Chapter 2

STAGES OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN SRI AUROBINDO’S INTEGRAL YOGA

2.1 Introduction

Sri Aurobindo, who was one of the most forceful pioneers of India’s freedom movement, developed a new philosophy of life. Being a part of the national movement, he developed the idea of socio-political actions from a purely spiritual standpoint. He proclaimed that an individual’s spiritual development can lead to focussed activity in social and political reformation. The vision for such activities would come from the consciousness itself, which is called collective consciousness¹ that gets evolved during the process of spiritual development. The speciality and perhaps the uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual development lie in the fact that this involves an evolutionary perspective. By ‘evolution’ he understands the transformation of the material universe, which is the foundation and the original substance, also called matter accompanied with the development of consciousness from inconscience state (as present in the matter) to the Supramental state (which is the highest realm of consciousness). He shows that this evolutionary structure of the world process logically fits in with the concept of creative energy inherent in the ultimate

¹ It is the large subjective form of consciousness that is derived from individual consciousness power. It is based on group of individual’s with group-mind and group-body that develops to unite and transcend together to higher realms.
reality. The concept of creative energy is essentially an innovative formulation in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy, because presence of energy in matter is completely a scientific notion. The term ‘creative’ is used specifically as an expression for pure energy (śakti), because supreme knowledge is one with pure existence-consciousness-bliss (sat-cit-ānanda). So, Being (Brahman) is the ultimate ground of the universe, the indivisible unity of pure existence and pure energy. This equation, existence = energy, is central to the integral awareness of Being, which is the cornerstone of Sri Aurobindo’s integral philosophy.

Sri Aurobindo interpreted Being as the ultimate ground of the universe, as the Supreme Person (Puruṣottama) or the Supreme Being (Para Brahman) endowed with infinite creative energy. He affirms this Supreme Being as the unity of unchanging and immutable perfection on one hand, and the ever-changing and evolving world-spirit on the other. So, the Supreme Being is both determinate and indeterminate in nature. By determinate it refers to the higher realms of consciousness and by indeterminate it refers to the matter where the creative energy resides in inconscient state. Thus the Supreme Being in its indeterminate form is ineffable Superconscience, but gets manifested as infinite existence-consciousness-bliss in the due process of evolution. It is this Supreme Being that expresses itself in the shape of numerous patterns of creation and world order and also exists in the mode of infinitely differentiated individual selves. Even though the Supreme Being is manifested in all these divergent forms, it is not exhausted in any or all of them put together. So the Supreme Being is also described as the Lord of the Universe, who wills, governs and

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2 These are the two aspects of the Supreme Being (Brahman).
3 The higher levels of consciousness are those that transcend the ordinary rational mind. These levels of consciousness will be discussed later in this chapter.
possesses its world of manifestation. This is how Sri Aurobindo upholds his monistic standpoint.

Before getting into the metaphysical thoughts of Sri Aurobindo, it is necessary to discuss about the three fundamental problems\(^4\) which gave direction to the spiritual quest and philosophical thinking. The first problem arose from Sri Aurobindo’s perception of a paradox in the national life of India. He was capable enough to appreciate the sublime heights of truth-vision that the ancient sages of India had attained. The cultural history of India is the story of countless experiments with spiritual truth and a persistent endeavour through ages to organise life and society in accordance with the highest spiritual values. It would be no exaggeration to say that spirituality is the dominant keynote of Indian civilization. The problem here is: inspite of profound wisdom in the domain of spirituality how did India lagged in social, economic, political, and scientific spheres of life? The second problem concerns the opposition traditionally believed to exist between mysticism and action, between complete liberation and selfknowledge on one hand and active physical existence and social participation on the other. In keeping with the traditional Vedantic view of the body as unreal and identification of the body as primal ignorance the problem arises: is there a dichotomy between the body and the Self? Is supreme self-realization really incompatible with embodied existence or active participation in the world? The third problem arose from Aurobindo’s concern for the future of man and civilization. His scope of interest embraced not only the fate of India as a nation but also the destiny of all mankind. From the very

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\(^4\) These are the problems regarding the preparation for national movement that are discussed later in this section. These problems ultimately helped Sri Aurobindo to design his philosophical thought by method of Integral Yoga.
beginning of civilization, men felt the need for unifying the human race, the need for fashioning some kind of unified world-order out of the chaotic and conflicting medley of different tribes and peoples, races and nations. The problem here is: can world unity be achieved consistently with the help of distinctive genius belonging to the world’s divergent ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups and sovereign nations? If so, what would be the ultimate unifying principle? In answer to these three problems he designed his theory of \textit{Integral Yoga} that would help in achieving the higher realms of being and also unify the world.

### 2.2 Sri Aurobindo’s Conception of Integral Yoga and its Purpose

One might find it fascinating that Sri Aurobindo even though being a monist does not claim the world to be illusory as the Vedāntins. According to the Vedāntins, \textit{Brahman} is the ultimate reality and the world is just a mere illusion. But an individual, being under the veil of ignorance considers the world to be real and thus fails to understand the true nature of \textit{Brahman}. Only, when the \textit{avidyā} (ignorance) is removed by true knowledge of \textit{Brahman}, then the world no more appears to be real and one understands it to be a mere illusion. But Sri Aurobindo considers that \textit{Brahman} is in the world as well as in the \textit{Supracosmic Absolute}. One needs to overcome one’s ignorance in order to understand that the world is nothing but the manifestation of the Divine, and is not just a mere illusion. In other words, it can be said that it is a play of the Divine to manifest itself into different forms, from where it again tries to reach the Supramental. This division of the Divine into different forms of the world is the indeterminate
state of the Brahman. When the consciousness tries to develop itself from the inconscient state to the ordinary mental consciousness and then tries to transcend the ordinary mental level that are veiled by the limitations of rationality and intellect and finally succeeds in overcoming these limitations by understanding the nature of Divine or Supreme Being – evolution in true sense takes place. According to Sri Aurobindo, it has always been a human aspiration to attain the Supreme, which are God, Light, Freedom and Immortality. Apparently, attainment of Divine or God may seem difficult, as ordinary human mind due to limitations of feelings, emotions, attachment, desires, rationality and intellect cannot transcend these limitations and grasp the true nature of Divine. In order to understand the true nature of the Divine, the mind has to be prepared and guided throughout by the Supreme will to overcome these worldly limitations which are considered as the natural tendencies of human mind. All these are caused by the ignorance and lack of understanding of the nature of reality and Being. Once an individual prepares the mind and transcends this ordinary intellect, the veil of ignorance gets removed; he attains deeper experiences such as sense of ‘oneness’ with the creator, or the feeling of being one with the creator. This becomes possible only by an individual’s revolutionary effort and also out of the evolutionary progression.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the transcendence of mind from one-level to the other higher realm is a two-way process, by which the veil of ignorance can be removed and also one can attain the oneness. Until and unless an individual intends to or desires for such oneness, it cannot take place merely by

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6 Unless an individual wills to overcome the limitations, the evolutionary process alone cannot help in transcending the levels of ordinary mind.
evolutionary progression alone. This union, which comes through the realization of the Divinity, involves a constant mutation of the body i.e. preparation of the physical and the mental level for transformation, by organisation of consciousness that tries to overcome the natural tendencies and limitations of the ordinary human nature. In other words, there takes place a transition of consciousness from one level to the other higher level or rather it is the widening of consciousness, which indeed enhances the cognitive activities of an individual. So, the consistent practice to develop one’s physical body and also the mind is part of the aim to attain the union with the Divine. This union is called Yoga, the union and evolutionary progression of an individual to the Divine.

