CHAPTER THREE

MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

Before entering deep into the different aspects of human existence, his aspirations and his destiny, let us first enquire about the problems of Man and the universe. The status of the universe, the place of man in this universe, how he is related to the universe, the coming into being of the universe and the individual and their relation to the supreme reality etc are the questions we have to look into.

THE COSMOS

Most of the Indian system advocate that this world is created by the Creative Consciousness of Brahman out of His Own Being. Then one may ask, how ignorance and division, even though temporary, exist in a world that has come out of the Being of the omniscient and omnipotent reality. Many have dealt with this problem but most of the solutions expound nothing and no elucidations can be judged as satisfactory. Even the highly acclaimed system of Indian Philosophy seems, in a sense, explain away the whole issue by characterising this universe an illusion. Sri. Aurobindo has made a close observation and
perusal of all the different solutions and has shown them to be untenable because, he says, they are pseudo-solutions of an imaginary problem. He has also tried to eliminate the misconceptions and inconsistencies regarding the problem and has shown that the so called contradictions and inconsistencies are more 'apparent' than real and that the existence of the Omniscient and Omnipotent Brahman as the basis and support of this creation is perfectly consistent with the reality of this world, notwithstanding all the pragmatic ignorance prevailing in it. Aurobindo has argued against those views which reduce the world, to a bare illusion and he calls it an impropriety. He repudiates the view that the phenomenal world has come out of the cosmic illusion and eventually with the growth of knowledge it turns out to be unreal or illusory. He argues that if the world is somehow or the other attached to Brahman, the ultimate reality, then it can on no account be illusory. Sri. Aurobindo says, "The Brahman, the Supreme Reality, is That which being known, all is known; but in the illusionist solution it is That, which being known, all becomes unreal and an incomprehensible mystery". Thus Aurobindo repudiates the illusionist conception of the world.

Sankara observes the universe as not real on the basis of

illusions and hallucinations which he illustrates with the examples of dreams and mirages. Aurobindo says that the analogy of mental hallucinations would only be applicable if we admit a Brahman without names, forms or relations and a world of names forms relations as equal realities imposed one upon the other. And if both are real both must be either separate aspects of the Reality or co-ordinate aspects of the positive and negative poles of the one Existence. Then it would only be an error. And Aurobindo views that any error or confusion of Mind between them would not be a creative Cosmic Illusion, but only a 'wrong perception' of realities and a 'wrong relation' created by the Ignorance. Like this Aurobindo refutes and then establishes the inapplicability of all other illustrations or analogy which the Illusionist offered to us as a better understanding of the operation of Māyā. All these hallucinations are based upon an error due to a resemblance between a present real and another an absent real. But it can have no application to the imposition of a multiple and mutable unreality upon a sole and unique immutable Real. Aurobindo accepts that the fundamental operation of cosmic Nature, which we see everywhere is a 'diversity' of the identical. But, he says, it presents itself not as an 'illusion but as a various 'real formation' out of an one original substance. He writes, "A Reality of Oneness manifesting itself in
a reality of numberless forms and powers of its being is what we confront everywhere. There is no doubt in its process a mystery, even a magic, but there is nothing to show that it is a magic of the unreal and not a working of a Consciousness and Force of being of the omnipotent Real, a self-creation operated by an eternal self-knowledge".

Aurobindo conceives that all mental errors and illusions are the result of an ignorance which miscombines its data or proceeds falsely upon a previous or present or possible content of knowledge. Thus it is due to the ignorance of our mind that the world seem to us as unreal. "The world might be a reality and only the mind's construction of it or picture of it erroneous or imperfect". Mind is an instrument of the cosmic ignorance but it does not act like a power or an instrument of a cosmic Illusion. It is a seeker and discoverer or creator of truths, possibilities and actualities. Aurobindo observes that there is no original consciousness with mind as its instrument in human consciousness which forces us to see the differentiated universe as unreal and an indeterminable and undifferentiated Absolute as real. On the other hand there is an original and supreme cosmic Truth-Consciousness creative of a true universe but our mind acts in that universe as an imperfect and ignorant consciousness which

2 Ibid., p. 432.
3 Ibid., p. 495.
4 Discussed in chapter Four, P.140.
by its limitation of Knowledge errs, mispresents, mistakes and misdirects the truth and the known. Thus Aurobindo establishes that the nature of our consciousness is not of a character that justifies the hypothesis of a Cosmic Illusion. Instead the problem is in the mixture of Knowledge with Ignorance in our cognition of self and things. Aurobindo writes, "There is no need of bringing in an original power of Illusion always mysteriously existent in the eternal Reality or else intervening and imposing a world of non-existent forms on a Consciousness or Superconscience that is for ever pure, eternal and absolute".

Aurobindo takes 'the Absolute is the supreme reality' as the first premise. And from this first premise he derives the existence of the universe and the individual and then the relation of the individual to universe and then both to reality. According to him the world is the 'manifestation' of a divine Truth and the field for the working out of a greater creative motive. He takes the 'initiating Ignorance', 'frustration' and suffering in this 'divine possibility' as a necessary factor for the 'imperfect manifestation' to grow into perfection. He observes the world as the process of an 'evolutionary manifestation'. In that case there is no need of a cosmic Illusion or a 'Phantasy' of meaningless Māyā. Because the aspects

that seem to justify it would be only the natural circumstances of a difficult evolution. All the stress of struggle and effort, success and failure, joy and suffering, the mixture of ignorance and knowledge would be the experience needed for the soul, mind, life and physical part to grow into the full light of a spiritual perfected being.

