Chapter 3

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN INTEGRAL YOGA

3.1 Introduction

The main aim of the present chapter is to discuss thoroughly the cognitive developments that take place while an individual undergoes through the process of evolution as outlined by Sri Aurobindo. The fundamental principles of integral yoga set forth by Sri Aurobindo have already been discussed in the previous chapter. In analysing the structure of human personality, Sri Aurobindo has introduced many subtle and metaphysical distinctions. For instance, he distinguishes between the eternal imperishable and transcendent individual self on one hand and the immanent evolving psychic being on the other. This psychic being is best observed in an individual, when the mind has not yet received any procedural training of reasoning and justification. Once the mind gets guided by intellect and rationality, it tries to sense and understand only those objects that are supported and justified by reason and intellect. He also distinguishes between the true individual self and the five deputy selves i.e. the physical, the vital, the mental, the supramental and the blissful selves. The five deputy selves in the Indian metaphysics are known as the pañca kosas. The kosas are imagined as the layers of an onion, which form a barrier from realizing an individual’s true nature of bliss and oneness with the universe. Yoga is the tool to bring an individual’s awareness deeper and deeper into the bodies,
eventually reaching the innermost core, the True Self. The five sheaths or the *pañca kośas*¹ are:

• *Annamaya Kośa* or the Food Sheath – *Annamaya Kośa* is a representation of the gross physical body. This sheath is regarded as the medium of enjoyment for gross objects through the physical senses.

• *Prāṇamaya Kośa* or the Energy Sheath – *Prāṇa* is the life or the force behind movement, which can also be described as the binding force of the universe. It is said that all birth and death in the universe are a result of *prāṇa*.

• *Manomaya Kośa* or the Mental Sheath – This sheath deals with the emotional, mental or perceptual part of the body, which comprises not just the mind, but also the organs within the body.

• *Vijñānamaya Kośa* or the Intellectual Sheath – This sheath represents the intelligence or the conscious human mind. *Vijñāna* represents the mind, skill and all the intelligence behind human work.

• *Ānandamaya Kośa* or Bliss Sheath – *Ānanda* refers to the pleasure, happiness or the bliss that a human can experience from any channel.

All these *kośas* or selves are the different metaphysical entities as every level has its own specific expressions and functions. Following this metaphysical analysis of self or *kośa* as outlined in Indian philosophy, Sri Aurobindo also distinguishes between the gross physical organism and the subtle body that is composed of life, energy, mind and its sense organs, intellect,

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ego and the psychic being. It is believed that the individual self endowed with
the subtle body is capable of functioning apart from and independently of the
gross physical organism. The different aspects of human personality such as the
physical, the instinctual, the rational, the supramental and the pure spirit are the
different modes of expression of the same fundamental energy which is the
creative dynamism of the self. This is the consciousness force (cīt-śakti) that
transforms and transmutes the self, to evolve into supramental consciousness
from the very physical being. The dichotomy of nature and spirit, as well as the
dualism of matter and mind and that of nature and Supernature\(^2\) is resolved for
Sri Aurobindo in this creative dynamism of the self. It is the consciousness force
of the creative energy that is present in matter in inconscient form and which
evolves gradually to life, mind and higher minds with the descent of higher force
from the supramental level. It is thus a two-way process, where the higher
energy descends and helps the consciousness force to evolve and ascend to the
higher realm of consciousness. So, mind and matter or nature and spirit are not
the multiplicities of reality. They are part of the one whole that starts to evolve
from matter or nature to transform and transcend to mind and spirit respectively.
A person even after attaining complete self realization and being awareness need
not feel alienated from his body, mind and personality. Since, both body and
mind has undergone the necessary transformation to grasp the highest
knowledge of truth and thus need not feel departed from the physical body.
Moreover, this body and mind is capable of being perfected and transformed
into an effective instrumentation of the illumined self. It is by the widening of
consciousness, which receives the knowledge of truth without any kind of

\(^2\) The realm of reality that one unites with by realizing the true nature of self.
limitation. The consciousness transcends the bounds and obstacles of ignorance, to reach the state of pure and true knowledge.

The previous chapter elaborated the classification of different mind levels and realms of consciousness. In the present chapter, the focus is on the developmental changes that take place at these different levels of mind and consciousness. So, before entering into the illustrative discussion of the developmental changes, it is important to point out here the finer and subtle distinctions between mind and consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo, this can be understood from three different perspectives. Firstly from Indian philosophical standpoint, where some systems claim that mind (manas) is an essential internal sense organ without which no sense perception would be possible. The external being perceived by the external sense organs are revealed to the mind which indeed imparts this information to the soul and thereby knowledge results via sensation and perception. For example, when a pot is perceived, the sensation of ‘a thing’ results which when conveyed to the mind relates the sense data of that thing to provide an individual with the knowledge of a pot. Thus coordination of all the information attained by the external sense organs is done by mind or manas to give concrete knowledge of the external object. Secondly however, from the psychological perspective it would be claimed that sense organs act only by the force of the mind operating as the will. It is the mind which when wills, only then the sense organs are involved in the process of perception. In other words, mind here is at the seat of control for the

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4 As Nyāya and Sāṁkhya considers mind as an internal sense-organ in association to the five external sense-organs, viz. eyes, ear, nose, tongue and skin.
activities or functions of the external sense organs. The will acts as the conscious operating power of the mind, which is much vaster and potent. This conscious power retains and attains all the information that comes into the mind via the external sense organs. *Finally*, from the perspective of physiology, mind would be considered as the mere executer of the actions guided by motor nervous system. In other words, all the sensations attained from the perception of external world are transmitted to the brain via neuronal signals. It is the brain that directs the mind to act and react in response to those signals, but it is known that mind not only acts merely upon nervous reactions, rather its realm of activity is much vaster. The powers of thought, memory, learning, acquisition, etc. are not mere nerve impulses. This power is the consciousness that Sri Aurobindo coined as *conscious-force*.

According to Sri Aurobindo, both mind and consciousness has to be admitted. Here consciousness plays an important role from the mind level even though it remains present in matter as inconscient and in life as vital energy. As mentioned earlier, consciousness is a force that is responsible for the sense experiences and knowledge. But this force or power gets delimited by ignorance of truth (i.e. being unable to realize the Divine, the power of consciousness cannot grasp the reality), domination of emotions, feeling and desires, ability to analyze and natural tendency of thinking logically or by rational intellect. Once an individual overcomes these limitations through widening of consciousness, as was revealed in Sri Aurobindo’s own experiences, one can understand and realize the Divine. So, the realm of consciousness is expandable and thereby one can reach the supreme level of consciousness with the knowledge of truth. It is
not only the realization of the Divine, but the expansion of consciousness that enhances the cognitive abilities. Our knowledge, habit of perceiving the external world, the regularity in appearances of the world actually delimits an individual from knowing the whole of universe and also beyond it. But when the limits of consciousness expand, an individual can attain higher knowledge with greater clarity and distinctness. These realms or levels of mind can be realized by an embodied individual. The physical mind, vital mind, mental mind, psychic mind and the spiritual mind are those five minds that are categorized based on their characteristic and mode of functioning. These five minds with their hierarchical functioning give a very lucid insight regarding the evolutionary progression of the conscious power. In a nutshell, along with the biological evolution of man from the moment of inception in the womb till the baby is born in whatever manifestation it comes out (any type of living being), it is aware only of the physical or sense mind. This mind helps in the perception and sensation of the external world. With the passage of time, slowly and steadily the ordinary external sensation develops into a sense of awareness where feelings and emotions come, which could not be tackled by this physical mind. Hence, the vital mind comes into play. Then the upsurging emotions of feelings and desires leads to certain inquisitiveness and queries, which are better tackled by reasoning and intellect leading to the formation of mental mind or the thought mind. So with the gradual progression of the mind levels, it is found that expansion of consciousness takes place that develops the cognitive functioning of the mind. It is justified equally both from biological and evolutionary standpoint. The fourth type of mind is the psychic mind, which is quite different from the ordinary rational mind as it does not depend on reasoning and intellect.
It is the soul which is neither influenced by sensation or by desire or by rationality. But when an individual receives proper training and education, it gets guided only by the rational faculty of the thought mind and thus cannot realize the understandings of the psychic mind. In other words, this mind helps to understand the nature of the Divine and so plays an important role in evolutionary progression of consciousness. It is by the help of this psychic that one is able to transform and transcend the mind levels and ascend to the higher realms of consciousness. Finally, the spiritual mind is there where the extension of consciousness takes place. The mind overcomes the narrow limits of understanding and thus transcends from ordinary experiences, rationality and intellect. Here the ascension from ordinary mental mind to that of higher mind is the first transcendence followed by the illumined mind, intuitive mind, overmind and ultimately the supermind. A thorough study of these mental levels would be done based on Sri Aurobindo’s accounts of literary and poetic expressions of these levels. He claims from his own yogic experiences that the transition of consciousness from one level to the next higher level always is followed by enhancement of cognitive faculties, their developments and qualitative growth. So, it is an effort here to understand primarily the expressions by which an individual can trace the developments taking place at the different levels of the mind.