In search for the query, as why this integralism is unique from the other Indian philosophical systems, it is now necessary to get a brief idea of those systems. Only then, it would be possible to get a clear view of Sri Aurobindo’s metaphysical thought, which is different from the other Indian systems. To begin with the Buddhist system, it is found that they have admitted the theory of karma to be the basic tenet in attainment of liberation. Once the roots of attachment and antipathies get destroyed, a state that is characterised by supreme and absolute indifference arises, and then comes the final perfection and total extinction of rebirth. The karma can produce its effect (karma-phala) in the present life or in any other life only when there is covetousness, antipathy and infatuation towards worldly belongings (these are the sakāma karmas). But, when man’s deed are performed without covetousness (niskāma karma) and all

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7 It is a process of being born over and over again in different times and different situations possibly for many thousand times.
sorts of desires or feelings are abandoned, uprooted and pulled out, then such actions do not produce any consequences for the future. *Karma* by itself without desires or cravings is incapable of bearing good or bad results. So, once self-indulgence, covetousness and satisfaction within an individual gets destroyed, the cessation of sorrow happens, which finally brings an end to the process of rebirth. As long as there is delusion, greed and aversion and as long as passions are not extinguished, generation of *karma-phala* (results and consequences) continues. These results and consequences of *karma*, whether being good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant get accumulated over the span of time, which may be even in more than one life-time. Buddhists hold the retributive process of *karma*, where all the consequences or results have to be attained in either one life span or in more than one life, until all the results are attained by an individual and generation of new *karma-phala* gets ceased due to absolute indifference towards worldly desires. At this stage, *niśkāma karma* do not bear any results and thereby the individual is no more binded in the cycle of rebirth. When attainment of all types of *karma-phala* ends, one finally enters into the state of non-suffering. This cessation of rebirth and end of suffering is *Nirvāna* i.e. liberation from all types of worldly indulgences. Thus an individual gets liberated. But this theory could not provide a satisfactory explanation of the world or nature from where the individual starts its journey of seeking *nirvāna* i.e. the worldly indulgences and suffering. There is no proper explanation for this world or nature which is left by an individual or where the individual lives its life before attainment of *nirvāna*. 
On the other hand it is found that the Sāmkhya philosophy has admitted two principles – *Purusa* and *Prakṛti*. Here *Purusa* is pure inactive intelligence. The Self (*Purusa*) according to Sāmkhya–Yoga philosophy is not directly demonstrated by self-consciousness. Its existence is a matter of inference on teleological grounds and grounds of moral responsibility. The self cannot be directly noticed as being separate from *buddhi*. Through beginingless ignorance there is confusion and the changing states of *buddhi* are regarded as conscious. These *buddhi* changes are further so associated with the reflection of the *purusa* in *buddhi*, that they are interpreted as the *experiences of the purusa*. This association of the *buddhi* with the reflection of the *purusa* in *buddhi* has such a special fitness that it is interpreted as the experience of the *purusa*. This is the interpretation of Vācaspati. But Vijñāna Bhikṣu says that the association of the *buddhi* with the image of the *purusa* cannot give us the notion of the real person who undergoes the experiences. It is to be supposed therefore that when the *buddhi* is intelligised by the reflection of the *purusa*, it is then superimposed upon the *purusa*, and one have the notion of an abiding person who experiences. Whatever may be the nature of explanation, the union of *buddhi* with *purusa* is somewhat mystical. As a result, reflection of *cit* (consciousness) on *buddhi* and the superimposition of the *buddhi* take place. The *purusa* cannot realise that the transformations of *buddhi* are not its own. As *buddhi* resembles *purusa* in transparency, the *purusa* fails to differentiate itself from the *modifications of the buddhi* and as a result of this non-distinction the *purusa* becomes bound down to *buddhi*. In this situation, it always fails to recognise the truth that *buddhi* and its

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8 The second evolute of *Prakṛti* – the first being *mahat* (*ahaṁkāra*) which is the ego-sense in individuals.
transformations are wholly alien to it. This non-distinction of puruṣa from buddhi, which is itself a mode of buddhi is what is meant by avidyā (non-knowledge) in Sāṁkhya and is also the root of all experiences and miseries or sufferings.

In order to get rid of this sorrow or suffering, death cannot be the right way, for after every death there will be rebirth. So long as citta (mind) and puruṣa are associated with each other, the suffering will continue. Citta must be dissociated from puruṣa. It is because of the non-distinction of the self from the buddhi\(^9\) that all the experiences, desires and sorrows are superimposed on to the self. It is necessary therefore that in buddhi we should be able to generate the true conception of puruṣa. When this true conception of puruṣa arises in buddhi it feels itself to be different and distinct from puruṣa and thus ignorance gets destroyed. So, prakṛti which was leading us through cycles of experiences from one birth to the other birth, fulfils its final purpose when this true knowledge arises that differentiates puruṣa from prakṛti. This final purpose being attained, the prakṛti can never again bind the puruṣa with reference to whom this right knowledge was generated. However for other puruṣas, the bondage remains as before and they continue their experiences from one birth to the other in an endless cycle. Thus in order to bring liberation, it is not enough that a true knowledge differentiating puruṣa and buddhi should only arise, but it is also necessary that all the old habits of experiences of buddhi, all its sarīṃskāras should also be destroyed once for all and never to be revived again. At this stage

the buddhi is transformed into its purest state, reflecting steadily the true nature of the purusa. This is somewhat a dualistic approach.

Now Advaita Vedānta (non-dualistic) philosophy as taught by the Śaṅkara School, is that the ultimate and absolute truth is the Self, which is one, though appearing as many in different individuals. The world also as apart from the individuals has no reality. All other events – mental or physical are but passing appearances, while the only absolute and the unchangeable truth underlying them all is the self. Vedānta sought to reach beneath the surface of appearances, and enquired after the final and ultimate truth underlying the microcosm and macrocosm, the subject and the object. In general, mukti (salvation) meant the dissociation of the self from the subjective psychosis and the world. But Vedāntins hold that the world as such has no real existence at all, but is only an illusory imagination, which lasts till the moment when true knowledge is acquired. As soon as one comes to know that the one truth is the Self, the Brahman, all our illusory perceptions representing the world as a field of experience ceases. This happens not because the connections of the self with the world cease, but because the appearances of the world process do not represent the ultimate and highest truth about it. The ordinary experiences of the world seem to be correct and no one is aware of the illusion that run on from the beginningless time, neither one knows how it is related to the truth, the Brahman. But once the truth is known, the false knowledge of this world-appearance disappears once for all. This false knowledge or illusion is the avidyā or māyā that has an apparent existence and is not a real entity in association with which a real world-appearance has been brought into permanent existence. The
realization of the true nature of Brahman establishes that the visible world is illusory, which is the result of avidyā (ignorance). By avidyā and māyā, it is meant as the lack of true knowledge about the nature of Brahman. Once the true nature of Brahman gets revealed by attainment of true knowledge, there remains no more avidyā or māyā. The perception of the apparent world is the result of avidyā. This avidyā has a creative nature by which it creates the worldly appearances and these lasts as long as the true nature of Brahman does not get revealed. The truth (Brahman) is neither affected by the association of avidyā, nor is there any real association with it. So, when an individual acquires the true knowledge of the self or Brahman, the illusory world-appearances gets abolished and he realises the self as really one with the Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, admits the existence of both – eternal spirit and matter. This notion even though apparently may seem to uphold dualism, but in true sense Sri Aurobindo is a monist. As far as the rational intellect has apparently divided Matter and Brahman as two extreme terms, so until there is a convincing identification to the intellect, it would be really a difficult situation to reconcile between spirit and matter. Even though, one is subjective and the other is objective but they are so inter-linked with each other that one cannot be understood without the other, as they are not independent realities. It is the one Reality, which has two aspects in it – spirit and the matter. The evolutionary movement of the nature in Sri Aurobindo’s view is the fulfilment of an ideal – the ideal of divine life upon earth by progressive revelation of the spirit in matter. Such ideal or goal cannot be realised if only