Aurobindo conceives the Absolute as the 'origin and support' and 'secret reality' of all things. As the Absolute is real, self-existent and self-evident, so the universe also is real by virtue of the Absolute of which it is, a self-manifestation. "The creations of the absolutely Real should be real and not illusion". And all that contains in the universe also is real by virtue of the universal to which it gives a 'form and figure'. He substantiates his point with the Vedic doctrines such as 'purusa evadam sarvam', 'sarvam khalu idam brahma', etc. All these Vedic utterances establish that Brahman as such and the pulsating energy of Brahman which is the world, have equal existence. There may be a difference in degree of density but there cannot be a difference in existence. Both are real. The World is not the 'vivartha' or 'appearance' of Brahman but Brahman 'becomes' the world just as the clay becomes the pot. Since Brahman becomes the

6 Ibid., p. 458.
universe, both are one, though at a different level, and there is no duality. This view is different from Sankhya view, which conceives a dualism of Purusa and Prakriti. In Sankhya conception the Purusa is the conscious principle and Prakriti is the unconscious one. But in Aurobindo's conception there is a conscious working in the material universe also but only that it is in the latent form.

According to the Illusionist Brahman alone is real. If so there could be a consciousness or power of Brahman which is a 'real creator' and a 'creator of realities'. But they also argue that there can be no other reality than the pure and absolute Brahman. In that case it follows that there can be no true creative power of Brahman. Aurobindo observes that a Brahman consciousness aware of real beings, forms and happenings must accord a truth of Becoming or a spiritual and material reality of the universe. But in the Illusionist view the experience of the supreme Truth negates and nullifies the reality of the universe, which Aurobindo argues is 'logically incompatible'. Aurobindo writes, "Maya's creation is a presentation of beings, names, forms, happenings, things, impossible to accept as true, contradictory of the indeterminable purity of the One Existence. Maya then is not real, it is non-existent: Maya is itself an illusion, the parent of numberless illusions".

Ibid., p. 442.
Aurobindo holds that the Absolute manifests itself in two terms, a Being and a Becoming. The Being is the "fundamental reality" and the Becoming is an "effectual reality". The Becoming is "a dynamic power and result, a creative energy and working out of the Being, a constantly persistent yet mutable form, process, outcome of its immutable formless essence". Reality is at once static and dynamic, "Both status of being and movement of being can be real". The universe is a result of "dynamis in movement". It is the force of being throwing itself out in action and energy at work. In any case the 'status' of the being and the 'eternal dynamis' of the being are both real, and they are simultaneous. The status admits of action of dynamis and the action does not abrogate the status. Eternal status and eternal dynamis are both true of the Reality which itself surpasses both status and dynamis. The immobile and the mobile Brahman are both the same Reality. We cannot conclude from the limitations of perception and action that the 'movement' or the 'expression' or 'self-creation of the spirit' is unreal. It is a temporal order of reality but it is still a reality of the Real, not something else. All that is in Kinesis is the movement, the action and the creation are the Brahman. The becoming is movement of the being. Time is a manifestation of the Eternal. All is one Being one

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Consciousness and one even in infinite multiplicity. And Aurobindo argues that there is no need to bisect it into an opposition of 'transcendent Reality' and 'unreal cosmic Maya'. If the Reality alone exists and all is the Reality, then the world also cannot be excluded from that Reality. If the world does not reveal in its form and powers the Reality that it is and if it seems only a changing movement in Space and Time, that is not because it is unreal, but because it is a 'progressive self-expression' and 'manifestation' of That in Time. And our consciousness cannot see it or its essential significance in its totality. We can understand the reality of the world if only we distinguish between the 'essential Reality', the 'phenomenal reality' dependent upon it and the restricted and often misleading experience of our sense-experience and reason. It is held by our reason that truth must be empty of any conflict of contradictions. And according to that, since the phenomenal universe seems to be the contrary of the essential Brahman it is unreal. But Aurobindo says that what appears as contradictions to a 'reason based on the finite' may not be contradiction to a vision or a 'larger reason based on the infinite'. What our mind sees as contraries may be to the infinite consciousness not contraries but complementaries. 'Essence' and 'phenomenon of

Likewise since the individual being is contrary of both transcendence and universality it is also unreal.
essence' are complementary to each other and not contradictory. The phenomenon manifests the essence; the finite is a circumstance and not a contradiction of the infinite; the individual is a self-expression of the universal and the transcendent. All the problems and difficulties are raised by the finite reason by cutting, separating and opposing the power of the Infinite to its being. To understand truly the world-process of the Infinite and the Time-process of the Eternal, the consciousness must pass beyond this 'finite reason' and the 'finite sense' to a 'larger reason' and 'spiritual sense', that is in touch with the consciousness of the Infinite and responsive to the 'logic of the Infinite'. There is the Timeless and there is the process of things in Time. But nothing can appear in Time unless it has a basis in the timeless Reality. The 'timeless eternity' and 'time eternity' are two aspects of the Eternal and Absolute and both are real but in a different order of reality. What is unmanifest in the Timeless manifests itself in Time. Each thing exists is real in its own degree of the manifestation and is so seen by the consciousness of the Infinite.

Thus Aurobindo establishes that there is no Cosmic Illusion. And he holds that the 'world-existence' is not a 'deceptive trick' of Mind nor a blindly and helplessly self-existent mass of

separate phenomenal existences. It is not an existence without having any 'secret Intelligence' within aware of its starting point and its goal, but it is one which is wholly 'self-aware' and therefore entirely 'master of itself'. The universe always has an aim. In Aurobindo's words it is not "a purposeless illusion nor a fortuitous accident", but it has a design and a teleology working within it. It possesses the 'phenomenal being' in which it is involved, realises itself in form and unfolds itself in the individual. Aurobindo conceives that the 'manifestation' of the supreme reality into the world for the 'purpose of creation' and he says it is a lila. "World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing".

THE COSMIC PRINCIPLES

Aurobindo conceives the cosmos as the manifestation of the Absolute. In its manifestation, the Absolute plunges into its opposite, the Inconscient. This Inconscient is a status and power of involved consciousness. Out of this Inconscient that all in the material universe may emerge. Then the first emerged cosmic principle is Matter. Matter emerges itself in Life, Life into

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12 Ibid., p. 42.
13 Ibid., p. 78.
Mind and the Soul. In Aurobindo's words, "Out of this Matter apparent Life manifests and it delivers out of itself by means of the living body the Mind it contains imprisoned within it". Now let us examine each of the cosmic principle separately.

