversion of the individual being requires a different body to house the spirit and to respond to its workings". Birth is merely the first step and rebirths are further steps towards earthly undertakings. Sri Aurobindo says, "It is rebirth that gives to the birth of an incomplete being in a body its promise of completeness and its spiritual significance". And he further writes, "Rebirth is an indispensable condition for any long duration and evolution of the individual being in the earth-existence".

The same reasons that necessitate birth explain rebirth also. The spiritual potentialities may not be consumed or used up in one birth. "It is evident that in one life we do not and cannot labour out and exhaust all the values and powers of that life, but only carry on a past thread, weave out something in the present, prepare infinitely more for the future". In the present birth man has attained the mental level. The soul has passed through repeated births in the lower animal forms to reach


102 Ibid., p. 826.

the present human status. So in order to achieve the terrestrial goal also, the soul must pass through repeated human births. Aurobindo writes, "For the soul has not finished what it has to do by merely developing into humanity; it has still to develop that humanity into its higher possibilities". So according to Aurobindo Rebirth is a 'necessary postulate' of human existence and it gives to individuals a certainty of superhuman future. He says, "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 prehuman past, it has a Superhuman future". Man is not the ultimate summit of evolutionary Nature since he is much too imperfect. There may be a higher or at least a larger possibility which the divine intends yet to realise in man. Man has to move from the ignorance and from the little life which he is in his mind and body to the Knowledge and the large divine life which he can compass by the unfolding of the spirit. The minds of great men possess, imperfectly certain powers which give the indication of perfection in the long course of evolution. This long line of evolution generally comprehends the ascent through rebirth that brings about such perfection. Aurobindo writes, "If mind itself has other powers as yet only imperfectly possessed by the highest types of the human individual, then a prolongation of the line of evolution and consequently of the ascending line of


105 Ibid., pp. 760-61.
The Divine Will is to attain or consummate higher and greater possibilities in man for which he has to go through repeated human births till he attains the supreme status. Thus rebirth is the most outstanding mechanism to accomplish the destined culmination and unless and until the mental is changed into supramental, evolution cannot arrest the process of rebirth. Aurobindo observes that there are many intermediary steps to be traversed before the attainment of the supramental level and it may not be possible to traverse and go beyond these levels in one life. Therefore births have to be succeeded by rebirths. "If Supermind also is a power of Consciousness concealed here in the evolution, the line of rebirth cannot stop even there; it cannot cease in its ascent before the mental has been replaced by the supramental nature and an embodied supramental being becomes the leader of terrestrial existence".

Under the aspect of rebirth viewed under evolution, life becomes a progressive, ascending series for the unfolding of the Spirit. It acquires a supreme significance because with rebirth, the way of the spirit in its power is justified. Aurobindo sees rebirth as the sum of the 'works' of large Spiritual will and wisdom in which the human soul and the cosmic spirit look into

106
Ibid., p. 763.

107
Ibid., pp. 763-4.
each other's eyes with a noble and divine meaning. Now there arises one question, how can an individual's birth be useful or helpful in the universal process of ascent? Or, how can such an individual phenomenon be an aspect of the universal process of evolution. Aurobindo says that the role of the individual in cosmic evolution is very significant. The human life is only a term in the gradation of series and the spirit in this cosmos can gradually grow into its purpose only through the medium of human life. It ultimately attains its purpose through the widening as well as the ascending individual spiritual-consciousness in the Physical body. The individual is an agent through which creation expresses itself and it is in him that the supreme consciousness is to be realised. Therefore the individual has to be given time and opportunity to grow. For this he has to assume a body. "The assumption of body is the first requisite for the ascent and conversion of the individual into a higher, spiritual and Gnostic being". It is in this embodied state that the individual can do whatever he can to expedite the next step of evolution. Therefore he must be born and reborn till the spiritual task is performed and the spiritual goal is achieved. Aurobindo says, "It is (in) the body that he must make his own foundation and the starting-point for his development of the life and mind and