either matter or spirit be admitted. The concept of divine life on earth would have no base, if only matter is admitted as the only reality, like materialists. According to them, nothing is spiritual in nature and so mind or consciousness are just mere epiphenomenon of matter and hence is nothing but material. This is a very popular physical mind approach, which follows from the knowledge that takes place through the physical senses, and the function of reason is to deal with the facts provided by the senses. But Sri Aurobindo says that the domain of matter gets delimited by the senses and so one fails to recognise the knowable realities of the universe, which are beyond the range of the ordinary senses. There are such faculties and powers within the human beings that transcend beyond the senses in determining the true nature of reality. Hence in such situation, consciousness or mind cannot be explained merely as the epiphenomenal states of matter. As epiphenomenal states cannot provide any explanation for the knowledge about reality that can be attained irrespective of the external sense organs. Such types of knowledge include intuition, telepathy, extra-sensory perception,\textsuperscript{11} etc. On the other hand, keeping aside this materialistic approach where consciousness is considered to be merely an epiphenomenon, the ascetic approach is considered. The reality of Spirit is admitted here and the material world is completely denied. According to the ascetics, nothing exist other than the Spirit; hence explanation for this visible world becomes impossible. Then reality of spirit is admitted and material world is completely denied.

\textsuperscript{11} These types of knowledge will be discussed later in this chapter in mind-level section.
So, to reconcile between these two extreme ends – spirit and matter, a series of ascending steps have been proposed by Sri Aurobindo. He accepts the rationalistic materialism on one hand and also the supraphysical reality on the other. The ascending steps from the matter to the mind and finally transcending the physical reality to reach the supramental level or the supermind is an evolutionary process. Each ascent will bring with it a partial change and modification of the old nature taken up and subjected to a new fundamental principle. Matter being the first substance, but still, the original and ultimate power is not an inconscient material Energy, for then Life and Consciousness would be absent, as the inconscient cannot evolve consciousness, or an inanimate force evolve Life. So, there must be some consciousness force greater than life and also greater than mind. It must be then a supramental Consciousness-Force – a power of the spirit. This power resides in matter in the inconscient form, due to the veil of ignorance and through the process of evolution, an entire transformation of this creative energy takes place by the full emergence of the law of spirit. This power of the supermind or the gnosis must have entered into the matter to evolve Life-Consciousness, or Mind-Consciousness, change the mental into supramental being, make the inconscient in us conscious, spiritualise our material substance, erect its law of gnostic consciousness in the whole evolutionary being and nature. This movement of evolution is the progressive self manifestation of the spirit in the material universe. It has to make its account at every step with the fact of the involution of consciousness and force in the form and activity of the material substance. This process proceeds by an awakening of the involved consciousness and force

\[12\] Details of the evolution and involution are discussed later in this chapter.
and it ascends from the lower principle to the higher principle, from lower grade to higher grade, from the latent power to the manifested power of the secret spirit. This journey of the spirit, is not merely its transference from the lower status to the highest or supreme status only, rather it involves in manifestation of the latent powers of consciousness. It also involves in realization of the unknown reality and the transformation of the nature of consciousness, which is bounded by senses at the initial stage. The consciousness opens and manifests all its potentialities to understand the nature of reality and realize the Supreme Being – *sat-cit-ānanda*.

The first foundation in this evolutionary emergence, is the creation of forms of Matter, the first inconscient and inanimate, then the living and thinking Matter, the appearance of more and more organised bodies adapted to express a greater power of consciousness. Even though very little has been studied about the inner side of consciousness, but still so far observed, evolution in continuity is a leap from one grade of consciousness to the higher, where there is real and radical difference between the grades of consciousness. It is to be noted here that the successive ascent of consciousness from the lower realm to the higher realm, does not imply that the features of the lower realm gets abandoned. In the same way, being at the lower grade does not imply absence of the higher principles. In other words, all the possible potentialities and principles are present in consciousness from the very beginning, which gets manifested with the transcendence of consciousness from the lower realm to the higher realm. The potentialities develop and get manifested, which leads to improved and varied

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13 Ascents of consciousness to be discussed in detail later in this chapter.
functions of consciousness. Thus the principle of the process of evolution is a foundation (matter), from which there is an ascent from that foundation to life and the mind. In this ascent, a reversal of consciousness takes place from a greater height by which wideness is gained that leads to the action of change and new integration of the whole nature. Although the physical foundation of matter remains, but it can no longer be the foundation of consciousness, since consciousness cannot originate from the inconscient. So, the foundation of the developing existence will be the new spiritual status present above an individual or the unveiled soul-status (Psychic mind) within an individual. The flow of knowledge and will from above will help to determine the action and reactions of the being to cosmic experience. The whole concentration of the being gets shifted, where the higher and inner being presently unknown, will in the process become known as an individual. In other words, the outer world itself will become inward to the spiritual awareness, a part of itself, intimately embraced in knowledge and feeling of unity and identity, penetrated by an intuitive regard of the mind, responded to by the direct contact of consciousness with the supreme consciousness. Thus the old inconscient foundation itself will be made conscious in an individual, by the inflow of light and awareness from above and its depths annexed to the heights of spirit. So, an integral consciousness will become the basis of an entire harmonization of life through the total transformation, unification, integration of the being and the nature.

Thus, it is evident from the above discussion that no other system claims total transformation of an individual along with the reality. So, this yoga aims

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14 Functions and potentialities of consciousness will be discussed in Chapter 3.
15 To be discussed later in this chapter.
not only for evolution on one hand, but also is a process where entire consecration takes place by union with the Divine. This is *Integral Yoga* and has the following aims to fulfil. First, Integral Yoga aims to merge with the divine consciousness and second, it aims to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth to transform mind, life and body. This transformation of mind, life and body is the main aim of integral yoga, which makes them subservient to the realization of God. Here, Sri Aurobindo uses transformation in a special sense. He understands it as a change of consciousness, both radical and complete, which can take assured steps towards spiritual evolution. In other words, the nature of consciousness from the mind level changes drastically to a higher nature in the Supramental level, where the process gets completed. The novelty of Sri Aurobindo’s *Integral Yoga* lies especially in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. *Firstly*, it aims not at a departure from the world and life, but at a change of life and existence. This Yoga not only emphasizes on the union with the supreme being after which the world and life would stand as merely an illusion due to ignorance; rather it aims at the transformation of mind, life and body with attainment of knowledge and power to transcend from the ordinary state of being into the Divine state of being\(^{17}\). As in case of the other systems, where it aims at the removal of ignorance only, followed by the union with Divine there, descent of supreme consciousness may be an incidental process and not an intended event. Hence, these systems never claim about the transformation of mind, life or body, rather their aim is just to unite with the Divine, realise that life and world are illusory, caused due to the veil of

ignorance. But in Integral Yoga, it is the two way process taking place simultaneously, where individual’s ascent is only the first step and the descent of the supreme consciousness to raise an individual to a further new higher consciousness level is an important aspect. The two processes go hand in hand and one without the other is incomplete. So, ascent of the individual by process of sādhanā and the descent of the next higher-level of consciousness, helps one to follow successfully the integral yoga. Secondly, the object sought after is not the mere individual achievement of the Divine realization, but something more than that. This yoga intends at the transformation of reality too along with an individual. So, this is not just mere individual liberation but the transformation of the whole nature as such. Thirdly, the method of integral yoga, as recognised by Sri Aurobindo is to achieve the total and integral change of consciousness and also of the nature. This yoga, therefore, aims at conscious union with the Divine in the supermind¹⁸ and the transformation of the nature. In other words, it aims to transcend the ordinary rational Mind and enter into the Divine Truth of Sachchidananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), which is not only static but also dynamic, and raises the whole being and also the nature into that Truth.