MATTER

Aurobindo repudiates the fundamental distinction between Spirit and Matter. He conceives Matter as the lowest power of the being of Saccidananda which it assumes while subjecting itself to the phenomenal action. It is the first manifestation in space and the substance and stuff of the universe. Brahman is the cause, the supporting power and 'indwelling principle' of the universe. He is its material cause as well as its sole material. Matter is Saccidananda represented to its own mental experience as a formal basis of object knowledge, action and delight of existence. He writes, "Matter also is Brahman and it is nothing other than or different from Brahman".

Aurobindo is of opinion that our present knowledge idea and experience of matter is not its truth. But it is merely a phenomenon of a particular relation between our senses and the all existence in which we move. And it is in that sense that Matter is unreal and non-existent. Substance is the form of the

14 Ibid., p. 188.
15 Ibid., p. 242.
world-existence on which it works. In Aurobindo's words, "Of that substance if Matter is one end, Spirit is the other. The two are one: Spirit is the soul and reality of that which we sense as Matter; Matter is a form and body of that which we realise as Spirit". Thus in Aurobindo's conception Matter is only a form of Spirit. He observes that Existence is in its activity a Conscious-Force and since 'Force' is only the action of one sole-existing conscious-Being', its results can be nothing else but forms of that 'Conscious-Being'. It is because of the dividing action of Mind that this 'form of Spirit' assumes the present appearance. To put it in Aurobindos words, "Matter is substance of the one Consciousness-Being phenomenally divided within itself by the action of the universal Mind".

The whole 'indivisible series' and 'ever ascending' degree of the world-existence are founded on a "conceptive difference ending in a practical distinction". It is this distinction that creates the series descending from Spirit through Mind to Matter and ascending again from Matter, through Mind to Spirit. But the real oneness is never 'abrogated' 'diminished' or 'impaired' even in the grossest densities of the Matter. When Matter first emerges it becomes the dominant principle. It seems to be the basis of all things, the constituent of all things and the end of

16 Ibid., pp. 240-41.
17 Ibid., p. 236.
all things. But Matter itself is found to be a result of something that is not Matter but of Energy. And this Energy is not something self-existent and acting in the Void but turns out to be the action of a secret Consciousness and Being. When the spiritual knowledge and experience emerge it is seen that the creative Energy in Matter is Movement of the power of the Spirit. Matter itself is not the original and ultimate reality. At the same time the view that divorces Matter and Spirit and puts them as opposites is unacceptable. Aurobindo writes "Matter is a form of Spirit, a habitation of Spirit, and here in Matter itself there can be a realisation of Spirit". Matter contains in itself the balance between a perfect poise of tranquillity and the action of an immeasurable energy. But it does not posses that which it contains. its peace wears the dull mask of a 'sleep of unconsciousness' and rather an 'impersonal consciousness'. It is driven by a force which is its real self but whose sense it cannot yet seize nor share. It has not the awakened joy of its own harmonious energies.

LIFE

Just as Matter is the subordinate principle of the Existence of Saccidananda, so Life is the subordinate principle of the

Consciousness Force of Saccidānanda. It is the energy aspect of Saccidananda, the dynamic play of a universal Force. Life is also a hidden form of the Absolute like Matter. However, Life is beyond the stage of Matter and is a 'higher principle' Aurobindo writes, "Life is a scale of the universal Energy in which the transition from inconscience to consciousness is managed".

Life is an immortal stream of progressive consciousness. It struggles through ups and downs of destiny to fulfil itself in a 'mystic something'. From cradle to grave its wayward course is led by a conscious Force. The past is its source, the present its course and the future its goal. The soul force is its resource. The Womb is not its origin nor the tomb its destiny. Its body ripens and rots, but something that lives in it as Life, goes on throbbing 'right-left' to the march of existence. Life makes forms, stimulates them with its energy and holds them by disintegrating and renewing their substance in a ceaseless way. Thus life and death are not contradictory to each other though they appear to be so. Aurobindo writes, "Even in the death of the body there is no cessation of Life, only the material of one form of life is broken up to serve as material for other forms of life".

Life is evidently a stage intermediate, between 'animal

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20 Ibid., p. 176.
existence' and 'inanimate' Matter. It lies embedded in matter in an 'inconscient form'. It 'emerges' gradually by its own force into consciousness and finally into mind. Aurobindo writes, "Life is a force evolving out of Matter and culminating in Mind". Evolution of life presupposes the involution of it in matter. Life reveals itself as essentially the same everywhere from the atom to man. It is a 'universal operation' of Conscious-Force that creates, maintains, destroys and recreates forms or bodies and attempts to awake conscious sensation in those bodies. "Life is universal Force working so as to create, energise, maintain and modify, even to the extent of dissolving and reconstructing, substantial forms with mutual play and interchange of an overtly or secretly conscious energy as its fundamental character".

There are three stages in the operation, which has taken successively three appearances, the 'material', 'vital' and 'mental'. The lowest is that in which the vibration is still in the 'sleep of Matter'. The middle stage is that in which it becomes capable of a response, still 'submental' but 'on the verge of consciousness'. The highest is that in which life develops 'conscious mentality' which becomes the basis for the development of sense-mind and intelligence. Aurobindo writes, "It is in the middle stage that we catch the idea of Life as

21 Ibid., p. 185.

22 Otherwise the law of creation has to be admitted which is contradictory to its nature.

distinguished from Matter and Mind, but in reality it is the same in all the stages and always a middle term between Mind and Matter constituent of the latter and instinct with the former."