3.2 Expressions of Mind Levels

Based on the cognitive abilities and activities, the classification of an individual mind has already been established. As the evolutionary progression takes place
followed by widening of consciousness, different expressions are used to refer to the different realms of consciousness. Even though, specifically there is no distinct demarcation of the realms of consciousness, the way in which Sri Aurobindo presents his own experiential records, it implies a gradual progression and widening of conscious activities. By ‘conscious activities’ it is meant here as all types of conscious functioning like sensation, emotion, thinking, feeling, willing, understanding, introspection, problem solving, rationalising, etc. that are part of an individual life. But progressions in all these activities are better realized by the proper understanding of an individual’s thoughts. In other words, the better an individual realizes and understands the reality the better conscious functioning takes place. This conscious functioning at different mental realms is best understood by the thoughts expressed in the poetic form, which refers to the deeper levels of realization and understanding of the reality. According to Sri Aurobindo, poetry is an easy way of expressing the mental states, as it is the spontaneous outcome of thoughts within oneself, which comes out only when an individual is ‘mindful’. By being ‘mindful’ it means to possess the inner silence to express the thoughts without one’s own deliberate effort. The inner silence, deeper understanding, true poetic vision, rhythmic expression, etc. all develops with the progressive ascension of an individual towards the higher realm of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo himself while undergoing the process of transformation and transcendence has reported his own personal experiences and mental activities. The approach of study here is to understand the different forms of poetic expressions that were used by Sri Aurobindo himself, in order to depict the realms of consciousness. The power of thought, imagination, vision, understanding, pure intuition, etc. are all the
different cognitive powers and abilities of the mind, which remain limited and latent in the ordinary mental minds, but develops during the process of transformation and transcendence. These developments lead to deeper understanding and realization of the reality, which indeed explores the realms of reality beyond the limits of observability. The limitation of observability is due to lack of proper understanding and realization of the reality. In other words, the insufficient conscious functioning is incapable of revealing the whole nature of reality. Hence, undergoing the process of yoga helps in developing and widening of the different conscious functions.

This development of mental functioning leads to creative thinking, imaginative understanding, intuitive insights, larger memory, proper intellectual analysing, etc. which are best demonstrated by the different types of expression used in the poems. These expressions, in fact, reveal the different conscious realms in which an individual resides or dwells. The widening of conscious abilities not only gets reflected in poetic creations but is also demonstrated in day to day life of an individual. It leads to easier problem solving, coordinated planning, proper and smooth execution of an action, recalling of near past and present events spontaneously, etc. that provides a better living for an individual. So, the primary attempt here is to understand the transcendence of the conscious realm from ordinary mental mind to the higher grades, as outlined by Sri Aurobindo himself in his own experiential records.

The first three mental levels i.e. the physical mind, the vital mind and the mental mind are the primary mind levels that are almost more or less actively observed in all and every human beings. The life cycle of an individual starts
with the physical mind being guided by sensation, then develops the vital instincts and finally attains the rational outlook of observing and understanding the external world. So, these minds viz. physical, vital and the mental are responsible for the ordinary daily activities of an individual. Only when an individual makes an attempt or effort to transcend the ordinary rational mind level, then by practice of yoga the widening of conscious abilities takes place along with the enhancements of the cognitive faculties. These abilities of consciousness are intelligence, imagination, introspection, intuition, etc. which are already present within an individual, but are not observed frequently. The ordinary rational mind (mental mind) is mainly dominated by the logical thinking, rational understanding, etc. that is received by mental training and education. These interfere with the normal activities of the mind, thereby preventing the conscious abilities from acting spontaneously. Only through the practice of yoga the conscious abilities can be brought into play or action, which leads to overcome the limitations of the ordinary mind. The ordinary mind being bounded by sensation, experiences and rational justification cannot transcend the limits of observability and anything about reality beyond observable area seems to create logical contradiction within them. Sri Aurobindo mentions that once an individual participates in this ascension, the individual gets more refined expressions for the inner realization of the true self, the nature and also about the world. The following sections will illustrate the involvement of different mental levels and their pertinent cognitive activities.
3.3 The Physical Mind

The very first primary level of mind that is concerned with the happenings of the external observable world is the physical mind. This mind makes one aware of the external world through sensations only and so it is also known as the sense mind. The structure and mechanism of working of this physical mind makes it collect only the external information and data through the sense organs. It is capable of performing such actions only. Every human being start their life with this sense mind and gradually develops feelings, emotions, rationality, etc. for the better functioning of the mind. The physical mind deals with the physical matter that appears to an individual via sensation and which is present in the external world. So the mind is concerned with the facts that are observable to other individuals also. It cannot grasp the feelings and emotions, but just gives a good response to the external or internal bodily sensations only. This mind cannot even perform the task of intellectual thinking and rational inference. Its limitation is in understanding the physical world that is attained by the senses only. It cannot go beyond the appearances of this external world nor could this mind attain the knowledge of reality. For example, any physical object perceived from one perspective appears to be real for the sense mind, whereas on observing the whole object it proves the previous knowledge to be partial. In other words, the external senses can grasp only the partial nature of any object due to the limitations of senses. But when the holistic understanding of reality takes place, then an individual is able to realize that the knowledge attained by senses is partial in nature. Thus, the external world too has degrees of observability which cannot be known by the sense mind.
Sri Aurobindo in his book, *Records of Yoga* mentions about this physical mind, which is mainly concerned about the bodily sensations. In practising yoga or meditation, the right posture and control over the sense organs is required, so that one can feel and realize the inner thoughts. An individual can reflect upon one’s own internal thought and feeling and thereby transcend the bounds of sensation. It is by regular practice and uninterrupted concentration that the external bodily sensations can be overpowered. This removes the uneasiness felt during right postures, removes the pain taking place due to the sensations and directing the outward external sense organs to divert towards the inner thoughts and reflection. So to transcend the higher levels of consciousness, the physical mind has to be controlled as it interrupts the feelings, emotions and intellectuality by mere bodily sensations. The sense mind acts out of the basic awareness constituted by sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, etc and transmits these sensations from the external world to the mind. It is the common feature of mind by which the received external sensations gets altered, modified, inhibited; and the intensities of these sense impacts are measured. All the abilities are not in use ordinarily, but they remain subliminal and may upsurge irregularly or abruptly in certain fitful actions like dream, trauma, etc. These abilities are also observed in person during deep sleep, meditation, hypnosis or due to intake of certain stimulating drugs. Hence, the functioning of the sense mind has to be controlled by thoughts, feelings and judgements, which are possible by the help of vital mind only.

