Chapter III

The Concept of Perfection: A Brief Comparative Study

Section A: Aurobindonian Concept of Perfection

Section B: Idea of Perfection in Samkhya, Shankara, Warkari sect and Sri Aurobindo
Philosophy, in its true sense, is not a building of intellectual sophistication, but an outcome of inner urge of man to dismantle the mystery about himself and the world around him. Philosophy in many ways deals with problems of human life. Though thinkers, world over, with all their sincere attempts and thoughts have not come to any agreed solution of the problems discussed in philosophy till date, their search has certainly enriched the human mind and enabled him to have clearer ideas about the present human life and human destiny, though the solutions offered by them may not necessarily be final and faultless. Indian contribution to the field of philosophy is rich in variety, quantity and quality.

Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is not only an intellectual penetration into the depths of the unknown but also a spiritual endeavor to realize what has been imperfectly visualized by reason to be the Truth. He tries to reason out in his magnum opus *The Life Divine* and other books, his philosophy of spiritual evolution, which, it is claimed, disentangles all
the disturbing problems, frees man forever from the clutches of ignorance and leads him towards Perfection.

Though it is said that Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is the outcome of his deep meditations in search of truth, it can be clearly observed that his philosophy is very close to the findings of Vedas and Upanishads. Vedic and Upnishadic truths are reinterpreted in different ways in Aurobindonian philosophy. His philosophic spiritual findings closely resemble the truths found by sages of ancient India.

Perfection is the last stage of evolution of man and the world in Aurobindo’s philosophy. To understand his concept of perfection we have to know some terminology like supermind, suprarational consciousness etc. along with some basic concepts of Aurobindo’s philosophy, that constitute background to his concept of perfection.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the supreme reality is Sacchidananda which is also called by other names like Brahma or the Divine Being, is at the base of all cosmic Existence. It expresses and determines itself through multiplicity. As we see various forms of it around us, we can call it Form and Formless at the same time. The formless is inherent in the form.
The Divine Being is beyond all limitations, dualities, time and space. It is human mind that imposes the limitations upon the Brahma and perceives a vitiated Reality. It is entirely free to include and arrange in its own way and exercise all possible terms of its self expression. The absolute represents both the Being and Becoming. It is both the one and the many, a Unity and Diversity as well. It expresses itself in a way It chooses. The Unity and the multiplicity are not contradictory but complementary and mutually interdependent aspects. It is at once transcendent, universal and individual. There is no reason why these two should not be viewed as representing the same. The Universe is the unlimited, multi layered, mystic, multi faceted space for the individual.

Sri Aurobindo thinks that the human reason has its inherent limitations, and the realization of higher spiritual consciousness can not be achieved by our mental apparatus. The limits of human intellect must be transcended to have access to the higher spiritual consciousness. There is no wonder if the human being fails to grasp that which, by its very nature, passes beyond its scope and yet it is realizable because it is the Supreme Truth.
Sri Aurobindo does not agree with the theory of Maya which holds the cosmic existence to be an illusion, unreality. It is not the fiction. He admits that such an experience is felt on a certain spiritual level, but it is not final. The existence is not unreal, because, it is based on the Real. It is a free expansion of the Being and Being is not bound by it. The Reality of Being is above imperfections and limitations. In illusionist theory, knowledge of the Reality nullifies the whole cosmic existence. In Aurobindo, it transforms the person to whom now the world has an added significance, a reality in tune with the eternal and the Absolute. Thus the physical world is not an illusion but only a lower order of reality.

Philosophy starts from wonder, the wonder about oneself, about one’s origin, curiosity about existence and destiny. Thus an individual constitutes a central figure in the realm of any search for Truth. The individual is not the physical body or the mind, but something deeper and truer than what appears on the surface level. It is the fundamental and eternal principle that stands behind, and the realization of whose true nature emancipates man from the clutches of ignorance. The individual in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is “not merely the ephemeral physical creature, a form of mind and body that aggregates and dissolves, but a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self manifesting spirit.”

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According to Sri Aurobindo, “The primal law and purpose of individual life is to seek its own self development.”

The individual is part and parcel of the universe, essential and complementary to each other. When an individual grows into higher spiritual consciousness, he realizes the universal within him and outside the world.