It is neither the mere formation of substance nor the operation of mind with substance and form as its object of apprehension. It is rather an 'energising' of conscious being which is a 'cause and support' of the formation of substance and an intermediate 'source and support' of 'conscious mental apprehension'. It supports and liberates into action the 'apprehensive consciousness' of existence called mind and gives it a dynamic instrumentation so that it can work not only on its own forms but on forms of life and matter. It connects and supports and acts as a middle term between the 'mental commerce' of mind and matter.

The continual currents of the 'pulsating nerve-energy' of life carry 'force of the form' as a sensation to modify Mind and bring back 'force of Mind' as will to modify matter. This 'Pranic-energy' is the whole significance of the omnipotent Life that has manifested and inhabits the material universe.

So "Life is neither an inexplicable dream nor an impossible evil that has yet become a dolorous fact but a mighty pulsation of the divine All-Existence". Life is not a separate entity but has all Conscious-Force behind it in every one of its workings.

24 Ibid., p. 186.

25 Ibid., p. 231.
All life depends for its nature on the fundamental poise of its own constituting consciousness because as the Consciousness is so will be the Force. It is that Conscious-Force alone which exists and acts in created things. Life is only its 'final operation' intermediary between Mind and Body.

Life, like matter, proceeds and evolve through the widening, heightening and integration process. As life evolves it passes through four stages of development. The first status of life is characterised by a dumb inconscient drive. This drive is not free, but controlled by the universal movement of which it is a part. It is the consciousness of Matter and the material living. Life starts with the extreme divisions and rigid forms of Matter. The atom which is the basis of all material form is the very type in this rigid division. It rejects death and dissolution under any ordinary force. It is the physical type of the 'separate ego' which defines its existence against the principle of fusion in Nature. In this first status we can see the subjection of the material individual to the not-self.

The second status is the state of vitality. In this status the contrary phenomenon takes the lead and the physical basis of the 'vital ego' is obliged to consent to dissolution. Its constituents are broken up so that the element of one life can be
used to enter into the elemental formation of other lives. There is a constant 'dissolution and dispersion' and a 'reconstruction' with a constant 'interchange and fusion' of elements. Aurobindo writes, "Interchange, intermixture and fusion of being with being, is the very process of life, a law of its existence".

Now there are two principles in life. One is the necessity or the will of the separate ego to survive in its distinctness and guard its identity. The other is compulsion imposed upon it by nature to fuse itself with others. In the physical world Nature lays much stress on the former impulse but as soon as Nature has secured a sufficient firmness in her creation she reverses the process. Thus the individual form perishes and the aggregate life profits by the elements of the form that is thus dissolved.

The terms of the second status of Life are 'death and mutual devouring, hunger and conscious desire'. This desire is inherent in life and pushes it forward on the ladder of perfection. It is the struggle to increase, to expand to conquer and to possess. The phenomenon of 'death' involves in itself a 'struggle to survive'. The phenomenon of 'hunger' and desire involves a struggle towards a status of 'satisfaction and security'. The phenomenon of 'limited capacity' involves a struggle towards expansion, mastery and possession'. Because, "Limitation and

Ibid., p. 201.
defect are only the negation by which Life tempts its own positive being to seek for the perfection of which it is eternally capable". The struggle for life is not only a struggle to survive but also it is a struggle for possession and perfection. Thus in the second status of life there is the consciousness of limitation and the struggle to possess and master both self and the not-self.

The development to the third status brings a harmonisation of the first two terms of life. It is a transformation of the original terms into a 'fulfilment and a harmony'. But in appearance it seems the very contradiction and opposite of the first conditions. In this state the individual is able to persist in the consciousness of his individuality and yet fuse himself with others without disturbance of 'preservative equilibrium' and 'interruption of survival'. This state of development is a condition in which we rise progressively beyond the struggle for life by 'mutual devouring' and the 'survival of the fittest' by that struggle. In this status there is more and more a survival by 'mutual help' and a self-perfectioning by 'mutual adaptation', 'interchange' and 'fusion'. Here "Life is a self-affirmation of being, even a development and survival of ego, but of a being that has need of other beings, an ego that seeks to meet and include other egos and to be included in their life". In this

27 Ibid., p. 199.

28 Ibid., p. 203.
tertiary status of the evolution, the 'fittest for survival' would be the individuals and the aggregates who develop most the 'law of association' and the 'law of love' and who harmonise most successfully 'survival' and 'mutual self-giving'.

The principle of this status is love and it seeks to possess and to be possessed, to receive and to give. The growth of the principle of love does not abolish the 'law of desire' but rather transforms and fulfils it. Love is in its nature the desire to give ourselves to others and to receive others in exchange. It is 'a commerce between being and being'. In the case of physical life it does not desire to give itself but it desires only to receive. But in the status of love the true law is to establish an 'equal commerce' in which the joy of giving is equal to the joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater. Aurobindo writes, "In its life-origin, the law of love is the impulse to realise and fulfil oneself in others and by others, to be enriched by enriching, to possess and be possessed because without being possessed one does not possess oneself utterly." Thus there comes about through association and through love, a recognition of the not-self as a greater and dearer self than its own individuality. Therefore there comes a

A conscious preservation of individuality along with the consciously accepted necessity and desire of interchange, self-giving and fusion with other individuals, is necessary for the working of the principle of love.

The secondary terms of life which is hunger and desire.


Ibid., p. 205.
consciously accepted submission to its law and need which fulfils the increasing impulse of aggregate life to absorb the individual.

However, the perfect solution of the problem of Life is not likely to be realised by 'association', 'interchange' and 'accommodations of love' alone. But it must come by a fourth status of life in which the eternal unity of the many is realised through the spirit. In this fourth state the conscious foundation of all the operations of life is laid not in the 'divisions of body' or in the 'passions and hungers of the vitality' or in the 'grouping and the imperfect harmonies of the mind' but in the 'unity and freedom of the Spirit'. The fourth status is a sign of perfection. It is conceived as "the pure and full emergence of the original will, the illumined fulfilment of the intermediate desire, the high and deep satisfaction of the conscious interchange of Love by the unification of the state of the possessor and possessed in the divine unity of souls which is the foundation of supramental existence".