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Once the sense mind is controlled, the bodily sensations no more disturb by creating the reckless feelings and fickle thoughts about bodily needs and desires leading to disturbance of concentrations. Slowly and gradually, the dominance of external sensations gets minimized and the mind gets directed more towards the inner thoughts and feelings. This leads to the enhancement of the power of assimilation, concentration and attention to the thoughts. This does not imply that the external sense world gets detached, rather the perspective of perception of the individual widens from the realm of external world to the realm of internal world. Sri Aurobindo himself cites an example that when required quantity of food is consumed, then proper assimilation takes place and the food is capable of rendering the purest form of energy. This example indicates that an individual being guided by senses cannot take the required quantity of food because of several factor like taste, satisfaction, etc. which diverts the concentration. Only when an individual is free from the sensual bound, the body is able to assimilate the food and provide the required energy. When an individual progresses in yoga, the senses get controlled, then any and every type of sensation does bring pleasure and satisfaction to the individual. There remains no scope of pain and dissatisfaction as the yoga leads to transparency of mind, where an individual does not try to hide one’s intention rather becomes capable of understanding the thoughts, will, and desires of other persons also. This is possible because of an individual’s inner concentrations. The ordinary mind misses the point of concentration and muddles them with sensations, feelings and desires, fear, will, etc. The individual replicates through the same mechanism to conceive the thoughts of other individual, as he/she does it for himself/herself, which is instantaneous and automatic. Both the thoughts
are external in nature and are attained by the senses only. But when the limits of consciousness widens, then mind rises beyond the realm of the sensory world and unites with the universal cosmic consciousness, which is capable of receiving everybody’s awareness and also interact with the thoughts of the other minds. So misguidance of senses may be the primary obstacle of this mind, for which Sri Aurobindo considers the vital mind to be the next higher level with respect to the physical mind.

3.4 The Vital Mind

The next important level is the vital mind. This mind is considered to be the seat of emotion, feeling, desire and will. This mind creates within an individual the longing, attachment and indifference towards the physical realities, which are observed via sensations. The activities performed by an individual residing in the vital mind is always flooded with emotions and feelings, as compared to the physical or sense mind. The physical mind is aware only of external data and information of the observable world, whereas the vital mind actually makes the process of thinking and planning for the execution of an action. The responses for the available external data are prepared by this mind, but it cannot be given the responsibility of executing the action, as this mind being guided by will and emotion cannot think in a rational way. This would lead to unsuccessful execution of the action. So, the activities of the vital mind are limited upto the processing of data, planning and thinking about the action only. The vital mind after being directed inward by the control of senses is capable of providing

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6 The universal cosmic consciousness refers to the Supermind Consciousness.
deeper insights, which cannot be grasped merely by the external senses. Here the mind has transcended from the realm of acting merely as the physical being (which is concerned to satisfy only the physical needs) to vital being, which seeks to be subjective, imaginative and purely emotive; that marks an individual to be distinguished from mere animality. The vital mind performs planning of action, imagining of achieving the goal of the action and make future planning for further actions. But this mind being the seat of emotion and desire, cannot select the right way of executing an action and so, many a times misses reaching the goal of the action. These are due to the emotional divulsions that confuse an individual from taking the right decision of doing or not doing an action. Hence at this stage the mind needs a proper guiding source other than emotions, which can select the correct way of executing a plan. The focussed thought on planning and execution can be done only by the mental mind or the rational mind by help of reasoning. This mental mind does not entertain any and every random thoughts that are guided by feelings, emotions and desires. The mind becomes capable of understanding the whole task and thereby leading to successful volition of those planning. So mere sensations of physical mind which were obtained, are then processed by emotional planning and finally are executed by help of rational understanding. Thus there takes place a transition of mind from physicality to vitality and then to rationality. This transformation develops the relation of an individual with the external world. In physical mind state the external world is revealed only by sense-data, which further develops into vital mind, when an individual is able to perform some cognitive activities like planning, thinking, coordination of thoughts, etc. which are not performed by the physical mind. Again the activities of the vital are guided by emotional impulses.
and feelings hence, there is a very loose control of will-power, radical discipline due to which these emotions lead to unsuccessful planning and coordination of actions. It is because of this reason that vital mind needs to be transcended.

An individual with the dominance of vital mind is aware only of one’s own feelings and desires as ‘my desires’, ‘my pains’, etc. But only when an individual makes an effort to transcend this mind or keep the vital under control, then one is able to realize that all those desires and feelings are not within an individual. These are present in the external world, where an individual is caught in these false identifications as one’s own feelings and desires. The individual tries to develop a sort of unification with such feelings. Only when an individual tries to overcome the bounds of emotions and feelings, the relation with the external world gets clearer, by which one is able to understand the reason for likes and dislikes, for anxiety or unease, which eventually helps to understand the external things in a correct way. It is the external vibration that tries to create an impact in minds as desirable or painful, etc. This control over the vital mind creates a sort of individual protective atmosphere, by which the person is capable of feeling and understanding the external vibrations of the world and also the psychological vibrations of other persons. This is possible only when an individual’s vital mind has undergone the process of appropriation and identification with one’s own thoughts and desires. This indeed concentrates the force of vital energy. This energy is so strong and compact, that Sri Aurobindo experienced an incident once when rain occurred due to cyclone in the external world, a single drop of rain water did not enter the room, where the windows were wide open. This is Sri Aurobindo’s own experience that is narrated by
Mother\textsuperscript{7}, where he claims that silencing of the vital mind, provides an individual with so strong energy that one is capable of reaching against the natural phenomena also. In other words, every worldly activity is the play of energy and when an individual has already mastered over the vital mind, he becomes the owner of all these energies and hence can accept, stop or reject these external energies as required.

3.5 The Mental Mind

The mind guided by reason and intellect is the \textit{mental mind} or \textit{thought mind}. This mind is developed through education and mental training, where it neither merely accepts the sense-data from external world (by physical mind) nor is solely guided by emotions only (by vital mind). The action of the thought mind or the mental mind is to accept the evidences of the senses, command over desires, emotions and instincts, control the impulses of the sense mind and then try to give them an orderly direction for effective success. So, mind here is controlled by rationality and enjoys a greater superiority in comparison to the physical and the vital mind. Even though the vital mind takes the initiative of performing the action of planning and coordination of thoughts, but still the vital mind is incapable of taking the right decision. It is the thought-mind that admits the sensations and based on these sensations the mind applies memory, associate the ideas, makes generalisations and thereby develops secondary ideas or thoughts. This mind marks to be the distinctive feature of being present in human beings, making them completely superior to other living beings.

\textsuperscript{7} Satprem. \textit{Adventure of Consciousness}. Mysore: Mira Aditi, 2003. p. 94.
(animality). Thus, the sense mind helps in attaining the stream of sensations and sense perceptions, which is followed by the impulses and desires of an individual that makes man able to involve in an action, by use of reason, will and intelligence of this mental mind. This mind is more aware of other cognitive activities apart from those performed by physical and vital mind. The mental mind is reflective in nature, performs learning, and retains ideas and thoughts as memory that helps this mind in performing dynamic actions to reach successfully the desired goal, to make judgements based on intelligence and rationality and to take decision from memory and learning. Hence, this mind is really a mind with higher cognitive abilities, which is capable of proper programming and coordination of actions based on logic and rationality.