2.3 The Brahman

One would fail to understand Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy without the proper understanding of the nature of Brahman as he conceives. According to him, Brahman is the triune of three characteristics that are inseparable. They are Pure Existence (Sat), Consciousness (Cit) and Bliss (Ānanda). In other words,

¹⁸Consciousness of the supreme mind level that leads to the union with the Divine.
*Brahman* is the absolute, the Supreme Being, the Reality, the eternal which is not only the spiritual, but is also the material and conscious substance of all the forms of the universe. It is responsible for the origin and support of the universe. It is the possessor of universe since; it is the one beside whom nothing else is existent. *Brahman* is regarded as the supreme in relation to the universe.

By *Cit* or Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo indicates the consciousness force, which is free and is the all creative self awareness of the absolute. This consciousness force is the integral conscious power of the Supreme Being that is capable of manifesting itself into various worldly forms. By worldly forms, here the diversified phenomenal world is indicated. This is the physical reality which is observable to us. The phenomenal world comprised of different forms of matter, each of which possesses consciousness either in *inconscient* form (as in matter) or in *conscient* form (as in living beings). Here a question arises as why *Brahman* being supreme, absolute and eternal try to create in itself the world of forms? If *Brahman* is compelled to create the phenomenal world, then it cannot be said as free and absolute. Again, because of its characteristics if *Brahman* is obliged to create the worldly forms, by help of the conscious-force or energy, then it has to be determined. But, it is seen that neither the *Brahman* is determined nor can the absolute be compelled to create the physical world.

Although, it is true that all the potentialities are within the Supreme Being and *Brahman* being free may not choose to involve into the world of forms. But still the phenomenal world is observable and hence, Sri Aurobindo’s answer is that – ‘If then being free to move or remain eternally still, to throw itself into forms or retain the potentiality of form in itself, it indulges its power of movement and
formation, it can be only for one reason, for delight.'\textsuperscript{19} So \textit{Brahman} out of delight indulges into divisions and thereby spreads itself out into the world of forms. In other words, the infinite variation of the phenomenal world comes out from the triune of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss i.e. \textit{Sachchidananda}, whose consciousness by its own nature is a self expressive creative force. This creative force makes mutable forms of one immutable being, finite results of the one infinite force and things of variable self-expression of one invariable and all-embracing self-expression.

Now another question may come up as why at all \textit{Brahman} should take delight in such a movement of self-expression? According to Sri Aurobindo, the answer lies in the whole methodology of manifestation of the phenomenal world. It is because the possible states of affairs that get manifested either in this world or in other worlds are all inherent in the infinite being itself. In the process of creation, the \textit{Brahman} spreads itself out into different forms and divisions and ultimately reaches the basic principle – \textit{matter}. Matter in itself has no power or activity that can bring about the process of transformation. Here the creative force lies inconscient, so the spirit has to involve itself in order to change it to life and then to mind (\textit{mental being}). Once this upward movement of uniting with the Absolute gets started, then the spirit within gets transformed from inconscient nature to the absolute freedom state through the intermediary processes (including transformation of the mental levels and the ascents of consciousness)\textsuperscript{20}. The main object of transformation is an individual, where the mind acts as an instrument for this transformation. An individual with limited


\textsuperscript{20} To be discussed in detail later in this chapter.
mental consciousness cannot understand the nature of Reality or Brahman and hence, it tries to overcome the limitations in order to attain knowledge that lies beyond the observable phenomenal world. Only a liberated and enlightened mind can grasp the multitudinous relativities of this world that can be seen and those of other worlds that cannot be seen. So, the phenomenal being in which the Pure-Spirit is involved brings changes in matter, that changes to life and then to mind. At this mind level, in an individual being, the spirit unfolds itself to bring transformation in conscious understanding and realization of the nature of supramental being. Finally, it comes to unite with the Divine from where the journey of transformation (involvement into worldly forms) started. So, the delight of Brahman precisely lies in the variable realization of all its possibilities that gets worked out as universe of which an individual is only a part. This universe which includes multiplicities, discord of different other forces and limited mental consciousness, tries to overcome all this and evolve into the Superconscient unity where there is a flow of indivisible force, harmony and oneness. This superconscient unity is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss or what is known as Sachchidananda. So, according to Sri Aurobindo – ‘Existence that acts and creates by a power and form the pure delight of its conscious being is the reality that we are, the self of all our modes and moods, the cause, object and goal of all our doing, becoming and creating.’

2.4 Evolution and Involution

In understanding the delight of the Divine, that spreads itself into multitudinous forms and divisions and thereby again tries to unite back with the Divine Being, one needs to know about the two important mechanisms as discussed in the metaphysical framework of Sri Aurobindo. These mechanisms are *involution* and *evolution* by which the Divine executes the delight. Here evolution is necessarily preceded by involution. *Involution* is the process of intentional splitting of the Divine, a movement from unity to the divisions in order to create the universe. Whereas *evolution* is the process where the phenomenal being has to undergo changes and overcome the divisions and duality created during the process of involution and then unites with the supramental being or the Divine. In this process of involution, the spirit spreads itself out to every possible world forms. Hence this involution of Spirit or creative-energy in Matter not only makes the evolution necessary, but also gives a special significance to it. The conscious power present in the crude matter as inconscient manifests itself gradually as the superconscient or as the supreme conscious power in the process of evolution.

The evolutionary process involves a threefold movement – *foundation, ascent* and *integration*. By ‘foundation’ it is meant as the evolutionary foundation in which the Spirit with all its powers gets involved. The medium of evolution of the Spirit is Matter. As matter acts as the intermediary in the process of evolution, it cannot be the foundation; hence the ultimate foundation is the infinite Spirit. This matter has a veiled consciousness, which even though limited, contains all the latent powers of the Spirit. The matter that is perceived
by our senses is the external sheath behind which there are subtle degrees of physical substance, and it is easier for the life, mind and other powers to enter into them and operate. In other words, it is the combined effect of matter, life and mind that takes part in the process of transformation by unfolding the capacities and capabilities of the consciousness lying inherent and dormant in matter. By ‘ascent’ Sri Aurobindo means an upward progress or development from a lower grade to a higher grade. This involves the development of something that is already involved or implicitly present in consciousness. Thus ascent is followed by the ‘integration’ where something emerges as a new principle of existence from its involved state. The difficulty one is faced with is the link between Matter and Spirit, as both seem to be mutually exclusive. Sri Aurobindo claims that extending the field of consciousness can give solution to this issue. It is just an inner enlargement of consciousness from the individual existence into the cosmic existence, as consciousness is present in matter from the very beginning in inconscient form. In other words, it is just the development of this consciousness into all its possible forms and manifestations of all its capabilities with the progressive evolution. To be possessed of cosmic consciousness is to undergo a change in vision. This change in vision takes place by the series or levels of consciousness that act as the intermediary steps between Matter and Spirit. This is the ascent of consciousness in gradations through the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind and the Overmind\(^{22}\). This series of gradations are also described as series of sublimations of consciousness. Thus, the unfolding of the latent consciousness within the inert matter and rising up to the Supramental, thereby realizing the

\(^{22}\) These are the levels of consciousness which will be discussed in the following section.
union of the Divine with the world, is the process of *evolution*. This is achieved by an individual through practice and surrender to the Divine that shows and leads an individual to the proper path of meditation.