MIND

When Mind emerged it became the dominant principle. It uses Life and Matter as means of its expression and a field for its

33 Ibid., p. 206.
34 Ibid., p. 218.
own growth and sovereignty. And it begins to work as if it were the true reality and the creator. But Mind also is a limited and derivative power. It is here a 'luminous shadow' thrown by the divine supermind. In the mind, consciousness is delivered out of its imprisonment in the act and form of its own force. But it is not yet master of the act and form because it has emerged as an individual consciousness and is aware therefore only of a fragmentary movement of its own total activities. Aurobindo conceives Mind as the "chained and hampered sovereign of our human living". It is the dominant factor of our being. It is an evolute of the supermind. It is a 'dark figure' and the diminutive form of supermind. "Our mind stands between superconscience and an inconscience and receives from both these opposite powers: it stands between an occult subliminal existence and an outward cosmic phenomenon". Mind revels in the division and manyness and is forgetful of the oneness behind. It requires reillumination from the supermind. It always translates infinity into the terms of the finite. It measures off, limits and divides objects. Mind divides as well as aggregates ad infinitum. Mind is a principle which breaks, divides, multiplies, adds and subtracts. It cannot cross its limitation and yet be beyond the limits of mathematics. "Mind in its essence is a consciousness


36 Ibid., p. 432.
which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. It cuts up being into 'wholes' into 'ever smaller wholes' into atoms and the 'primal atoms' into nothingness. But the supramental knowledge knows every whole and every atom to be only a concentration of all, the all force of consciousness and the all being into a phenomenal form of itself. If mind goes beyond this dividing tendency and tries to conceive a real whole then, "it loses itself in a foreign element; it falls from its own firm ground into the ocean of the intangible, into the abysm of the infinite where it can neither perceive, conceive, sense nor deal with its subject for creation and enjoyment". When mind subordinates itself to the supramental knowledge then there would be no real division but only an infinitely multiple concentration into forms of being and division could only be a subordinate process of appearance necessary to their spatial and temporal play. Mind is constitutionally incapable of grasping a whole and it therefore inevitably reduces every whole to a mere aggregate and so it can give only a partial knowledge of the object. Mind is obliged to deal with objects as if they were things in themselves while truly they are not. It is this essential characteristic of Mind which conditions the workings of all its operative powers such as conception, perception,


38 Ibid., pp. 162-63.
sensation and the dealings of creative thought. "It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession". Mind is the parent of limitations and ignorance and the dualities. "Mind is the nodus of the great ignorance, because it is that which originally divides and distributes and it has even been mistaken for the cause of the universe and for the whole of the Divine Maya". Avidhva, the self-ignoring faculty, separates the action of mind from the action of the supermind. Because of this separation Mind perceives only the particular and not the universal. Mind is so limited that it views every phenomenon as a thing-in-itself and separate part of a whole. It is unable to conceive both particular and universal as phenomenon of the infinite. Sri Aurobindo writes, "the Mind tries to clamp everything into rigidly fixed forms and apparently unchanging or unmoving external factors, because otherwise it cannot act". Only the external Real-Idea is firm and maintains a certain ordered constancy of figures and relations in the flux of things. Mind vainly attempts to imitate this constancy by attributing fixity to that which is always inconsistent. It is because of the Ignorance of the human mind, and because of its involved state

39 Ibid., p. 162.

40 Ibid., p. 163.

41 Ibid., p. 188.
that mind fails to apprehend the truth.

Mind is a form of consciousness which is too finite and ignorant to conceive the Infinite consciousness. It cannot comprehend the inner and final truth. It is incapable of knowing the secrets of Nature and has no vision of the Divine. "The Reason", states Sri Aurobindo, "cannot arrive at any final truth because it can neither get to the root of things nor embrace the totality of their secrets; it deals with the finite, the separate, the limited aggregate and has no measure for the all and the infinite". When mind tries to deal with the infinite then at once the inalienable tendency to delimitation comes in and the Mind will find itself handling images, forms and words. Mind fails to comprehend the Absolute. It can only conceive or perceive a formless Vast but utterly fails to understand the real Infinite. Aurobindo writes, "Mind cannot posses the infinite, it can only suffer it or be possed by it; it can only lie blissfully helpless under the luminous shadow of the Real cast down on it from planes of existence beyond its reach". The possession of the infinite can come only by an ascent to those supramental planes and the knowledge of it can have only by an inert submission of Mind to the descending messages of the Truth-conscious Reality.

Also Aurobindo writes in Savitri,
"Reason cannot tear off that glimmering mask;
Her efforts only make it glimmer more;
In packets she ties up the Indivisible;
Finding her hands too small to hold vast Truth
She breaks up knowledge into alien parts
Or peer through cloud-rack for a vanished sun".

The main function of Mind is to know the world and to indulge in creative activities. Mind is not an original and primary creative power of Consciousness. It is a derivative, and 'instrumental demiurge' and an 'intermediary creator'. "Mind creates, but it is not an original creator, not omniscient or omnipotent, not even an always efficient demiurge". On the other hand Maya, the Illusive power, an original creator which creates all things out of the substance of Reality. In the workings of Mind there is no creation of illusions as in the case of Maya. Because Mind creates out of substance only what is possible to the substance. It does only with the force of Nature what is in accordance with her realisable energies Mind only invents or discovers what is already contained in the truth and potentiality of Nature. It receives inspirations for creation from within itself or from above. These inspirations can take form if only they are truths or potentials. For if the mind erects what is neither true nor potential then it cannot be created and cannot become actual in Nature. On the contrary in the creation of Maya, eventhough it creates on the basis of the Reality it erects a superstructure which has nothing to do with the Reality and which is not true or potential in it. Though it creates out of the substance of the Reality it makes out of it

44 Ibid., pp. 433-34.
things that are not possible to it. That means it creates its forms and determinations while Reality is supposed to be Formless and interminable.