The human is the only being that has an idea of progression. He alone is capable of understanding his imperfections and realizing the meaning of perfection which can be achieved by the gradual enrichment of consciousness. Throughout the journey of life the process of evolution should reach its full essentiality, the complete freedom.

Sri Aurobindo points out that the human evolution passes through three main stages viz. infrarational, rational and suprarational. He is confident that the human society must ultimately reach what he calls the ‘Gnostic consciousnesses.’ These three stages are applicable not only to an individual but to the society also. In the infrarational stage man acts mainly on impulses and instincts. He has no clear thoughts or ideas. From this stage, man proceeds on to a rational stage in which he gains some control over his thoughts and actions. He judges, analyses and
synthesizes his life-structure. Ultimately man centers into the suprarational stage in which he gradually becomes aware of his integral unity with the cosmic spirit. He develops higher spiritual consciousness which, in the end, culminate into the Gnostic consciousness. On the other hand the higher consciousness helps the gradual ascent of the individual and the race.

In Aurobindonian philosophy, the spiritual evolution is the inevitable destiny of man. Though its emergence is not so easy to effect for the human race as for Sri Aurobindo thinks, there is no other way of deliverance. The supreme spirit involved in the Inconscience must evolve Itself to regain Its lost light through the graded scale of different consciousness. It results ultimately in the spiritual evolution which has its summit in the Supreme Itself. Matter, Life and Mind are lower stages of the evolution while Higher Mind, Overmind, Supermind etc. constitute the higher grades. There are, however, many intermediary planes also. It is privilege of man alone to evolve consciously to his spiritual destiny. Inner development is a necessity. Establishment of the divine life on earth alone can bring lasting harmony and peace in the world. And this perfection is the aim of the spiritual evolution. But this is possible only when the supermind descends to the physical plane. It is the Divine grace
which brings about this decent in order to harmonize the human race and turn it into a divine society.

The evolution starts from the Inconscient but where does it lead the mankind? Man has known, or rather tried to know, his past and present, but to know his future, a destination towards which he has to grow, is a task he has to accomplish now. To realize this, man must possess the integral knowledge which would reveal the light of the Divine. This integral knowledge is the aim of the spiritual evolution. Anything less than this, partial emphasis or insistence on any one aspect could not take us to the destination. It is not the aim of the spiritual evolution merely to reach the supermind plane. It is to realize *Sacchidananda*.\(^5\) The *Sacchidananda* is the supreme Reality, the Divine Being of which the Supermind constitutes an awareness.

The realization of the unity or oneness can be achieved with help of yoga. The Yoga insists on the purification of man and his transformation towards realization. The integral Yoga would take us to that highest summit. This can be done by living an inward life and purification of the self. The spiritual evolution will ultimately eradicate the source of errors. Sri Aurobindo writes about the aim of his yoga:
What I perceive clearly is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show the men may be perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it may be entirely victorious and irresistible.6

But it must not be supposed that the evolution leads to any spiritual height which has no interest in the world; on the contrary, it is a life to be lived in the world, to change the world in order to make the divine life possible. It is not the aim of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga to realize some solitary spiritual height unconcerned with the world. The aim embraces the world movements and orders. The integral consciousness does not exclude world-activities, it harmonizes all the aspects and gives it a new spiritual meaning.7 Thus in his opinion spiritual perfection is firmly rooted with earth.

Spiritual perfection is possible because the Reality is not exclusive of the existence we are physically aware of. The spiritual evolution is a realization of that which exists potentially, but ignorant eye fails to decipher it.

To recognise the true essence of existence, mere intellectual knowledge of the external physical world is miserably insufficient. Man
has to discover the nature of his true being of which he is capable. His aim is not just survival but to evolve his consciousness to realize the higher spiritual possibilities for ultimate peace and harmony on earth. Realization of this ultimate truth can finish all man-made divisions and its consequent problems.

The spiritual evolution is a graded unfolding of the Supreme Existence. The Supreme is in itself a conscious being manifesting into different levels of consciousness. On each plane of evolution, spirit takes poise proper to that plane. It becomes mental being in mind, vital being on life plane and a material being on the physical plane. It becomes the being of knowledge in the supermind. The spirit remains behind as a psychic entity in an individual.\(^8\) Nature brings forth its potential powers on the surface in the course of evolution\(^9\). The evolution gradually brings forth the hidden layers of consciousness enriching the present and promising the future.