Sri Aurobindo understands that still a discord is present. It is the problem of harmony, which an individual with ordinary mind fails to perceive and realize. This is due to the complexity of evolution of Life in Matter. But a possible justification to hold such a view as how life comes out of Matter or Mind out of living forms is that to consider the Vedāntic solution that Life is involved in Matter and Mind in Life. According to the Vedāntins, Matter is a form of veiled Life; Life is a form of veiled Consciousness. So, mental consciousness is only a form and veil of higher states, which are beyond the mental mind. All this is due to the impulse in man who tries to reach towards God, Light, Freedom, and Bliss and participates in the process of evolution. So, in other words, an individual is involved in the evolution. Nature with conscious cooperation of man then tries to manifest the Divine upon earth. Then can an individual put a pause to this evolution? If it were true that Spirit is involved in Matter, then the evolution will bring out or manifest the Divine and realization of God will take place. But mankind is unable to realize the Divine with the limited mental abilities and hence are confronted with certain problems of practical life. The logical thoughts persuade and limit the mental activities in understanding the Divine which indeed leads to mysticism. So, it is always better to act upon the guiding Conscious Will which may at the beginning conflict with the minds’ logical reasoning and blind sights, but one can slowly enter into the path of progressive self development by complete surrender to this
Will. Thus, understanding of different mind levels that are admitted by Sri Aurobindo would help to realize the evolutionary progression in a better way.

2.5 Different Levels of the Mind

Mind is the first manifestation of the conscious force, which is capable of perceiving, understanding and analyzing the observational world. The mind being an instrument of knowledge grasps the worldly matters. It possesses the ability to plan, to construct, to deconstruct, to fragment, to unite all the observational data and manipulate it in accordance to its own nature. According to Sri Aurobindo, mind is the lowest possible expression of the supermind consciousness, though not the lowest expression of conscious-force that remains as inconscient in matter. The supermind consciousness is the ultimate and highest expression of consciousness that possesses the knowledge of truth and understands the nature of reality and divine in an integral way. The ordinary human mind, being influenced by sensations, emotions, feelings, reasoning, etc. is the inferior expression of the supermind. So, this ordinary mind is involved in activities that give life the appearance of divisions and fragmentations of the one reality. The lower mind tries to evolve into the highest expressions of consciousness and transcends the limitations of sensation, emotions and feelings that are caused by the ignorance. The gradual transcendence of mental consciousness to higher realms is brought about by transformation of consciousness and removal of ignorance and obscurity.

The ordinary human mind is like a reflective mirror that receives reflections or images of a pre-existent truth or fact. But, along with this the mind
also possesses the faculty of constructing in itself the possible images, other than those that are presented to it as actual facts. Hence, it is unable to distinguish between the actual facts and the possible ones, due to which it makes them, appear diversified and these come irreconcilable to ordinary human intellect. It is due to this reason that the world appears to consist of multiplicities. Only when the mind tries to overcome the bounds of rationality and limited mental intellect, it tries to realize the deeper truths and attain the knowledge of divine by widening the realms of conscious power. So mind here, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a preparatory state of consciousness, which has to reach its ultimate goal in the process of evolution by gradual ascent towards that supreme consciousness.

Apart from the general notion of mind, Sri Aurobindo holds that man possesses different levels of mind, which are best understood by their functions and characteristics. The primary among them is the physical mind. This mind depends on sensations, external objects and actions, draws its data from the observational facts and events and reacts in accordance to those data. In other words, this can also be called as the sense-mind that depends completely on the sensations. It considers the physical and objective facts to be real, as they are objects of an individual’s conscious realm. Again, it also considers the inner subjective experiences of oneself to be real as the objects of physical reality, because one is aware of one’s own experiences directly. Thus, an individual mind can be aware of its own mental phenomena by direct experience, but would remain unaware of the experiences of the other individual. These phenomena cannot be observed or attained directly by senses. Hence, it is the
limitation of the physical mind of man that creates in him a habit of believing only the observational physical reality and doubting and challenging all those data that are not attained by experience. So, first the physical mind has to open up to the higher consciousness realms in order to overcome the limitations of the physical plane. It changes its object of knowledge from mere observational realm and tries to understand from within the true attitude of feeling and emotions, which guide the mind to grasp the knowledge.

Next to the physical mind is the vital mind. This mind is the seat of feeling, will and emotion that drives an individual with satisfaction and achievement of possessing the emotions. In other words, this is the desire-mind that tries to make plans, dream a desire, imagine an action that can be done in future if opportunity provides. This mind stays apart from the sense-mind and the external observational world. It is mainly concerned with inner feelings, desires and emotions, out of which it always tries to imagine, think and plan its activities. This is a very important attribute of this mind, but the mind fails in implementation of such plan of action. Being guided and controlled by emotions only, the acts are random and without discipline. Hence proper execution of planning, imagining and thinking does not take place; instead it leads to failures, discontent and disappointment. Thus the vital mind has to be transcended so that the planning, thinking, imagining, etc. are guided by reason and rationality for successful execution of those actions. This vital mind is divided into four parts. They are:
(a) The Mental Vital: This mind tries to express the feelings and emotions and all other vital movements of an individual in terms of mental expressions as thought, speech or otherwise.

(b) The Emotional Vital: This mind is mainly concerned with emotional expression of the vital and is thus the seat for various feelings like love, hatred, sorrow, joy and the rest.

(c) The Central Vital: This is a seat for stronger vital longings and reactions like ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, desires and passions of various kinds and hence is the field of much vital energy.

(d) The Lowest Vital: This part of vital mind is mainly concerned with smaller feelings and desires that are a part of daily life like food, desire, likings, disliking, vanity, quarrels and number of such other desires.

Thus this mind being guided and dominated by emotions, feelings and desires needs to be transcended, so that an individual can be released from the bounds of senses and desires and thereby try to realize the true nature of the Divine.

The mental mind is the next higher level to the vital mind. It is mainly concerned with pure and conceptual thinking. This mind is based upon the association of thoughts and ideas, recollection and correlation of memory, logical and insightful planning, problem solving and decision making. All the thoughts and ideas of the desire-mind that are transferred to the mental mind now get executed in actions, by help of reason and pure thinking. Thus this mind is considered as the centre of all the mental skills like learning, memory, pattern
perception, and recognition, etc. According to its various functions, this mind can be divided into three parts:

(a) *The Thinking Mind*: This is the highest aspect of the mental mind, which is mainly concerned with thoughts and ideas that help in processing our knowledge. It makes decisions and judgements regarding the ideas of planning and problem solving. It also plans, thinks and imagines about the fruitful execution of action that are transferred by the desire-mind.

(b) *The Dynamic Mind*: This part of mental mind is mainly concerned with the different activities that are to be performed. Thus this mind puts mental forces for realization of the ideas and planning actions upon those ideas and thoughts. All the ideas are worked out into action in accordance to reason.