The basic difficulty with this mind is that it is concerned with the observational world only. This world being limited by the bounds of space and time, the reason supports only the empirically observational features. The logical orientation of this mental mind and reason can present only a partial knowledge of the external world. The mental mind does not merely depend on the sensational and emotional aspect for understanding the external world. It tries to go deep into the content and frame of the thought procedures, either within logical constructions or within the prevalent religious dogmas or within the intellectual thought systems which are easily supported by rational understanding. Only then it comes up with the knowledge that is regarded as true. Another difficulty with the thought mind is the presence of ‘ego-sense’. By ‘ego-sense’ it is meant here as the sense of individuality, by which an individual identifies oneself to be distinct from another individual. The ego-sense is so
much dominating at this mental level that the mind gets more involved in judging, observing and understanding the mere external affairs of the world. It is because of this ego-sense that the mind is always diverted from realizing the reality of self apart from being involved in the present state of affairs. So, this mental mind which is an essential feature of human beings needs to be transcended, to make itself free from the narrow rational outlook of ego-sense and its limitations. The mental mind has to be released from this individual narrowness. According to Sri Aurobindo, this is the highest realm of consciousness that is observed in more or less all human beings. So, on one hand, this is the end point of rational thought in an individual being and on the other hand, it is the beginning of yogic thoughts and experiences of an individual, who wills to transcend to the higher realms of consciousness. Once the person in mental mind desires to transcend the ordinary rational mind, transformation of mind takes place by widening of consciousness. It is just like blooming of a flower (specially a lotus) that opens its petals to reach the ultimate beauty. Once the limit of consciousness expands, it no more confines to the mere observable external affairs only. It tries to grasp the knowledge of the whole reality and transcend the bounds of rationality. The mental mind always performs its observation on fragmentary matters that are bounded within space and time. Transcending this level would imply the transcendence of space and time. When the realm of observability is no more bounded by space and time, then an individual can be aware of those facts that are not attained by the external senses.
The dependence on the senses is merely a habit. Sri Aurobindo says “It is possible for the mind – and it would be natural for it, if it could be persuaded to liberate itself from its consent to the domination of matter – to take direct cognisance of the objects of sense without the aid of sense-organs.”\(^8\) One can see and feel across the continents, as if distances did not exist, because distance is a hindrance only to the body and its organs, not to consciousness which can be anywhere it wishes to be. These are the preliminary advances in yoga. In his own diary entries, Sri Aurobindo refers to such an experience. He could feel the ill health of his elder brother during his practice of yoga, where he receives the indications that past health and vigour of his brother would not be retained long. It is the free transverse of consciousness that crossed the bounds of senses to grasp the information irrespective of the bounds of space and time.\(^9\) So it is observed from his own records that as one achieves control over the physical mind, the vital mind and the mental mind, only then one can prepare oneself to allow for the expansion of consciousness to take place.

After knowing these mental levels it is found that human beings are capable of controlling their mental states. Even though these are the basic mind levels, but consciousness within these mental levels can be directed in accordance to one’s own desire. The physical mind which is mainly concerned with physical sensations only like food, desire, physical pain, etc., when overpowered, functions without such physical needs. As has been cited earlier (in physical mind section) that minimum food is required, for body can assimilate the maximum amount of energy as the senses are no more diverted for

their own satisfaction. The right posture of yoga, the breathing exercises also brings control over the physicality and stores energy for the body. The vital is the outcome of such energy that is mainly controlled by emotions, feelings and desires. When emotions are controlled then the vital energy helps to fight against all illness, etc. Finally, the rational mind tries to evaluate the observational reality on basis of logic and rationality. This mind mainly depends on sense-data of the observational world, where the senses are limited by the bounds of space and time. To overpower this mind it implies that consciousness can cross the bounds of space and time limitation and reflect to inner thoughts and understandings that would help to widen the realm of knowledge.

All these mental levels are present in every human being. But in order to go beyond this ordinary level, one has to take the help of psychic mind. This mind is also known as the soul. It is not guided by senses, or by emotions or by rationality. Infact this mind is hidden by one’s ideas and feelings and thus, does not get observed externally. This is the inner mind that retains only the essence of all experiences that an individual attains. In other words, this can be expressed as the true personality. Now the following section will illustrate in details about the functioning of the psychic mind and its contribution to the process of ascension of consciousness.

3.6 The Psychic Mind

Sri Aurobindo best refers this mind as the ‘soul’. In other words, this is not the active mind that is guided by sensory abilities (like the physical mind) or by the emotional longings (like the vital mind) or by rationality (like the mental mind).
It is the inner consciousness that lives within every individual and all the experiences of the physical realm, emotional realm and the rational acquisitions leave their impressions on this mind. It thus stores all the essence of experiences that an individual gains and it is due to this essence that distinguishes one individual from the other. This *psychic mind* is considered to create a uniqueness of an individual. The psychic links all experiences of an individuals’ life in an unbroken chain of experiences and through the accumulation of innumerable types of experiences, the psychic acquires and develops a strong individuality. This psychic grows more with experiences and creates a force of individualized consciousness, which helps the mind in transcending the limits of rationality and open up to the higher realms of consciousness. Clearly then, it is found that there are many degrees of human mind, in which psychic is the latent possibility within an individual being. Whatever experiences the physical mind, the vital mind and the mental mind provide to the psychic mind are all related to the external world only. But there is also inner experiences and introspection that are a part of the inner mind. In other words, they are not two different minds, but are only the two-sided aspect of the same mind that remains present externally and also internally. The psychic mind acts as the medium of contact between the external affairs of the mind and the internal affairs of the mind. So, if the psychic mind is not developed and it remains behind the physical, vital and the mental mind, being suppressed by sensations, feelings or desires and rational ideas or thoughts, it cannot communicate between the external mental life and the internal mental life. This would indeed not lead to the ascension of consciousness. So, Sri Aurobindo claims greater importance to the development of the psychic mind.
The psychic mind or soul is the inner self of an individual that is not guided by feelings or emotions or rationality. This mind tries to grasp the inner feelings and thoughts that remain covered by the experiences of the physical mind, the vital mind and the mental mind. Only when one can explore those inner thoughts, consciousness will try to expand its limit of knowing. The following is a small excerpt from *Savitri* which reveals the inner development of Satyavān in connection with his experiences and exploration of Nature or Reality. Here it is merely not the poetic mood and process that is shown, rather it points to the development of soul.

“As if to a deeper country of the soul
Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
Through an inner seeing and sense a wakening came. . . .”\(^{10}\)

The poem implies the soul to be like a ‘deep country’. Here one finds truths about the reality (earth) that is realized by inward seeing or introspection. This inward seeing indeed creates a sense of awakening within oneself that links the external world with the internal one. There is an indication of a new awareness which is not in the mind, but deep inside within an individual. It is the psychic that is referred by the phrase “deeper country”. The soul or psychic is not a generalisation, rather it is compared and contrasted with the earth and are balanced against each other. The deeper region of oneself is the soul, whereas the earth is comprised of vivid observable images. In order to introspect oneself “inner seeing” is required, whereas normal waking consciousness is sufficient enough to sense the earthly images. Thus external consciousness of sense is comprised of several observations, whereas the soul or psychic mind stands for

consciousness other than life-force and mind operating in material body and brain. This seems to be the dream region that is referred to as “wakening”, where the person can delve into for inner seeing and create images. The expression can be interpreted in two ways. First is that, where the individual understands the earth-experiences in a different and deeper light. Second, there are experiences of new things in soul’s depth, which appear as earthly objects, but in reality they are present as original truths, whose copies or representations are the earthly objects\(^\text{11}\). In order to grasp the true nature of reality, one cannot merely depend upon these inner thoughts and seeing. One has to transcend and surpass this realm in order to allow the knowledge of truth from the Divine itself and remove all the unclarity and obscurity of ignorance.