Mind is an 'observer' and 'user' of actualities. It is a 'diviner' or 'recipient' of truths not yet known or actualised and a dealer in possibilities. But it has not the omniscience of an infinite Consciousness. It is limited in knowledge and its limitation of Knowledge is constituted by 'incompleteness', 'openness to error' and Ignorance. Therefore Aurobindo says, "In dealing with actualities it may misobserve, misuse, miscreate; in dealing with possibilities it may miscompose, miscombine, misapply, misplace; in its dealings with truths revealed to it, it may deform, misrepresent, disharmonise". However its limitations of knowledge are supplemented by imagination and discovery. It does not like the infinite Consciousness, manifests the 'Known' but it has to discover the 'unknown'. It seizes the possibilities of the Infinite not as results or variations of forms of a latent Truth but as constructions, creations or figments of its own boundless imagination. It receives inspirations, intuitions, imaginations and impulsions to knowledge and action. It has not the omnipotence of an infinite conscious Energy but it can only realise or actualise what the

Cosmic Energy will accept from it. It may make constructions of its own which have no correspondence with the things of actual existence, no potentiality of realisation and no support from the truth behind them. But still these constructions start from an illegitimate extension of actualities, and turn truths to an application which is not applicable.

Aurobindo observes three grades of Mind. They are the physical mind, the vital mind and the thinking mind. The physical mind perceives the actual, the physical and the objective. It accepts them as a fact and this fact as self-evident truth beyond question. The physical mind regards, whatever is not actual, not physical and not objective as unreal. The 'entirely real', for the physical mind, is an 'actual', 'objective', and a 'physical fact'. The physical mind regards its own being too, as an objective fact, warranted to be real by its existence in a visible and sensible body. It accepts all other subjective beings and things on the same evidence in so far as they can become objects of our external consciousness. Aurobindo conceives Physical Science as a vast extension of this mentality. Physical mind corrects the errors of the senses and pushes beyond the first limitations of the sense-mind by discovering means of bringing facts and objects into the field of objectivity. Its
standard of reality is objective and its test of the real is the possibility of verification by positive reason and objective evidence.

The vital mind or life-mind is an instrument of desire. It is not satisfied with the actual but it deals in possibilities. It has the passion for novelty and is seeking always to extend the limits of experience for the satisfaction of desire. It has the desire to enjoy and to possess actualities. But, at the same time, it hankers also after the unrealised possibilities and has the ardent desire to materialise, to possess and to enjoy them also. It is not satisfied with the mere physical and objective but is also seeks a subjective, an imaginative and a purely emotive satisfaction and pleasure. Without this factor the physical mind of man left to itself would live like the animal, moving in material Nature's established order, asking for nothing beyond it. This, vital mind has, an 'unquiet life-will' and 'demands'. "It enlarges always desire and craving, creates a dissatisfaction, an unrest, a seeking for something more that what life seems able to give it: it brings about a vast enlargement of the field of physical actuality by the actualisation of our unrealised possibilities, but also a constant demand for more and always more, a quest for new a world
to conquer, an incessant drive towards an exceeding of the bounds of circumstance and self-exceeding".

There is still another reflective mentality behind the dynamic and vital mentality. It is the source of the pure thinker in us. "It is that which knows mentality in itself and sees the world not in terms of life and body but of mind; it is that which, when we get back to it, we sometimes mistake for the pure spirit as we mistake the dynamio mind for the soul". This higher mind is able to perceive and deal with other souls as other forms of its pure self. It is capable of sensing them by pure mental impact and communication and no longer only by vital and nervous impact and physical indications. It conceives too a mental figure of unity. But even this reflective mentality does not escape from this original error of mind. The fundamental error of Mind is the fall from self-knowledge. That means the individual soul is ignorant of the fact that its individuality is a form of Oneness and one concentration of the universal. From this original error results all its particular ignorances and limitations. The human mind is conscious of things and knows them only as they present themselves to its individuality. Because of this it falls into an ignorance of the rest and thereby into an erroneous conception even of that which it seems

46
Ibid., p. 414.

47
Ibid., p. 169.
to know. Mind is ignorant of the fact that since all being is interdependent, the knowledge either of whole or of the essence is necessary for the right knowledge of the part. So there is an element of error in all human knowledge. "Self-ignorance is therefore the root of all the perversity of our existence, and that perversity stands fortified in the self-limitation, the egoism which is the form taken by that self-ignorance".

The thinking mind is in its very nature an ignorant dealer in possibilities. That means it does not possess the truth behind anything. It is simply sounding and testing each possibility of any given thing so that perchance it may get at some settled belief or knowledge about them. But since dealing in a world of relativities and possibilities, it can arrive at no final certainty, no absolute and abiding conviction. Aurobindo says that, the thinking mind "inquires into everything, questions everything, builds up affirmations and unbuilds them, erects systems of certitude but finally accepts none of them as certain, affirms and questions the evidence of the senses, follows out the conclusions of the reason but undoes them again to arrive at different or quite opposite conclusions, and continues indefinitely if not ad infinitum this process". Even the actual, the realised can present itself to our mentality as a 'may be or may not be'.