spirit in the physical existence. That assumption of body we call birth, and in it only can take place here the development of self and the play of relations between the individual and the universal and all other individuals; in it only can there be the growth by a progressive development of our conscious being towards a supreme recovery of unity with God and with all in God" (sic). Thus as a matter of course human birth is a medium or a way through which the process of cosmic evolution can be forge ahead. Sri Aurobindo says, "It is conceivable so that the Eternal may have actually chosen to manifest or rather to conceal himself in the body; he may have willed to become or to appear as an individual passing from birth to death and from death to new life in a cycle of persistent and recurrent human and animal existence". The Eternal Spirit has individualised Itself in man for the Delight of a novel experience. The individual purusha assumes a body so as to serve the gradual progression of Life, Mind and ultimately the Spirit in this physical existence. Thus the assumption of a body or being born is a necessary postulate for the functioning of the Divine Purusha on the earth. But his birth cannot be in this world- order an isolated accident or a sudden excursion of a Soul into physicality without any 'preparing past' to it or any 'fulfilling hereafter'. Aurobindo says that, in a world of involution and evolution, "The intrusion

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110 Ibid., p. 754.
of such a rule of individual soul-life into an evolutionary
spiritual progression would make it an effect without cause and a
cause without effect; it would be a fragmentary present without a
past or a future. The life of the individual must have the same
rhythm of significance, the same law of progression as the cosmic
"life". It is in man that the Divine Will first discovers
itself, but one birth is quite 'inadequate' for this purpose.
Therefore, repeated births are necessary. On account of this,
Rebirth is an opportunity to work out man's destiny, ie, a
complete manifestation of the Spirit in a transformed body.

Now there arises some relevant questions concerning
rebirth. The first is whether it is possible or not for the human
soul to go back to the animal stage as the popular theories of
transformation have believed. Sri Aurobindo answers this in the
negative. Human level implies a heightening of consciousness. The
process of individual evolution is ever a steady march of
progression in successive births and there is no retrogression or
the fall of the higher being into the lower. Since the spirit is
gradually progressing through, the levels of Matter, Life and
Mind, it seems impossible that so decisive a conversion of
consciousness from a lower animal stage to the human level can be
reversed. Sri Aurobindo writes, "It seems impossible that it

111 Ibid., p. 758.
should so go back with any entirety, and for this reason that the transit from animal to human life means a decisive conversion of consciousness, quite as decisive as the conversion of the vital consciousness of the plant into the mental consciousness of the animal. It is surely impossible that a conversion so decisive made by Nature should be reversed by the soul and the decision of the spirit within her come, as it were, to naught. However, Sri Aurobindo does not rule out the possibility of exceptions. He says, "The movement of Nature is always sufficiently complex for us not to deny dogmatically such a possibility", in extraordinary cases. But in ordinary cases the soul that has once assumed a human status has to go through repeated births in the human formation. By rejecting the popular belief of retrogression Aurobindo asserts that "Whether the animal reversion is possible or not, the normal law must be the recurrence of births in new human forms for a soul that has once become capable of humanity".

The next factor to be considered is the process of rebirth or the mechanism of rebirth. The question is whether the soul would partake in a body soon after it leaves the old body or it would halt somewhere in some form before it enters a new body. In religious thought we can find both kinds of answers to the

113 Ibid., p. 762.
114 Ibid., p. 762.
question. On the one hand there is the general belief that the soul assumes a new body soon after the death of the old body. On the other hand there is the old religious belief of a life after death in hell or heaven or in some other world, which the soul acquires as a result of his own past actions. It is also believed that only when the soul completely disposes of the effects of his own deeds in the past life that he is sent to another material life and is given a new body. Sri Aurobindo analyses both these answers at length and says that it is not proper to give a clear cut and distinct answer to the question in hand. He holds that whether a particular soul would assume a new body immediately after death or whether it would dwell in some existence for some time before assuming a new body would depend on the inclinations or dispositions and the effort or endeavour generated by the soul itself. In certain cases it is believed that the unity is so strong that the soul is motivated to expedite the acceptance of a body and in these cases the life-span and the life-experiences have been so short and imperfect as to propel the soul to an immediate rebirth for the prolongation of the process. In some other cases it is believed that rebirth is not taking over a body immediately after death, it is the assumption of a new being or personality that may continue to have a supraphysical 'existence
without assuming a body. That means these souls have been able to procure ample command over their own nature – formation, so as to be able to continue in existence without the substantiation of a physical body. Sri Aurobindo gives thought to the nature of this supraphysical existence and he very rationally solves the problem. Because he does not attempt to fix up or rigidly determine the course of rebirth. Whether a soul would take over a body immediately after death or would wait in some supraphysical existence would be determined by the capacity and power of the soul itself. He writes, "This inconsistency would disappear if we admit a variable movement dependent on the stage of evolution which the soul has reached in its manifestation in Nature; all would then turn on the degree of its capacity for entering a higher status than the earthly life". He is of opinion that any attempt to solve this problem conclusively and to determine the course of the process of rebirth is futile.