(c) *The Externalizing Mind*: This part of mental mind is mainly concerned with the external affairs of the thought-mind. The ideas, plannings,imaginations, decision making, problem solving, etc. are the activities that take place in the mental-mind. These activities need to be expressed externally among the other individuals, for communication and coordination of any action. This is expressed either by speech or by expression in life or any other form of expression that is possible. This mind performs the activity of expressing the thought-mind externally to other individuals.

Thus mental mind and its three parts are again not sufficient enough to know and express the Divine. The main limitation of this mind is that it considers only the observational facts and justifies the events that are supported by the reasoning of the rational mind. To this mind, realization of divine would
involve in contradictions and irreconcilability. This mind is more habituated to understand and justify the fragmented objects of the world. It cannot take into consideration that all such fragments are parts of that one whole reality, because sensation provides fragmentary knowledge and reason justifies only the observational reality. So, this mind needs to be transformed and transcended from ordinary rational understanding to higher thoughts, higher ideas and higher intuitions. But before the discussion about the higher expression of consciousness starts, one needs to know about the psychic mind. According to Sri Aurobindo, the psychic mind is the seat of conscious force (creative energy) that can help an individual to open up to the higher realms of consciousness. It is by help of the initial descend of the higher conscious power (that leads to ascension of consciousness) that enables such evolutionary change in consciousness.

2.6 The Psychic Mind

The word ‘psychic’ is used to indicate anything that is other than and also deeper than the external mind, life and body. It is the soul that Sri Aurobindo refers here as psychic. This psychic is connected with the activities and functions of the inner-mind, inner-vital and the subtle physical being that remains subliminal within an individual. These subliminal desires are not attained by an individual through the ordinary conscious awareness, rather gets revealed through the psychic. In other words, psychic is the seat of connection between the deeper inner subliminal desires and the rational externalising mind.

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that hinders the arousal of such desires. The subliminal desires are not justified by rationality, hence are prevented from coming into the externalising mind. In fact, such subliminal desires are quite often termed as abnormal or supernormal or occult phenomena. But Sri Aurobindo considers this psychic mind, to be an essential locus for understanding and realizing the hidden subtle desires within an individual. These subtle desires are also a part of conscious activity that are not revealed to an individual by ordinary consciousness. So, admitting the psychic mind implies that the external mind attains the ability to reach the deeper summits of conscious activities. In other words, the realm of consciousness expands from the ordinary external awareness to the deeper subtle desires and feelings of the subliminal mind.

It is due to the presence of the psychic mind that helps in the spiritual transformation of the rational mind to the higher realms. It helps the Divine principle to bring about the transformation in consciousness, thereby expanding the realm of conscious activities. This psychic mind helps in transformation of body, life and mind into the spiritual aspect to understand and realize the truth about reality, which was not attained by the mere externalising mind. Thus, it is this soul or psychic where the mechanisms of involution and evolution take place along with the dual phenomena of ascent and descent.

All the movements in the soul are referred to as psychic. This mind possesses the quality of peace. The characteristic power of the *soul* is the presence of divine element in it, which can turn everything towards the *Divine* i.e., bring in a fire of purification, aspiration, true light of discernment, devotion
that transforms by degrees the whole nature\textsuperscript{24}. But, in the act of psychic the chief obstacle is the rational (mental) mind. Only if one can quieten the mental mind, then the psychic can have the chance to move things towards the Divine. As mind is inordinately active, too full of questions – worldly and practical, too much is given to doubt and self-defence, which is very useful in worldly life, but can in no way enhance one to succeed in yoga. Even though in yoga, the critical rational mind (self-critical as well as critical of things outside) is an element that possesses its value so long as the true inner discrimination of the divine truth and appearance does not come. This rational mind does not carry one in the path of yoga, rather makes the progress slow and stumbling. Thus there must be something in one like a true spirit that can open itself directly to Truth and Light. It is the psychic being which turns to the truth directly, feels it instinctively behind all appearances and disguises, without any egoistic demand or conditions. This soul or the psychic being has the Divine element present in it and thus does not act as the Supreme Being seated above the manifested being to control and guide the manifested being. Rather, this soul possessing Divine element always tries to come down in the manifestation to support its evolution in the material world. In other words, it is the spark of the Divine which is at first an undifferentiated power of the Divine consciousness containing all possibilities, which have not yet taken form, but it is the function of the evolution to give form to this soul. This spark is there in all living beings from the lowest to the highest order.

The psychic being is formed by the soul during evolution, where this remains as the pure mind free from any sort of technical training. It is this characteristic that makes the psychic distinguished from the ordinary mind. It supports the mind, vital, body and grows by their experiences and carries the impressions of the pattern of nature from one life to the other. At first, it remains veiled by the mind, vital and body, but as it grows it becomes capable of dominating the mind, vital and body by sādhanā. When this psychic becomes dominant, then it freely uses its instruments (it includes sense organs and the mind) to direct things towards the Divine. Here merely liberation of mind, vital and body does not take place rather transformation also becomes possible. This psychic mind is the very central part, as here only the inner visions has to be admitted and all other thoughts and ideas of the external mind must be allowed to pass away without any attention. These thoughts continue to run down so long as the mind is not calm and still, leading to quiet rejection of such thoughts. But thoughts from within (i.e. from soul or psychic being) must be permitted to make the psychic active; and lead to the progress in sādhanā. The instruments by which the psychic directs the worldly things towards the Divine lead to the widening of consciousness. This journey of mind from ordinary mental level to the supramental level is the ascent of consciousness.

2.7 The Ascent of Consciousness

The instrument of man in the process of transformation is the mind, with thinking and willing as its force, similar to the life instinct in animals or the vital push and dynamism in plants. So, the mind in man has to develop in such a way
that the Divine Intellect could descent into it, to make the necessary transformation. It is the phenomenon of involution, where the divine intellect descends into the ordinary mind level to remove the ignorance. It provides greater clarity of knowledge to realize and evolve into the Divine. Only then, the mind can rise to higher consciousness above the ordinary human intelligence and rationality. The intuition that occupies the main place in the projection of knowledge is mostly veiled by ignorance. When the ignorance gets removed by the descent of the higher principle, the mind ascends to the higher realms of consciousness and is aware of the nature of the reality. The intuition possesses the four-fold power for attaining the truth about reality. These are: the power of revelatory truth seeing, power of inspiration, a power of truth touch or immediate seizing of significance and power of true or automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of one truth to another truth. This inner intuition gets completely guided by ordinary reason and rationality of the phenomenal world. Intuition can, therefore, perform all the actions of reason, including the function of logical intelligence, which is to work out the right relation of things and right relation of idea with another idea based on reason and logic. But, here pure intuition is a rare occurrence in such ordinary mental activity, as it is mostly guided by reason and logic that prevents in attaining the true knowledge about the reality, which is beyond the ordinary realm of observability. What can be attained by help of such ordinary rational mind are only the truths based on the mixed intuition that possesses partially both knowledge and ignorance. So, to change the whole consciousness, into the stuff of pure intuition that would bring changes into the feelings and emotions, life-

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impulses, actions of sense and sensation, workings of body consciousness the descent of divine consciousness is required. It recasts all these workings in the light and power of truth to illumine their knowledge and remove the ignorance. Thus, consciousness opens itself up to the higher summits beyond its own rational limits to allow the descent of higher consciousness to bring in the necessary transformation and remove ignorance.