48 Ibid., p. 172.
49 Ibid., p. 414.
SOUL

The soul is the psychic principle in man. It is different from his life, mind and body. Aurobindo writes, "The Self of man is a thing hidden and occult; it is not his body, it is not his life, it is not, -eventhough he is in the scale of the evolution of the mental being, the Manu - his mind. Therefore neither the fullness of his physical, nor of his vital, nor of his mental nature can be either the last term or the true standard of his self-realisation". Like other cosmic principle, there is a double soul or psyche in the human being. Aurobindo says that we have two minds in us. One is the surface mind of our expressed evolutionary ego, and the other a subliminal mind which is not hampered by our actual mental life and its strict limitations. So also we have in us two lives. The first is the outer, involved in the physical body, bound by its past evolution in Matter and the other subliminal force of life which is not cabined between the narrow boundaries of our physical birth and death. Even in the matter of our being there is this duality. Aurobindo writes, "We have a double psychic entity in us, the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness, and a
subliminal psychic entity, a pure power of light, love, joy and refined essence of being which is our true soul behind the outer form of psychic existence". He further remarks that it is when some reflection of this larger and purer psychic entity comes to the surface that we say of a man that he has a soul, and when it is absent in his outward psychic life that we say of him, that he has no soul. The desire or surface psychic entity forms our egoistic existence. The subliminal soul is open to universal delight. The surface soul is deprived of such delight since it is guarded by egoistic walls. Even when cosmic delight penetrates through such walls, it becomes distorted. Thus it follows that the superficial or desire-soul lacks the true soul-life.

The desire soul obstructs the realisation of our true soul life. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the need of the awakening of the inner soul of which we are quite unconscious. The vision of the Divine is shut from our view because of our egoistic desire soul. He says that the misfortune of the present humanity is that it cannot find its real soul. To put it in his words, "The malady of the world is that the individual cannot find his real soul, and the root-cause of the malady is again that he cannot meet in his embrace of things outward the real soul of the world in which he lives". To find our true self is the first step in the

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52 Ibid., p. 221.
realisation of our Divine life. The individual aspires to trace the essence of being, delight and power in the external things and gets only contradictory results. If he succeeds in finding out that essence, he will find also the universal being, power, conscious existence and delight even in the contradictory results. But contradiction in that case will be reconciled in the harmony and unity of the Truth. He will then find his own true soul and with the aid of it, his self. Because Aurobindo conceives that the true soul is his self's delegate, and his self and the self of the world are one. Usually the self is unable to do this due to the interference of the egoistic ignorance in its different psychological states.

Our superficial self or Desire Soul, which is a physical-vital-mental formation, is restricted because of its very nature in knowledge, feeling and experience of the Divine Delight. But the subliminal Mind, Life and physicality are, unlike the surface being, greater in knowledge and experience and are in perpetual contact with the cosmic Mind, Life and Matter. Out of our ignorance of the fact that our mind is only the human range of consciousness and that there is much above and below our mental level, we identify it with the superficial consciousness. As a matter of fact our larger and truer individuality is constituted
by the subliminal mental, vital and physical beings, supported by
the psychic being. It is the psychic being which takes delight in
all the different experiences of the surface mind and allows us
to hold fast through the surface mind. It has its distorted
reflection in the Desire Soul which, confined within the
boundaries of egoistic ignorance, fails to see the 'rasa' (the
delight of things) behind the varied experiences of life and is
unable to have any contact with the Divine-Cosmic Delight. From
our varied experience we are able to derive either pleasure or
pain or indifference. But according to Aurobindo's view this is
not the actual 'rasa' but is only due to the wrong reception of
the experiences of life by the Desire-soul. Due to its erroneous
acceptance of life, the Desire-soul misinterpret the 'rasa' in a
triple way that is failing to appreciate the purely essential joy
of being, it indulges itself in an unequal way in the three terms
of pleasure, pain and indifference. Unlike the desire soul, the
subliminal soul deals with the essence or responds to the rasa of
things. The knowledge of our own self is not possible unless we
go behind our surface existence, "and send down our plummet into
the subconscient and open ourself to the superconscient so as to
know their relation to our surface being". Between these three
terms man finds his whole existence to move. The superconscient

53
Ibid., p. 223.
in man consist of the essential truth and the delight of things. It is not at all controlled by external diversities. The subconscient in man is open to the superconscient through its world-experience and is not one with the soul of the world. The subliminal soul is conscious of the 'rasa' of things and has an equal delight in all contacts. This inner soul of man, "compels the shrinking desire-mind to bear and even to seek and find a pleasure in what is painful to it, to reject what is pleasant to it, to modify or even reverse its values, to equalise things in indifference or to equalise them in joy, the joy of the variety of existence". This is done by man's real soul as it is compelled by the universal to extend itself in all the spheres of experience in order to grow in Nature. If man were confined to his surface soul, his progress would not have been possible, but 'would circle in the same grooves for ever'. A blank response or a total indifference to the excitations of the world-self can be exhausted only by bringing the 'real soul' to the surface to replace the 'egoistic standards' of pleasure and pain by an equal and an all-embracing personal- impersonal delight. This is done by the great poets, artists, intellectuals, God-lovers and others, in their own fashion while they seek to find Love, Beauty, Knowledge, Divinity, etc. universally.

54 Ibid., p. 223.
THE COSMOS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Aurobindo conceives the universe and the individual as the two 'essential appearances' into which the Unknowable descends and through which it has to be 'approached'. Any view that affirms the cosmos only and dismisses the individual or that affirms the individual consciousness and denies the cosmic existent is wrong. Both are 'fragmentary truth' and they err by laying too much emphasis on one 'apparent factual aspect' of the world action. The universe and the individual 'depend upon' and 'exist by' the transcendental Divine Being. The universe is an extensive manifestation of the Divine, that is, it is the embodiment of the Divine, in infinite space and time. The individual also is an embodiment of the Divine but it is a 'condensation' of it. To put it in Aurobindo's words, "Universe is a diffusion of the Divine All in infinite Space and Time, the individual its concentration within limits of Space and Time".