It has to be noted that poetry is primarily not the exclamation of the mind and its concepts, not the cry of life-force and its desires or not even the appeal of the body and its instincts. The delight of poetry is created by inner seeing and sensation, which are not just fanciful entertainments. It depends on visual perception of the earthly matters and then creation of vivid imagery by help of introspection. To these images, shapes and colours are imposed by the poet. So, poetry from the psychic mind state can grasp only the earthly matters and represent them with vivid imagery as was seen in the excerpt mentioned above. This mind tries to correlate the external observable world with the internal perception and imagination. Though thought processing or illumined perspective is not yet developed at this stage, but still it is found that it owns a better status in comparison to the physical, vital and the mental mind, which are totally

limited to the earthly images only. Atleast this mind creates a new activity of inner seeing and introspection that leads to the creative development of cognitive faculty. Not only external data is received here, but also imagery can be created based on this data by help of the psychic mind. The next step of development leads us to the ascension to higher mind or the first level of consciousness beyond the ordinary rational outlook.

3.7 Higher Mind

The first mental level beyond the ordinary rational mind is the higher mind. Sri Aurobindo called these realms as ascension of consciousness because these realms are known by their abilities. The widening of consciousness is the process of knowing, understanding and realizing the change in perception of the reality that were used at ordinary mind level. In the mental mind, the ultimate way of knowing was rational intellect, logic and reasoning with which the mind is being trained. It realizes the observational facts and tries to relate them on the basis of rationality or logic. But transcending to the realm of higher mind is no more guided by rationality and intellect rather it tries to derive its knowledge by inner thoughts. In other words, this mind emphasises on the subjective thoughts of the corresponding objective presentations. The mere ideas of sense, emotion, etc. that are presented to the ordinary mind now gets completely transformed in the light of subjective inner thoughts, which present an individual with the truth of reality. This mind even though has transcended the bounds of rationality there still occurs interference of the reason and rationality. This interference makes the inner thoughts unclear and the true realization of the Divine is not possible.
According to Sri Aurobindo, these realms are not so much defined with boundaries that some sort of intermixture of thoughts cannot take place. Being in higher mind state, an individual may sometimes descend to the ordinary mental mind and be persuaded by reasons and rationality. It can also with greater clarity ascend to the next higher level of illuminative state. This sort of free traversing is frequently observed in these realms of consciousness.

The preliminary work of this higher mind is to create images thoughts and impulses from the inner thoughts attained by introspection. In other words, all sorts of thought experiences are capable of producing coherent images, coherent dreams and visualization of all ideas in totality. The fragmentary understanding no more remains in the higher mind. It tries to grasp knowledge from the ideas by conjoining all of them to form one-whole. This mind is no more dependent on the mechanism of implied deductions and inferences like that of the mental mind. Sri Aurobindo himself justifies the working of higher mind, stating it to be the power of thought coordination. For instance, it is because of the potent thought and will of health that is capable of replacing the faith in illness and its consent to illness. This mind indeed helps with positive vibrating thoughts of power, motion and strength. By help of this mind an individual may overpower all the traces of fear, lack of coordination and all types of negative vibrations that generally interfere in the mental mind. This mind tries to bring in the clarity of knowledge by thought and removing the ignorance from the mental levels. Apart from these cognitive abilities, higher mind also helps to change the vital mind. The nature of emotive impulses changes and the new sense of understanding and realization become possible.
Here an excerpt of a poem is presented that depicts higher mind state of thought expression.

“If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom
Swallow up life’s brief flash for aye, we fare
As summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom,
Whose sound and motion not alone declare,
But are their whole of being!”

The poem implies that when an individual lies or no more exists, it seems to be a total gloom. Here life is compared to a flash of light that gets swallowed by death. So life and death are like the summer gusts that come and go and produce some sound and motion for some time. It is, thus, not merely the presence of sound and motion of the summer gust, infact the whole nature of it gets revealed within that time. As life and death are not the mere occurrences that can happen as events in an individual’s life, rather these comprise the whole nature of an individual. In other words, the life cycle of a human being starts with birth and ends at death, involving the whole life-period of an individual. The above excerpt possesses the genuine language of the thinking mind with some impacts on the inner thoughts. There is no spiritual content in this poem, because the mind creating this poem is limited mostly to the narrow mental range of vision and not going beyond it. The comparison of two separate events i.e. life and death are taken as one whole idea, which is explained by the short lived summer gusts. These gusts come and go and mark their presence by the sound and motion. It is the ability of the higher mind to understand reality with natural awareness and arrive at the truths of those realities. It utilises the ability

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of comprehensive thought force to link up events of reality with those appearing in observational world. This mind does not construct too many images. In another instance of a poem, it will be indicated that same imagery is depicted that is identified to be the ability of the higher mind.

“The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow.” .......

The moth in its limited life has the desire to become the star one day. It transcends its limit and so also the night wills to become the morning, which begins a new day and new hope. An individual devotes oneself to those activities only, which would take them away from sorrows and relieve the life from the worldly bondages. The desire and devotion are always present in an individual in order to transcend the limits and unite to all the truth, all happiness i.e. the Divine. This poem too bears no spiritual content, but only tries to relate the worldly events on one hand with those of one’s desire to surpass the bounds of limitation – to enjoy freedom, joy and satisfaction.

Both the above excerpts do not provide any enlightened thought or idea, new vision or understanding, but merely grasps the observational images that the mind tries to receive externally and thereby tries to unite them as one whole. It is the best ability that is observed in higher mind, that it receives no more fragmentary images bounded by space and time. It transcends the realm of space and time and provides an individual with the unitarian thought about the reality. For example, the concept of life and death are two aspects but are related to one

life only. The desire to overcome the limitation is found in many creatures and so also in human beings who try to come out of the bondages of sorrow. The next consciousness level would provide much greater clarity and more vivid imagery in comparison to the higher mind.

3.8 The Illumined Mind

The next higher realm of consciousness is the *illumined mind*. This mind is more capable of attaining higher thoughts and knowledge. No more there occurs interference of the reason and rationality, which is the very basic problem with the higher mind as it is the first higher level beyond the ordinary rational mind. Here the mind is more stable in attaining knowledge not by intellect or mere external observation; rather it is inwardly conscious about the inner-thoughts, it understands and realizes the depths of ideas that are associated by the higher mind. So, this mind is completely beyond the realm of ordinary thought and understanding. Sri Aurobindo claims that illumined mind is capable of deeper realizations and so it has vaster images. These are represented either by verbal expressions or by rhythm or by colourful usage of metaphors. Thus these skills are best observed in poetry, where the nature of the poem claims the poet being in illumined mind state while writing the poetry. Neither ordinary intelligence nor rational imaginations are the true recipients of poetic pleasure. Since poetry is not complete with the use of mere imagery or by use of rhythmic words only, so these cannot provide the reader with higher and deeper thoughts. In fact, poetry is created by the power of an individual who perceives the material world and realizes its true nature, which is known beyond the realm of ordinary senses.
and expressed by help of creative languages. Here one no more deals with mere appearances, or the ordinary speech language that is meant only for communication as there are the activities of the mechanized and sophisticated intellect more clearly observed in the state of mental mind. This realm of consciousness develops the characteristic feature of inner vision. Inner vision is the discriminative thought or the analytic observation. This inner vision reveals the same truth of reality to one and all, who possesses the ability of understanding by inner vision. Thus, there develops a tendency of understanding one’s own self and also being aware of other thought minds. All the persons with this mind level bear the same truth and the same vibration. Hence, there occurs reception of information about the other minds without help of any external physical sense organs or are not even deduced from past experiences. The mind itself rises to the level of transparency, where it can traverse freely from one mind to the other. This is known as the extra-sensory perception (ESP). Though the ability is noticed in this mind state, since complete transparency is not achieved so there results inaccuracy and deficiency of certitude in understanding the others’ mind.