In the process of evolution the emergent is always richer than from what it emerges. The life is richer than matter, mind than life and so on. The Supreme Being is richest of all the rest.\(^10\) The process culminates into the highest spirit, the ultimate Truth that is in disguise.
Sri Aurobindo does not say that the greatest crime of a man is that he was born. It is a supreme opportunity for him to attain perfection. Human life is necessarily purposeful. He can realize the Truth and achieve perfection if he aspires as he is a significant and important link in the process of the spiritual evolution.

Different stages of spiritual evolution above mind culminating into the supermind are described by Sri Aurobindo. The Higher mind, Illumined mind, Intuitive mind, Overmind and Supermind constitute the higher spiritual planes in a successive order. The descent of the Supermind would help people ascend to higher planes according to him.

The real difficulty blocking the way of perfection is that the substance of our normal being is “molded out of the Inconscience”\textsuperscript{11} The downward pull of ignorance is mainly responsible for our apathy and inability towards the ascending heights. Man must be free from the clutches of ignorance so that he may ascend to the higher consciousness. He lives in a superficial consciousness and is bound by the dictates of the desire-striken ego. Its elimination constitutes a first positive step in the spiritual progress. First we have to transcend the limits of our nature. Sri Aurobindo showed the practical way of transcending the physical, mental and other barriers which block our way towards higher ascension. He
indicates necessary moral and spiritual discipline to be able to walk on steadily towards the goal.

Sri Aurobindo is not an impatient missionary. With great care and due notice of the actual and possible impediment in the process of the evolution he has strenuously and confidently worked out his views. For him, the spiritual evolution is not an arbitrary or incidental leap into the Divine, but a deliberately and assiduously worked out reward of human strivings. He does not ignore the deviatory pulls and the possibility or even inevitability to some extent of the mixing of the lower limitations with higher evolution. Sometimes it presents a deceptive appearance of elevation to an evolving soul. Therefore he quite realistically tries to guard himself against any one-sided emphasis.

In Sri Aurobindo’s integral Yoga, guidance of guru is indispensable on the way to perfection. There should be an unreserved surrender to the Divine power without whose grace liberation is impossible. In the psychic transformation a person entrusts himself completely to the Divine Mother assuming himself to be an instrument of the Divine Power. In the second, the spiritual transformation, the peace, purity, knowledge, bliss, force and higher light descend even to the sub-
conscious nature. The last, the supramental transformation means an ascent into the supermind and its descent into our entire being which transforms a person completely. He is then completely and forever free from the forces of ignorance and thus attains individual perfection or liberation. Sri Aurobindo’s concept of perfection does not end here like other schools of spirituality. According to him, the transformation and perfection of the entire humanity is the goal. It is difficult and yet it is inevitable.

Although the transcendence of an individual is the most important step for realizing the dream of complete perfection on earth, it is insufficient and incomplete till it helps the world to rise. Mere individual transformation is not adequate because it is beyond the powers of any individual to transform the world completely. So the object of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga is not to produce any individual Superman but to establish the supramental power on earth so that a divine race may be created with the supramental consciousness and thus the divine life on earth would be possible.

The perfect individual man is called as “The Gnostic Being” by Sri Aurobindo. This Gnostic being is the instrument of divinity. The
Divine-Force works in him and through him. His thinking, living and acting would be governed by universal powers of Divinity. Sri Aurobindo has given a specific and important place to Gnostic being in the process of evolution.

The ultimate aim of the evolution is to divinize the human race. For, there must be some people living in lower consciousness in varying degrees. Their uplifting will be the task for Gnostic being. The Gnostic being would not ‘live in himself’, but he will try to bring into the world the Harmony and Unity he enjoys without conflict, struggle or ignorance.

The Gnostic being would be beyond all the pulls of ignorance. He would realize integral unity with all others. The Gnostic life represents inherent harmony, unity and integrity. Therefore conflict has no place in such a state. The Gnostic being realizes his unity with the divinity. He would then, naturally possess all the powers of the Divine. His obedience to the Divine law would not be apposed to his natural freedom because his being would be one with Divinity. The consciousness of identity will be the working principle of the Gnostic being. The self knowledge and the world-knowledge are the characteristics of him. They are not separate from each other. On the contrary, they form integral aspects of the same
Truth-consciousness. His knowledge is the Light of the Divine and not a knowledge boon of conceptual enquiry.