Thus in Aurobindo's conception both the universe and the individual are part of one and the same Reality. Neither the cosmos nor the individual consciousness is the 'fundamental truth' of existence. But both are fragmentary and both stand in need of the other for their realisation. The universe and the individual by himself cannot ascend towards the Divine but both

55 Ibid., p. 45.
of them require each other and exist for each other. Man cannot affirm the Infinite by itself to the exclusion of the cosmos nor the cosmos by itself to the exclusion of the individual. If so, then it would be a violent leap and man himself and the cosmos would remain an 'inexplicable mystification' or a 'purposeless mystery'. In that case the cosmos would be a huge play of blind organised Energy without significance and man's being would be a temporary minute 'anomaly' incomprehensibly occurring in that senseless vastness. Therefore Aurobindo says they stand explained to each other, unified and in harmony with each other. Aurobindo writes, "Man as he is is not sufficient to himself, nor separate, nor is he the Eternal and the All; therefore by himself he cannot be the explanation of the cosmos of which his mind, life and body are so evidently an infinitesimal detail. The visible cosmos too, he finds, is not sufficient to itself, nor does it explains itself even by its unseen material forces". Again he writes, "The individual is still necessary to the action of the Transcendent in the universe and that action in him does not cease to be possible by his illumination. On the contrary, since the conscious manifestation of the Transcendent in the individual is the means by which the collective, the universal is also to become conscious of itself, the continuation of the illumined individual in the action of the world is an imperative 'need of the world-play'".


The universe can ascend to the higher stage of spiritual life only with the aid of the self-conscious individual. Because of the infinite extension of the universe it cannot realize the Divine depth by itself. For that it needs the help of the individual who is the self-conscious concentration of the Divine. The cosmos is at the stage of the mental principle and in order to elevate the present state the cosmos stands in need of the individuals who are prepared to receive the higher principle which comes down. Then only a cosmic transformation can be achieved. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "Universe seeks in infinite extension the divine totality it feels itself to be but cannot entirely realize; for in extension existence drives at pluralistic sum of itself which can neither be the primal nor the final unit, but only a recurring decimal without end or beginning. Therefore it creates in itself a self-conscious concentration of the All through which it can aspire. In the conscious individual Prakriti turns back to perceive Purusha, World seeks after Self; God having entirely become Nature, Nature seeks to become progressively God.”.

The individual also stands in need of the universe for its

Ibid., p. 45.
realisation. The universe is his foundation, his means, his field and the stuff of the divine Work. It is the source of his life, dynamism and creativity and infact, it constitutes his entire field of activity. And it is also the concentration of the universal Life which takes place within limits. Therefore man must necessarily 'universalise' and 'impersonalise' himself in order to manifest the divine All which is his reality. A perfect self expression of the spirit is the object of our terrestrial existence. This can be achieved only if we have grown conscious of the supreme Reality as well as the cosmic Reality. Therefore we must become universal; for without an opening into universality, the individual remains incomplete. Aurobindo writes, "The individual separating himself from the All to reach the Highest, loses himself in the Supreme heights; including in himself the cosmic consciousness, he recovers his wholeness of self and still keeps his supreme gain of transcendence; he fulfils it and himself in the cosmic completeness". The universe is the field of the totality of spirit's self-expression and it is through the individual that its evolutionary self-unfolding here comes to its acme. Therefore, a realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an indispensable condition for the fullness of the self-expressing spirit. This shows the real being of the individual as well as

the revelation of our secret eternal oneness with the supreme and with all cosmic existence.

Thus Aurobindo establishes that if the individual has to realise or attain the supreme reality, it needs the assistance of the cosmos. That means man is at present at the stage of the mental but the lower cosmic principles like Matter and Life are also prevalent in him. And only by standing on this cosmic principles he can elevate the present mental state into the supramental state and then to the absolute Saccidananda. However, Aurobindo advocates that even when man most extends himself in universality of consciousness he must preserve his sense of personality and this gives him an obscure and egoistic representation. That means the individual does not lose himself completely in the universe. But he must retain his own status apart from the universe. Otherwise he would miss his goal and the divine work, for which he accepted his birth, would not be done. Aurobindo writes, "Man the individual has to affirm, to distinguish his personality against Nature, to be powerfully himself, to evolve all his human capacities of force and knowledge and enjoyment so that he may turn them upon her and upon the world with more and more mastery and force... Until he has thus developed his individuality, his personality, his
separate capacity, he cannot be fit for the greater work before
him or successfully turn his faculties to higher, larger and more
divine ends". In one respect the individual is a part of the
universe and yet his existence cannot fully be explained in terms
of the universe. The individual always retains something within
himself which is mysterious and transcendent and that constitutes
the mystery of his life. The whole evolutionary process of nature
is inwardly directed towards the revelation of this mystery.

According to Aurobindo not only the universe and the
individual fulfil in each other but both together fulfil
themselves in the Divine. He holds the view that the Divine is
ultimately 'self-revealed' in both man and Nature. Therefore,
both the world and himself cannot do without some relation with
the One which supports them and gives them their significance.
The infinite holds these finites and builds the harmony,
interrelation and essential oneness of multitudinous things. What
appears here as man, is an individual being of the Divine. The
Divine extended in multiplicity is the Self of all individual
existences. It is through the knowledge of the self and the world
that man arrives at the knowledge of God. "It is not by rejecting
God's manifestation, but by rejecting his own ignorance of it and
the results of his ignorance, that he can best lift up and offer

Ibid., p. 692.
the whole of his being and consciousness and energy and joy of being into the Divine Existence". Man can realise the Divine Existence either through himself, which is one manifestation or through the universe which is another manifestation. Arriving through himself alone he would 'plunge into' an individual immergence or absorption in the Indefinable and would lose the universe. Arriving through the universe alone he may 'sink' his individuality either in the impersonality of universal being or in a dynamic self of universal Conscious-Force. That means he would merge into the universal self or would become an impersonal channel of the cosmic Energy. But arriving through the integrality of both and seizing through them and beyond them on all the aspects of the Divine he would be able to exceed both and fulfil them in that exceeding. Then he would possess the Divine in his being and in the universe. Then the All -knowledge justifies to him its creation of himself and justifies by him its creation of the world it has made. In order to achieve this there must be an ascension into a supramental and supreme supernature and the descent of its powers into the manifestation. True knowledge can be made subjectively real only by a spiritual reflection or reception in mind-life-body Nature.