Comparing the faculty of perceptual understanding and thinking, Sri Aurobindo says\(^\text{15}\) that thought is a machinery of ignorance to seize truth, whereas the vision of the illumined mind is essentially the direct seizing of truth. There arises an inspiration within, which spontaneously creates images, expressions and visions that are the outcome of deep concentration power that develops within oneself. This concentration is indeed responsible for the extra

sensory perception that is observed in individuals being in illumined mind state. However there lies a tendency of mixing real incidents with that of the false one’s due to forms and appearances of the ordinary mind that do interfere in these higher realms also. The more the mind state transcends to next higher realm of consciousness, the interference of the mental mind ceases and direct knowledge is attained. In fact, this consciousness level makes possible the poetic blossoming or new forms of images or trail of scientific discoveries or worshipping God with complete surrender and devotion. It is the reasons that once mind is away from the external observable world, the sense and emotions are under control, ordinary rationality and intellect transcend and inner thoughts start developing (higher mind). These thoughts are associated together to form an idea of one whole i.e. the fragmentary nature gets abolished as all these transcend the bounds of space and time (that happens as one starts the ascension from the ordinary mind level to the higher realms of consciousness). On reaching the illumined mind state, one becomes capable of expressing those ideas of higher minds by intense revelatory words or by rhythmic expressions. The ideas get their image, shape, colour, sound and all sorts of expressions at this level. The inspiration or illumination helps one to manifest the inner potentialities of an individual those which are also the activities of consciousness.

Some poetic creations of illumined mind state will clearly justify the abilities of this level of consciousness.

“Wilt thou upon the giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy’s eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?" ....16

The poem here conveys the noble and dignified pathos of the blindness and old age of a great personality fallen into evil days. This expression is the play of hues of imagination. There is a resonant rhythm with the expressions used in the poem. It depicts by expressing the feelings of a ship boy who when sits high up in the mast (the height here signifies the dignity of the person, as no one can sit on the mast), there his eyes are sealed of old age and the brain is stagnant like a rock. His blindness and sensibility of brain has thrown him into evil days. This creates a sad tone in the poem and also the poet tries to feel the mind of the person being in such a pathetic condition after leading a dignified life. The expressions of properly structured images convey the inner thoughts of the poet. Another line from *Savitri* also depicts the same feature of the mind.

“Thou sun, of this great world both eye and soul.....”17

Here sun is given the supreme position in the cosmos that has its own light to see the world and also gives light to all the planets, satellites and the stars. All depends on the sun for their light, so it acts as the soul that guides the cosmos and gives light to others, being the eye for them. All these expressions convey the fact that there comes an inspiration of pure mind that creates a certain language, a definite manner of thinking a theme and the attitude towards the images. Imagery is functional, as it is only the means of thinking and feeling, but is not influenced by thought or emotion. They possess pictorial and artistic

values and reflect the many-sided opulence insight. Thus poetic expressions definitely convey the abilities of the illumined mind. But here is an example from Sri Aurobindo’s own records and experience, being able to reach this level of consciousness. He receives an indication about the death of Binod Gupta either on or by 25th January 1912. It was the level of inspired illumination on 22nd January 1912, when he attained such indications about the possibility of death of Binod Gupta. Sri Aurobindo actually received the message of death of Binod Gupta on 24th January 1912 due to heart failure. There was no previous news of his illness, etc. The incident clearly indicates the power of concentration that one develops in the illumined mind state, where one could foresee the near future events. But exactness and accuracy improves once one makes an attempt to transcend this realm and reach the next higher level, which brings greater transparency of mind and clarity of knowledge. So, outcome of illuminative mind cannot be merely considered as the excitement of the intellect or imaginations and emotions only, as all these are abilities of the vital mind and are concerned with the external observable world. But it is seen that the illumined mind no more depends on senses and so attains wider knowledge of truth about the reality. The next level of consciousness is the intuitive mind state.

3.9 The Intuitive Mind

*Intuitive mind* is the next higher realm of consciousness beyond the illuminative mind. Here knowledge takes place by *intuition*. By ‘intuition’ Sri Aurobindo

understands as the power of consciousness, which attains knowledge irrespective of outer sense and perception. It is the powerful inner interpretation that is not derived from any external observation. So, this mind has not to construct uncertain inferences based on reason and analogy of the appearances of the world. There is no longer the sense of a stream flowing in mind from the outside world, rather there takes place a sort of recognition of the light, the darkness, the knowledge, the ignorance and all types of contradictions that interfere in the ordinary mind level. It is the direct revelation of knowledge that presents one with truths of reality. This mind constructs nothing artificially by imaginations or deceptive anticipations which is the very essence of the mental mind. Here the mind no more realizes the inner thoughts (as in the higher mind) or the inner vision (as in the illuminative mind) rather this mind understands the reality by visional concepts. In other words, this is a kind of truth-vision, truth-hearing, truth-memory and direct truth discernment as is claimed by Sri Aurobindo\textsuperscript{19}. This true and authentic intuition is completely distinct from the power of ordinary mental reason and intuition. The ordinary mental reasoning is bounded by logical steps, whereas intuitive reasoning is the rapid insight and swift discernment about nature, life and man. This insight is free of doubt and error as the mind is not bounded by time, space and reasoning. These factors diminish the limit of knowledge and the mind remains almost veiled by ignorance.

The most prominent change that is observed in this mental realm is the highly intuitivised thinking. The mind being away from the external world opens

up to its inner realms. The ordinary individual is aware only of his surface consciousness i.e. the awakening consciousness which one uses to lead the daily life. This surface mind with which we normally function is not the whole mind; there lies an inner mind within every individual. This inner consciousness is known as subconscious. This level is below the waking consciousness which provides the surface mind with impression and images in dreams that are automatic, obscure and incoherent. These cannot be correlated or understood by the ordinary waking consciousness. But the subconscious mind actually provides an individual with all the habitual movements, specially the old habits, long-back memories, past events, etc. All these eventually get suppressed by the regular sensations of the surface consciousness or by the desires and emotions of the daily life. To bring back the contents of the subconscious level to the level of surface consciousness some external agencies are required. These external agencies include hypnotism, drug-induction or other extra ordinary phenomena,\textsuperscript{20} which helps to bring the long back memories, unrecalled childhood experiences or past scenes to the realm of waking consciousness. But evolution of consciousness and ascension to the higher realms of mind beyond the ordinary mental level (with waking consciousness) leads to automatic performance of all such activities. It is this intuitive mind that develops the complete transparency between the surface mind and the inner mind (which started initially from the higher mind state and reaches the level of transparency at the realm of intuitive mind) where inner thoughts, vision, memories all are attained by the surface mind. There is free traversing of ideas and imagery.

\textsuperscript{20} To be discussed in details in the next chapter.
between these two levels of mind and they are no more bounded by time, space and rationality.

The intuitive insight develops due to the transparency of conscious levels, which in fact transforms the physical, vital, mental and the psychic minds. At this stage, the mind no more depends on sensation of the physical mind, feelings and desires of the vital mind, reason and rationality of the mental mind or introspection of thoughts of the psychic mind. The mind operates extensively with all the thoughts, wills, ideas, feelings and desires as all are guided by the supreme spirit. These abilities grow and develop, where the telepathic sense increases in accuracy, content and certitude. There are instances of such achievements in Sri Aurobindo’s own records. The thought form develops an interpretative nature, which further transcends to the revelatory status (21st February 1920). At this realm the meeting of objective consciousness with the subjective consciousness takes place and thereby ‘sees’, ‘feels’, ‘touches’ and ‘understands’ the truth of reality directly. The poems at this mental level are not too much clubbed with multiple images and expressions. There is perfect form of creation with self-discipline that gives beauty and nobility to poetical expressions. Here is an excerpt from Sri Aurobindo’s poetry.