The Gnostic being is not the Titan. Titan’s victory is built on the tombs of others. He dominates by demolishing others. He is an ego incarnate. He does not rise beyond division and cannot see things integrally. The perfect man or Superman of Sri Aurobindo, on the contrary, takes all that is essential in the human being and uplifts it so that it may become element of light, joy, power of oneself and others. He not only teaches, but himself lives a perfect life. He has the vision of Truth and he is guided by it. He lives in the world and yet he will not be bound by the limitations of the world. The life of the perfect man would be a natural expression of his integral unity with the Supreme self.

Thus, the Gnostic being or the perfect man is the summit of the spiritual evolution. He is the apex of the spiritual concepts. His life is an expression of the divine law. He not only enjoys the supreme bliss but also guides the aspiring souls to the divine path so that they may also avail of that supreme enlightenment.
However, these perfect people would not be typical exhibitionists of any religion or spirituality. There can be infinite variations in the expression of the perfect people. They would go in all fields of life and wherever they go, they will emit their own light. They would use their inner perfection to brighten the field of life where they work.

The community of such perfect people is called the ‘Gnostic community’ in which they live the divine life. The Gnostic society would be a free and harmonious expression of the Divine. It would posses the Light, Beauty, Delight, and other highest powers of the Divine. There would be a complete harmony between the individual and the collective life.\(^{15}\) A “large liberty” will be a law of this community. This liberty would free man from all physical, mental, social, racial, communal and spiritual limitations as well as man made laws which are made to maintain peace and harmony in the world; for there would be no need of man made controls in such perfect society. The Gnostic being remains an individual but a universalized individual. He can experience divine presence everywhere. So, for him; all work is divine work. He is simultaneously transcendent, universal and individual also. He lives in the Divine and Divine lives in him.\(^{16}\) The Gnostic life is the life of
Harmony, Unity and Truth; for it is the nature of the Divine in which it lives.

Sri Aurobindo’s idea of perfect society can be contrasted with the human society of today. Instincts, passion and conflicts rule the normal human society. The interests clash and ego resists any attempts towards human consciousness.\textsuperscript{17} The human society considers man a physical, vital, and mental being. With all the progress done by the human society so far, it has failed to possess a key to permanent happiness. It insists on physical happiness which cannot give us any lasting solace. The list of human imperfections and failures is endless. So it is the quest for human perfection and the world perfection that makes us think about Aurobindonean concept of perfection.

The evolution of consciousness culminates into the divine life. The yoga of Aurobindo does not lead to a paradise beyond or life to be lived at some higher spiritual summit, but to the divine life on earth itself, not above or beyond it. The divine life is not a secluded delight to be enjoyed at the end of life but the realization of that supreme delight which constitutes the life of a divine soul.
The divine life stands on the progress of inner consciousness. It will encourage spiritual advancements. Those who are more developed will help the struggling individuals in order to uplift them. The building of an inner life and inward growth is the basic necessity of the spiritual life. It will abolish external compulsions making him live according to the inner law. The spiritual man lives a life of harmony and unity, helping the less evolved to higher grades, himself enjoying the delight in the divine life.

A person with divine life would realize his eternal, infinite, constituent unity with the Supersoul and free from the forces of ignorance, death and decay. After knowing the ultimate reality, he would never fall from his conscious unity with the Divine Truth. It is this omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent Divinity that the person realizes at the summit of his spiritual quest. Then he passes beyond the ignorance and sufferings of the finite existence. Then alone true delight of divine life is possible.

Complete perfection is inevitable destiny of man and earth according to him. The only difference is whether he accepts it gradually in the natural course of time which can take many ages, or he accelerates
it with pursuits of Truth. Since man is equipped with all the qualities and capacities to realize divinity, waiting for ages is unnecessary. He should attain perfection by transcending his physical and mental limitations.