The first decisive step out of the ordinary rational mind is the higher mind. This mind is something very much different from the mental mind, which is guided completely by logical reason and empirical sensations. Such type of rational reason and limited intellect plays no role in the higher mind. This mind tries to overcome the limitation of rationality by which the ordinary human minds are bounded, that creates the apprehension of multiplicities in the observable world. Only when such illusions and false knowledge gets removed, by the descent of supreme consciousness that brings with it the clarity of understanding and realization, the mind is able to realize the Divine. The basic element observed in this mind, is the sense of unification, where all objects realized are united to be the parts of one whole. This power is attained by the descent of spirit from the supermind that transforms and transcends the mind to the next higher levels of conscious activity. The higher mind now tries to surpass all bounds of reason and thereby never gets motivated with the sensations like basic desires of physical mind or the needs of the vital. Then this mind tries to link itself with the divine in some form or the other, so that the activities and decisions at this stage are no more guided by ordinary rational intellect of the mental mind. The mind tries to realize the nature of thought and
is not involved in the process of attaining thought with which it was accustomed in the mental mind. This mind being different from the ordinary rational mind, needs nothing to seek, no activity of mental construction, no labour of speculation or difficult discovery. It is an automatic and spontaneous way of attaining knowledge in a single view with a cosmic character, and not by mere individual thinking. The higher mind in its aspect of cognition also possesses the will and dynamic effectuation of Truth. This mind generally works on the mental will, the heart and its feelings, the life, the body through the power of thought and through the idea force. It seeks to purify the mind and vital through knowledge and transform them by the innate power of knowledge. The idea put into the mind and life as force tries to become conscious of the idea, respond to the dynamisms and modify itself in that sense. So, the feelings and actions become the vibrations of attaining the higher wisdom. In this way, the first workings proceed where the superior consciousness lays foundation of change and prepares it for realizing a superior truth of existence. This mind is still not at the stage to understand the truth in integrity, and so needs to be transcended to reach higher realms of consciousness.

The next higher level of consciousness to which one transcends is the *illumined mind*. Although there still persists the obstacle of ignorance, but with the ascent to higher realms of consciousness it diminishes progressively. In order to allow the higher consciousness to remove the obscurity of ignorance, knowledge is essential for the mind, vital and body to acquire the power for quietitude of nature, to compose and tranquillise. Only then, can the Divine act upon it and bring the ecstasy of knowledge, which is contrary to our ordinary
conceptions. For example when one says Divine Light, it does not mean light which is a material creation that can be sensed by vision or merely a subjective visual image or symbolic phenomenon. In fact light here is a spiritual manifestation of a Divine reality, which is illuminative and creative. It is because the human mind, which relies mainly on thought, conceives thought to be the highest or main process of attaining knowledge. But ignorance is incapable of making the truth wholly lucid and intelligible to the mind in all its extent and manifold implications. Knowledge in mind takes its entry through the clarifying precision of the significant sounds and the insight vision, without which it cannot give ideas the exact outline and expressive body that can be realized by the human mind. Even though according to its nature in higher levels of consciousness, it is perception or a cognitive seizing of objects, but still this means can grasp only the partial truth which is comparatively external and superficial in context of Divine knowledge. The thought can create only the representative image of truth, which is secondary and derivative in nature. This is not the ultimate truth itself, so perceptual power of the inner sight is greater and more direct than the perceptual power of thought. In other words, the consciousness of the seer is a greater power for knowledge than the consciousness of the thinker. It is a spiritual sense that seizes something of the substance of truth and not only the figure; but it outlines the figure and also at the same time catches the significance of the figure. The illumined mind has the capacity for larger comprehension and power to grasp the totality of truth. As the higher mind brings in a greater consciousness through the spiritual idea and its power of truth, the illumined mind brings a still greater consciousness.

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through the truth-sight by its power of seeing and seizing the truths of reality. This mind can effect a more powerful and dynamic integration as the mind with direct inner vision and inspiration brings the spiritual sight into heart and the spiritual light and energy into the feeling and emotion. This imparts to the life-force a spiritual urge, a truth-inspiration that dynamises the actions and exalts the life-movements. This urge and inspiration infuses into the sense organs a direct and total power of spiritual sensation so that the vital, the physical, the mental and the emotion all can conceive, perceive and feel the Divine in all things. In other words, the physical mind by the transforming consciousness breaks its limitations, the conservative inertia, replaces its narrow thought power and the doubts all that is attained by sight. It attains a direct sense and experience, to realize the Divine to live and rise into that supreme.

These two levels of consciousness enjoy their own united completeness only by a reference to the next higher level. It is this higher level from which they derive the knowledge and turn them into thought or sight and bring down them for the transmutation of the mind. So this realm of consciousness greater than the higher mind and the illumined mind is the intuitive mind. Intuition is the power of consciousness which is nearer and intimate to the original knowledge by identity. This knowledge results when the consciousness of the subject meets with the consciousness of the object, penetrates it, sees and feels directly and intimately the truth or the truths. These truths are present behind the appearances that are observed in the physical world. This results in an intimate truth perception at its depths, which is more than sight (of illumined mind) and much more than conception (as of the higher mind). The result of penetrating and
revealing the touch brings about the overwhelming and automatic certitude of such truths. In the human mind, the intuition is capable of providing certitude by help of truth remembrance. Sometimes, it is seen in the subject that there is an invading mixture or a mental coating that creates the possibility of misinterpretation. In these circumstances, an individual is driven mainly to rely on reason and are disposed even to control the suggestions of intuition. This is the discriminating intelligence that is felt in the intellectual part. But here one cannot be sure about the true thing and the mixed or false substitute. In other words, when the pure intuition gets influenced by the rational intuition, then there is no more direct certitude about the truths of reality. The rationality is completely limited to the world of sense only and thus cannot transcend the realm of ordinary empirical observation. Hence, knowledge gets limited to the phenomenal world. The consciousness has to transcend this ordinary realm and until the mind becomes predominantly reliant upon higher faculty, the coordination of its cognitions and activities cannot be regarded as the pure intuitive action. Only, when the original intuition descends into the lower consciousness and makes a clear way for communication with the higher sources, there reason and judgements by discriminating knowledge becomes inapplicable. The complete transmutation of mental activities takes place that get uplifted from knowledge-ignorance to pure knowledge by identity. Here an individual acts as the subject for attaining such knowledge and is not involved in the process as an observer only to take judgements and decisions. Even though certain integration takes place, but whole mass of identity-knowledge does not occur for which this intuitive mind needs to be transcended.
The next step of ascent leads an individual to the overmind. It is the power of cosmic consciousness and the principle of global knowledge. When the intuitive mind transcends to the overmind, the predominance of the centralising ego-sense is entirely subordinated, it is lost in the largeness of being and finally it gets abolished. Here the transmutation of the self takes place, where thought that originated in individual mind, now arises from cosmic knowledge. No more the feelings, emotions and sensations are felt from the separate ego-sense of an individual, rather it is the cosmic feeling, cosmic emotion and cosmic sensation that are derived from this mental state. It has a greater plasticity and thus admits the field of multiple possibilities. The pure essential self consciousness creates a sense of identification with the One i.e. the identification with cosmic consciousness. This cosmic consciousness is the union of all the individual consciousness. Here all the multiplicities unite to the one and there develops the cosmic structure of consciousness and action that leads to harmonious knowledge. This in turn removes the notion of multiplicities that in ordinary mental mind state seemed as contradictions and irreconcilable due to ignorance about the truth. The overmind tries to transform the inconscient completely, so that a new principle of knowledge could be established that can provide with the supramental consciousness and complete liberation from the downward pull of inconscience that acts as an obstacle even at this stage. Even though, knowledge of integrality tries to evade this mind but until the mind makes itself transform in the light of supramental consciousness it cannot make itself free from ignorance. So it has to ascend to the supramental conscious state.
There are four intermediary levels of overmind that one has to transcend in order to reach the supermind. In the first level where creative conscious force that is dominated by the thought mind makes one rely on the multiplicities and the worldly forms. This is the *mental overmind*. The next level is *intuitive overmind*. This mind tries to remove ignorance completely and create a uniform sense of oneness with the Divine. Whereas the other two level i.e. the *true overmind* and the *supramental overmind*, both of which tries to connect the overmind with the supermind, so that the descent of supramental energy can bring change in the mind levels. This change would indeed help the mind to open up to the higher realms of consciousness. All are the stages of overmind and are in no aspects realms of the Supermind. In order to reach the Supermind stage, the overmind has to open into the cosmic consciousness or enter freely into that consciousness. This overmental consciousness is considered as the first beyond mind state of consciousness, which is no more influenced by the thoughts of ordinary rational mind. So, it becomes much easier for the supramental consciousness to provide the overmind the supramental knowledge and helps it to transcend from this mind level to the supermind level of consciousness.