“My dream is spoken
As if by sound
Were tremuously broken
Some vow profound.
A timeless hush
Draws ever back
The winging music rush

Upon the thought’s track.”

The poetry expresses deep inner intuitive cast of imaginative and emotional excitement taking place. It is the creative intuition that is pictured by the help of poetic expressions. The dreams come up to speak like a sound which when breaks, seems a promise is broken. The time that runs by, never draws behind and it is like playing music tracks one by one that leaves the impacts on the thoughts of an individual. Here the poem presents a vivid picture with imaginative conjurations and symbolic hints through which one can enjoy the subjective and objective worlds. This would help to trace beauty and truth of things in interrelations and totality. Here the expression “dream is spoken” and “thought’s track” are subjective realizations of the objective world of ‘sound’ and ‘time’. Another excerpt of intuitive insight is observed in a poem by C.D. Lewis. The poem is ‘Magnetic Mountain’, where he describes vividly about the location of the mountain.

“Somewhere beyond the rail-road,
Of reason, south or north,
Lies a magnetic mountain,
Riveting sky to earth.”

The poet here has caught the movement at its peak of experience and has succeeded in casting it into an inspired utterance. The language and rhythm, the words and the images all carry with them the power of reality with concreteness

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of the image. Here a positive feeling of reality of a region of consciousness beyond reason makes one feel that it belongs to the realm of suprarational level. The poet tries to explain the location of the mountain in reality but that which is not bounded by space and time. It symbolises the mountain to be magnetic as it rivets the sky to the earth in a destination which lies beyond road and rail and is neither in north nor in south. But still the mind tries to open to vaster realms of consciousness that makes an individual one with the universal mind or the cosmic consciousness. Being at this universal level the mind no more performs actions on its own, it is completely guided by the supramental light.

3.10 The Overmind

This is the highest realm of consciousness that can depict its intellectual and cognitive abilities. It is almost the state of cosmic consciousness without the loss of individuality. Here even though the ego is present, but it seldom interferes with the working of the overmind. No more thoughts or ideas arise from the mind; they are received from the higher summits above (Supermind – ultimate state of conscious power). So, all types of feelings, emotions, understandings and realizations take place with universal comprehension and do not lie within the narrow limits of the self. This mind works on the principle of multiplicity. It means that the overmind possess consciousness with immense plasticity that holds all the possibilities of reality i.e. there lays ‘multiple possibilities’ of reality. As Sri Aurobindo describes here the experience that takes place as the sense of the universe is in oneself. The sense of individuality is replaced by the

25 Ibid., p. 66.
cosmic self – the *Brahman*. Thus working of the overmind brings enlargement of the entire being and also identification with the universal powers in the terrestrial existence. However this overmind is not capable of the dynamic transcendence (complete transcendence and transformation to supermind state) as it works on multiplicity and deals with everything according to its individual state of evolution. So, Sri Aurobindo points out the overmind to be the highest realm of consciousness that one can attain starting from lower sphere of mind (i.e. physical mind level). This is not the transformative power like supermind, which is capable of integral transformation of the whole of nature. Rather it brings an infusion of new consciousness into nature that makes possible the transformation of nature.

The overmind plane of consciousness is the ultimate region of creation. There remains no more divisible world and this mind perceives the whole reality as indivisible all-comprehending unity. It unites all the discordances that seemed to appear to the ordinary mind into a harmonious one. Here perception for all the things in the world is with equal lights – hence there no longer remains discrimination between beauty and ugliness. Both are realized to be the multiple possibilities of the one whole. As Sri Aurobindo states, with the evolutionary progression of consciousness, one reaches to the higher realms of consciousness and realizes the Divine. But to reach the overmind state one has to have either the feeling of religious intensity or has to develop highest poetic intellectuality or have the finest vision of art. It is only by either of these means that an ordinary individual can create within oneself the ardent desire to surpass his natural limits of knowing and understanding. Without such a desire of thought
one cannot resist the regular interference of the ego during transcendence from the lower mental planes. As is seen for artists and creators, there is a sizable ego that acts as the stumbling block in development. For religious man who has worked hard to dissolve his ego rarely attains the universality through the individual consciousness, as they do not make an attempt to develop the intermediary steps of personal consciousness. Thus falls back in attaining this overmind state of consciousness. Only when a creator intends to transcend all the intermediary levels, he/she acquires the right spiritual progression in attaining the overmind state and also expressing the thoughts and ideas of this state. Very few poets could transcend to this highest realm where there lies profound actuality of experience. The speech and sound attain concrete vision. The thought form is not from the ordinary thinking mind rather the idea structure is attained by knowledge by identity between the truths of reality. This gives direct access to truth that reveals the nature of reality. All other levels that were transcended to reach the overmind state have intrinsic wideness in the words and the expressions used. This overmind possesses the tension of the mental mind which brings the touch of universality and spirituality.

This mind reveals perfect self-evident facts that are perceptible beyond a certain level of consciousness. It is no longer the ideas that one sees and tries to translate; rather one hears vibrations or rhythms that literally take possession of the seeker. But a true poet tries to correct the expression again and again not to improve the form or style or get a better expression of this creation rather it attempts to catch hold of the highest vibration. The vibration at this level is due to transparency of the consciousness. The sounds heard and visualized are all
one, whereas they appear to be broken into pulsations at the intermediary levels.
All these sounds are eternal and infinite. The knowledge based on sounds has
different vibratory modes according to each plane of consciousness\textsuperscript{26}. Sri
Aurobindo experienced all these different modes and considered that the centre
above the head is no more a region, rather it a luminous reflection of a solar
source\textsuperscript{27}. The Sanskrit letters with essential sound represent the special vibration
that commands the forces of each of these planes in ascending order are: \textit{Lam},
\textit{Vam}, \textit{Ram}, \textit{Yam}, \textit{Ham}, \textit{Om}. These sounds itself possess the powers of
experience and realization and hence proper tackling of these vibrations can be a
powerful means of opening up to the higher consciousness. An excerpt from
\textit{Savitri} from an overmind state will clearly depict the realms of consciousness.