The Indian tradition has tried to explain rebirth and the tendencies exhibit in each birth strictly in terms of the law of karma. Aurobindo also accepts this and says that an account of the problem of rebirth would be incomplete without referring to the problem of karma. He writes, "Rebirth is meaningless without karma, and karma has no fount of inevitable origin and no

115 Ibid., p. 795.
rational and no moral justification if it is not an instrumentality for the sequences of the soul's continuous experience. If we believe that the soul is repeatedly reborn in the body, we must believe also that there is some link between the lives that preceded and the lives that follow and that the past of the soul has an effect on its future; and that is the spiritual essence of the law of *karma*. Aurobindo holds that the evolution of the self is not possible if there is not a connected sequence from life to life, a result of action and experience, a law of *karma*. In order to evolve upward within his own being and ascend through the physical, vital and intellectual levels of man, he must be given opportunity. This opportunity is rendered by the process of rebirth and *karma*.

**COSMIC EVOLUTION**

In Aurobindo's view the universe and the individual are the two 'essential appearances' into which the Unknowable descends and through which it has to be approached. So simultaneously with the evolution of the Individual, the Cosmos also is evolving. Aurobindo writes "This terrestrial evolutionary working of Nature from Matter to Mind and beyond it has a double process: there is an outward visible process of physical evolution with birth as

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its machinery... there is, at the same time, an invisible process of soul evolution with rebirth into ascending grades of form and consciousness as its machinery. The first by itself would mean only a cosmic evolution; for the individual would be a quickly perishing instrument, and the race, a more abiding collective formulation, would be the real step in the progressive manifestation of the cosmic Inhabitant, the universal Spirit.

Aurobindo observes three stages of comic evolution. The beginning is an evolution in the Inconscience, an evolution in the Ignorance is the middle step and the end is an evolution in the Knowledge. To put it in Aurobindo's own words, "An evolution in the Inconscience is the beginning, an evolution in the Ignorance is the middle, but the end is the liberation of the spirit into its true consciousness and an evolution in the Knowledge. This is actually what we find to be the law and method of the process which has hitherto been followed and by all signs is likely to be followed in her future working by evolutionary Nature". The evolution of Matter, Life and Mind are the evolutionary principles in Inconscience and Ignorance. The Evolution of Mind to Supermind through the different grades of Mind is also evolution in Ignorance but it is only a partial Ignorance and it is stepping towards knowledge. The merging of the Supermind in Saccidananda is evolution in perfect Knowledge.


118 Ibid., p. 703.
The first step is evolution from Matter to mind, which is the process of evolution from Inconscience to Ignorance. The principle of Inconscience is the ‘self-absorbed’ and ‘self-concentrated’ state of the Absolute in which It has negated Itself in Its apparent opposite. Matter is the utmost involved state of the Absolute and is, therefore, the first product of creation of the cosmos. “Each successive level in the descent of the Divine is to man a stage in an ascension; each veil that hides the unknown God becomes for the God-lover and God-seeker an instrument of His unveiling”. Therefore, matter is the ground and base of all evolution of higher principles, vital, conscious, spiritual and Supramental. The foundation or the ‘original Substance’ here is Matter, and Life and Mind are evolved in Matter. Though Life and Mind are modified and evolved they are subject to the law of material nature. While they evolve they do transform their substance first into ‘living substance’ and then into ‘conscious substance’. The ‘inertia’, ‘immobility’ and ‘inconscience’ of Matter is changed into movement of life, feeling and consciousness. Life and Mind are not the original creative Power but they are like Matter intermediaries, successive and serialised instruments of the evolutionary

process. Aurobindo writes, "Spirit is the crown of universal existence. Matter is its basis; Mind is the link between the two. Spirit is that which is eternal; Mind and matter are its workings. Spirit is that which is concealed and has to be revealed; Mind and body are the means by which it seeks to reveal itself. Spirit is the image of the Lord of the Yoga; mind and body are the means He has provided for reproducing that image in phenomenal existence. All Nature is an attempt at a progressive revelation of the concealed Truth, a more and more successful reproduction of the divine image". At first consciousness houses herself in forms of Matter which 'appears to be' altogether unconscious. Then it struggles towards the 'living Matter' or animal which is imperfectly conscious. It develops slowly and reaches its climax of intelligence and exceeds itself in Man. The control by the original Inconscience over the consciousness emerging from it shows the struggling of a mentality towards knowledge but itself an Ignorance.