Once an individual can cross beyond the mind’s frontier, there comes a vaster knowledge of truth. It is the *Supermind*, where a positive, direct and living experience of supreme Infinite takes place. This is beyond all limitations of quality, personality and multiplicity. This mind grasps the reality as One-whole without any diversity as all are the many sides of that multitudinous One. These uniformities cannot be grasped by the ordinary mind, as they seem to be
irreconcilable opposites for this ignorant mind. It is the integrality of the
supermind that keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the
truth of its individual self-determination clearly knit together. The supermind is
the only thing that has the ‘power to transform our material world and transform
it as thoroughly as lastingly, and for the better, as the mind did when it appeared
for the first time in matter\textsuperscript{27}. Just as mind and life has been established and
embodied in matter during the beginning of evolution, in the same way supermind
will descend down to bring higher consciousness into the earth consciousness to
make the necessary changes that can establish and embody the supramental
force. Thus, the working of supermind would only be the establishment of a new
principle of consciousness and a new order of conscious beings. This new
principle would then evolve its own forms and powers in the terrestrial being.
So, constant expansion of consciousness and self-perfecting is the goal of
integral yoga, by which the Divine will work. According to Sri Aurobindo, there
are three main characteristics of the supermind.

(i) The \textit{first} and foremost feature is that all the knowledge in supermind is
originally knowledge by identity and oneness. In other words, knowledge does
not come in pieces or fragments; rather a unified and integral knowledge is
attained that is devoid of all diversities and multiplicities. Whatever appeared to
be diverse and irreconcilable to the discriminating mind, no more seems to be
present under the influence of supermind. This is a principle in itself that
provides one with unified knowledge and being directly aware of the truth. Thus
there remains no ignorance for which the mind understands the appearance to be

reality or the one-whole as partial and with divisions. So knowledge here is complete, direct and that leads to truth about reality.

(ii) The second feature of supermind is that its knowledge is integral and real. As this mind is able to grasp the knowledge of Divine, so it can understand all the individuals in terms of the universal being. It has the knowledge of truth and thus can realize the infinite reality, which is observable in parts to the ordinary mental mind. It also understands the relativities as it is aware of the absolute and hence can link those relativities and potentialities, which are nothing but are the aspects of Divine. When it is not the supermind state, then an individual mind is limited by ignorance and understands the reality partially and in fragmented ways. This is because mind thinks analytically and thereby divides the universal knowledge into fragments and units. The supermind state is able to understand the totality of knowledge and thus can grasp the innermost essence as everything are parts of that Divine. So no more knowledge results in a fragmented or partial way, rather it tries to understand entirely in terms of essential oneness that leads to integrality.

(iii) Finally, the third feature of the supermind is that it is directly truth-consciousness. In other words, the supermind contains all the knowledge in itself and also the knowledge is present in the lower or individualized forms. Each stage of evolution manifests the knowledge that remains within an individual in latent state. It is the spirit of consciousness which slowly widens when an individual transcends from the ordinary rational mentality. According to Sri Aurobindo, there is a state of uniform consciousness beyond this supermind that understands the integrality of reality. The levels of mind below the supermind
level are those with dividing consciousness that cannot realize the Divine and thereby knowledge gets limited only to matter and the material world. Only, evolution makes it possible that the dividing mind develops and the realms of consciousness widen to the supermind state. This leads to the process of transcendence from the knowledge of imperfect nature to higher knowledge; to reach ultimately to the knowledge of truth. So supermind remains truth-conscious.

In reaching the unity i.e. being one with the Divine, the simultaneous abolishment of multiplicity is required. It is the mental mind that perceives the one as many with irreconcilable attributes, due to presence of ignorance that results in discriminating partial knowledge. Once evolution takes place and ignorance gets removed, true knowledge comes and all these multiplicities are reconciled to the One. This problem lasts only to the extent when mind is considered as the highest instrument of knowledge in place of preparatory stage, which further widens and evolves to higher consciousness itself. According to Sri Aurobindo, the main function of the mind is to analyse and synthesise. It can definitely grasp the parts and properties – forming the whole; it can also have the definite idea of assemblage of the parts or the totality of the properties. Mind has only a vague perception of the whole. The supermind, thus, acts as the link between the ineffable one – Sachchidananda and the seperative consciousness of mind. This is actually the spirit’s adventure, where it travels in a spiral way by descent followed by the ascent to higher realms of consciousness. The final goal is that of achieving the Divine Life by these intermediary processes of transformation and opening up to the higher consciousness revealing the real
nature of the Spirit. Thus it is the two-way process of the journey to rediscover the spirit in Matter and finally evolve out to unite with the Divine.

According to the integral view of Sri Aurobindo, there is no ultimate dichotomy or discontinuity between the Self and the body-mind structure. The body-mind complex is indeed a product of energy, but energy is in ultimate analysis the energy of the Self or the Spirit itself. At the present stage of evolution, the body-mind is indeed an imperfect instrumentation of the Spirit. But by the light and power of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supramental truth-consciousness, the total psycho-physical existence can be transmuted into a perfect image and instrumentation of the Spirit. The Supermind alone can descend into the darkness of physical existence without losing its full power of action. Herein lays the deepest potential of man. An awareness of this potential is sure to remove the mystic alienation of the liberated man from his mind-body structure, a characteristic of many Indian yogis. Actualization of man’s Supramental potential is the ultimate goal of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga.

The stage of mental transformation through which one transcends is noticeable by the cognitive changes that take place at every stage. This topic is discussed in the following chapter. But the Supramental transformation of the human personality is considered essential to the reconstruction of the society in accordance with the principles of the unity-in-diversity, peace-with-justice, and love-with-freedom. The mind or intellect is the principle of dichotomous thinking. The result is that the mind can think of establishing unity only by crushing diversities, imposing peace only by ignoring justice, expressing love only by smothering freedom, whereas the supermind is the principle of integral
consciousness in which all opposites are harmonized. So, the supermind alone is capable of laying the foundation for a unified world-order in which unity and diversity, peace and justice, love and freedom can coexist without any seeming contradiction. Integral yoga is the art of bringing forth into an overt operation, in an individual’s life and society, the integral and all integrating consciousness of the supermind.