“It was the hour before God’s awake
Across the path of the divine Event.
The huge foreboding mind of Night, alone
In her unlit temple of eternity,
Lay stretched immobile upon silence marge....
The impassive skies were neutral, empty, still.”\textsuperscript{28}

The poem conveys a feeling when the minds need to awaken from
darkness (ignorance). The vast field of consciousness lay unused and remain in
silence as if the sky of knowledge is empty and still. So the consciousness has to
be awakening as if, it would act like God in the world who foresees all the
divine events. In the same way, mind would open from its unlit temple and
would come across the dark night into the light of knowledge. The impression is
at first of music coming from afar and above, beautiful and not distinguishable

in notes. There is however a pervading intensity which may not be very clear but is also not blur. Thus the occurrences are seen with the physical eyes and touched with the physical hands. It brings in the focus of mind all those things which are regarded as substantial. The spiritual consciousness is revealed by the words of material concreteness that makes them affect the sense mind. The power and perfection of each line of the poem lies in the utter faithfulness of the fact that lies in the atmosphere and in the life throb of overhead planes. Even though poetic ability takes place in higher mind, there are some fragments that comes from ordinary mind level. These are deliberate efforts to create a link between observable world and the world of truth. There is a full grip of profound realities, the expanse and richness, which goes beyond the ordinary mind level. When poetry reaches the highest limits it creates an indistinctive pleasure of world, nature and life in a much deeper sense. But this is not the sufficient purport that one achieves in over-mental consciousness. Being at this level there is also a drawback. The overmind works on the principle of multiplicity, i.e. admits multiple possibilities of the world and so cannot realize the oneness of reality. But the oneness of reality can be realized and attained by the overmind only when there takes place the total transformation of nature. By help of this transformation in nature, the oneness is not only attained, but is also realized and synthesized by the human mentality. It is in the evolutionary process that in time will change and help in understanding the oneness.
3.11 Conclusion

After an elaborate discussion of all the mind levels and the realms of consciousness, it is found that each level has its own unique contribution towards the understanding of the nature of reality. The gradual transcendence of these mental realms implies a gradual progression and development of the potential cognitive abilities within an individual. The first and primary among them is the physical mind. This mind is mainly concerned with the external world via sense-experience only. Any type of cognition and awareness at this stage takes place by the help of the sense-data\textsuperscript{29}, which is obtained through the sense-organs from the external world. This mind is completely guided by the senses and so, it cannot realize anything other than the sensory input. But the main obstacle with this physical mind is that it cannot interact with other minds. The other minds are not attained through sense-data only, rather realization of thoughts and feelings are also required. Thus the physical mind needs to transcend the sensory realm in order to understand and realize the feelings and thoughts of oneself and also of others.

The next level is the vital mind, which is considered to be the centre and seat of all emotions, feelings, desires and will. Here the sensory data being attained by the physical mind do create certain emotions within an individual, which helps in realizing one’s own nature and thoughts. However, sensory data and the emotional guidance is not enough for a human being to make rational judgements. These two faculties alone cannot lead to successful execution of any action that calls for proper planning. Appropriate planning will be possible

\textsuperscript{29} The sensory data that can be obtained are: red colour, shape, size, hardness etc.
only if there is rational understanding and reason to guide an action. This develops with the transcendence of the vital mind to the next higher level.

The *mental mind* being the seat of acquired rationality, guides an individual in leading a life with rational thoughts and understanding, rather than from leading a life of mere animality or being a mere emotional organism without proper activity. The rational faculty is an important aspect of human beings that makes them so special in comparison to all other living beings. The faculty of rationality brings within one, the proper ability of sequencing, definite planning and execution of any action. These abilities are acquired by education and mental training, which confine human beings within the observable realm of the world. But in order to explore the deeper nature of reality, one cannot be bounded within the physical, vital and the mental minds only, which restrict the realm of knowing by sensations and rational abilities.

The rational discourse solely cannot help an individual realize the deeper inner feelings and experiences. The essence of all thoughts and experiences are stored in the *psychic mind*, which is known to be the seat of awareness. This mind tries to unveil the inner feelings that are covered by the experiences of the physical mind. Psychic mind has the ability to create imagery and correlate them, based on the external data (that received by the physical mind and the mental mind) and the feelings and internal experiences (the feelings and emotions of the vital mind and the introspective experiences that are naturally available to the psychic mind). But all such imagery gets limited by the experiences of rational understanding of the world. Hence Sri Aurobindo claims
that transcendence from rationality and sensation is needed in order to grasp the
ture nature of reality.

The next mind level, better known as the realm of consciousness, is the
higher mind. This realm mainly tries to grasp knowledge without the help of
rationality and logical thinking. From this mental realm onwards, the nature of
understanding and realization of the reality changes. With ordinary rational mind
only a part of the observable world could be known, but by the thoughts of the
higher mind more of oneness and unity in reality is observed. This builds up the
power of inner realization and concentration that leads to the occurrences of
only potent thoughts in the mind, in place of any types of negative vibrations
like fear, anxiety, sorrow, etc. So, mind gets far away from the influence of
negative emotions.

This higher mind, even though has transcended the rational thought
realm, can sometimes become overpowered by the mental reason and rationality.
So, when one transcends the higher mind and reaches the illumined mind, there
is no more obscurity in thought and understanding of the reality. Here the ability
of expressing the inner experience develops. These experiences are represented,
either by metaphors or by rhythmic words or by other kinds of verbal
expressions. Such skills are an important aspect observed in poets and other
creative personalities, by which they can create visualizations of their own inner
experiences. In other words, this power of expression develops further into
understanding of one’s own self and also about others. The transparency in
thoughts, help the mind to traverse freely from the thoughts of one individual to
the thoughts of other. This phenomenon of the mind, which grasps the thoughts
of other minds, is known as extra-sensory perception (ESP) or telepathy (reading others’ mind). At this conscious realm, though the mind grasps the thought of other minds, it lacks complete accuracy and certitude. This happens, because, in this realm the thoughts may get vitiated by rational intellect and the appearances of the ordinary mind. In this situation, mind can attain accuracy and certitude of thought experiences only if it transcends the bounds of space and time, which conceptually delimit the realm of knowledge.

The next higher realm of consciousness to which the illumined mind transcends is the intuitive mind. This mind is free from the world of appearances and thus there arises no contradiction of thoughts. Here, the mind acquires a new technique of understanding, that is, intuition. This intuition is completely different from the acquired intuition that one attains through the logical rules and mental training at the mental mind level. With the advent of the intuitive mind, the deeper realms of consciousness\(^{30}\) i.e. the sub-conscious realm and the un-conscious realm comes closer to the surface consciousness (awakening state of consciousness) and unites together to one whole consciousness. This helps in recollecting past-events, childhood memories, forgotten names, etc. that were subdued by the present affairs. In other words, due to this wholeness of the intuitive mind, the retention ability of the memory gets widened. It helps this realm of consciousness to unite all the experiences, by transcending the bounds of time and space.

Finally the overmind state is attained that makes space for all the possibilities and contradictions that arise in the world of appearance. It helps to

\(^{30}\)The details have been discussed in the intuitive mind section.
unite the two worlds i.e. the world of appearance (in which an individual lives) and the world of reality (the world which comprises of all possible appearances that make up the phenomenal world). Appearance is referred to be only one state of affair being manifested out of the many possibilities present in reality. Overmind is the realm, where multiple possibilities are given together that removes all types of apparent contradictions from them that appear to the mind at the lower realms of consciousness. Thus, this conscious level builds up the integrity of the knowledge, thereby leading an individual to attain the true and definite knowledge of the reality. From cognitive perspective, this mind is the highest realm, where perfect functioning of all cognitive activities takes place that developed during the transcendence of the mental realms.

So, the chronological transcendence of the mind from the lower to the higher realms of consciousness is explained by Sri Aurobindo. These transcendence and transformation are necessary in order to utilise the maximum capacity and ability of the mind. It would be better to say that it is the ability of consciousness to acquire the higher potentialities and reach to its sumnum bonum. Sri Aurobindo has outlined the nature of consciousness by showing its power of understanding, realizing and representing the world. This not only includes the wakeful consciousness or phenomenal consciousness, but also implies a deeper aspect about the nature of consciousness, which shows that mental training can bring about change in the ability of conscious functioning. These include enhancements of cognitive abilities, connative abilities and also the affective abilities\textsuperscript{31}. The remarkable amongst these three abilities is the

\textsuperscript{31} The three main functions of consciousness are cognition, connation and affection.
cognitive ability, where development and enhancements of the cognitive faculties leads to better understanding, realization and representation of the external world. This is one of the experiential subjective aspects of understanding the nature of consciousness from Sri Aurobindo’s yoga perspective. The following discussions will deal with the study of consciousness made by contemporary Western researchers.