In the second step evolution passes from Ignorance to Knowledge, ie, Mind is evolving to Supermind through different grades of Mind. The emergence of mental consciousness characterises the present stage of humanity. The present stage of the world cannot be looked upon as its highest condition. Matter,

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Life and Mind are the principles at work in the universe. Mind is the highest emergent principle so far. But evolution has not reached its culmination, and Mind is not its highest peak. Man represents the highest cosmic principle, Mind. But the mental man has still to evolve out of himself the fully conscious being who is 'divine manhood'. This 'supramental supermanhood' shall be the next product of the evolution. This transition will mark the passage from the evolution in the Ignorance to a greater evolution in the Knowledge. The evolution in the Ignorance is founded in the 'darkness' of Ignorance and Inconscience while the evolution in Knowledge is founded and proceeding in the 'light' of the Superconscient.

Mind with its limited intelligence labours acutely and is improved, adapted, varied and classifies the confused materials offered by Life and hands them over to the 'supreme Artist' of our 'divine manhood'. That artist dwells in Supermind or Superman. The emergence of the Supermind in the mental human being is not an abrupt and spontaneous process. For man is not prepared as yet for the descent of the Truth-Consciousness. He has to evolve through higher and spiritual grades of consciousness which have a wide range. There are many grades of consciousness higher than mind. Mind is the lowest principle of
consciousness. The higher grades of consciousness gradually dispel ignorance and provide knowledge. The mental consciousness evolves towards its goal through the four different higher grades of mind. The higher grades are Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and ultimately Supermind which is the real destiny. Aurobindo conceives these higher grades as not only the grades of individual consciousness but also of cosmic consciousness. This conception of the grades of consciousness as successive steps in the evolution of cosmic consciousness is an unique and a revolutionary one.

The third step is the culminating stage of evolution in perfect Knowledge. Here Supermind merges to Saccidananda. Evolution through knowledge is supramental evolution. It is a process of the pure manifestation of the Spirit in myriad expressions of Consciousness-Force and Bliss. It will be a process of the glorious expression of the Existence, Consciousness-Force and Delight of the Spirit in newer and infinite Divine vistas. Aurobindo remarks, "The evolution in the Knowledge would be a more beautiful and glorious manifestation with more vistas ever unfolding the selves and more intensive in all ways than any evolution could be in the Ignorance". This gnostic manifestation of life would be more full and fruitful and

its interest more vivid than the creative interest of the Ignorance.

The consummation of the evolution in Knowledge is the realisation of the triune aspect of Saccidananda. The process of evolution will go on till the integral Supramental Consciousness merges in the unitarian consciousness of Saccidananda. The highest summit of Supramental-Consciousness is Saccidananda and, therefore, the descent of Saccidananda will be the consummation of the spiritual and supramental evolution of Nature. As Sri Aurobindo observes. "At the higher end of evolution the ascending ranges and summits of Supermind would begin to rise towards some supreme manifestation of the pure spiritual existence, consciousness and delight of being of Sachchidananda". The conversion of the supramental Consciousness into Existence, Consciousness - Force, Delight and Saccidananda signifies the completion of the evolution in Knowledge. The emergence of saccidananda in His trinity of Truth, Consciousness-Force and Bliss will be the utmost and highest realisation of the long process of evolution. "A change", states Sri Aurobindo, "would begin with its firm appearance; that change would be consummated when the supramental evolution became complete and rose into greater fullness of a supreme

122 Ibid., p.1013.
Sri Aurobindo’s remarkable contribution to the history of the development of the philosophy of spiritual evolution is that the individual salvation does not mean an isolated existence of the self and freedom from the cycle of birth and death but it is, for him, an integral salvation and Divinisation of the entire lower nature of mind, life where the elements of his organism are spiritualised and integrally transformed into the Divine. The consummation of the individual consists in his Divine birth. The individual in course of evolution is transformed into superman.

123
Ibid., p.1014.