“Unity in diversity” which is not a mechanical but natural, is another important characteristic of the perfect society. Human society is artificially patterned. But the perfect society would freely allow multiplicity of expressions because it believes that every individual is different and unique creation of the divine. However, these diverse expressions would not create any anomalies or discords in society because it would know the inherent and integral Truth behind the diversity.

Direct creation of the perfect society is not possible because society consists of various aspects and elements. The first and the most important element of the perfect society is the perfect individual. The perfect individual must become a universal individual. It must realize its constituent unity with others. To the perfect man, all works would be the harmonious expressions of the same Truth. Therefore he would do any work with equal delight. Thus, unity, mutuality and harmony form the common principles on which the divine life would be based.
Sri Aurobindo’s vision of perfect human life is sometimes beyond the understanding of a general human mind. According to him, in divine life, human body would be free from diseases and death will be the subject of his wish. Human body will be fully under the control of its master. His body would be also free from the hunger. There would be no need for food. The perfect people would be powerful enough to draw energy from the universe which others normally get from the food. Sri Aurobindo also thinks that the procreation would be possible by direct transmutation of energy of such perfect being. This however does not mean that there would be no place for physical delights. The physical delight and joy will not be banned; on the contrary they will be made more perfect.

His concept of perfection is multidimensional. It does not reject any physical or mental aspect of life considering it opposite to the spiritual development. On the contrary it enables man to experience and enjoy the complete life. With superior consciousness, various capacities of human being develop automatically and bring perfection in every field of life. It will be expressed by his speech, his actions and even by his existence. However, he will not be the self–centered man lost in his spiritual happiness. He will believe in the transformation of this earth into
heaven, to create heaven right here where he lives. Sri Aurobindo’s aim - perfection is not for personal Salvation but for the perfection of humanity.

Perfection of the masses is the ultimate aim of Sri Aurobindo. According to him perfect life on earth is very much possible and creation of such community will help others to develop their inner consciousness. They would work ceaselessly for the upliftment of fallen souls because of their experience of the integral unity of souls and divinity. They will create suitable situation for the descent of the supramental consciousness which will bring the divine force and hasten the process of evolution for establishment of complete perfection on earth. This divine life would be an embodiment of harmony, peace, love and mutuality, far beyond the faltering shadows of the negative forces which gnaw us away from our real being.
Section - B

Idea of Perfection in Hindu schools and Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo’s concept of human perfection and the world perfection can be compared with some Hindu schools of spirituality and philosophy like Samkhya, Shankara and Warkari sect.

Samkhya philosophy and Sri Aurobindo

In Indian philosophy, Samkhya philosophy is hailed as one of the major school of thoughts. Its basic concepts about the nature of the world, divinity and human liberation are accepted by Sri Aurobindo. However, his concept of perfection differs from Samkhya philosophy. A rational attempt to find the basic laws of universe is done by Samkhya. It also attempts to free man from the clutches of pain and ignorance, to ensure an eternal freedom from the bonds of misery.

According to Samkhya theory, the ultimate reality is dual in nature. Prakruti and Purusha are these two basic principles. Purusha is divine, and human soul is considered as Purusha. Prakruti is the universe made by five fundamental elements-Sky, Earth, Fire, Water and Air. The
universe and human body is constituted by these elements. *Prakruti* is said to be full of three *gunas*—*Tama, Raja and Satva*. *Purusha* in *Samkhya* is conceived as an enjoyer of all this vast expanse of *Prakruti* and still is not affected by the bondage of three *gunas*. He is above all this. *Purusha* is a constitutive and eternal aspect of the Absolute.

According to Sri Aurobindo *Purusha-Prakruti* is the poise of *Sacchidananda*. *Purusha* is Existence whereas *prakruti* is consciousness—Force. *Purusha* or conscious Being is Lord and originator and at the same time enjoyer of all the formations and workings of the universe. *Purusha* is universal—individual and impersonal-personal. He is intimately related with *Prakruti* and at the same time separated from her. *Prakruti* moves and works under the guidance of *purusha* and her activities are meant for him. He controls her movement and activity. But the chance of freedom is given to *Purusha* only. When the *Purusha* is aware of his nature, he knows that he is intimately related with Nature and at the same time he is quite separate from her. In the state of ignorance *Purusha* becomes so much connected with *prakruti* or Nature that he does not realize his distinct and separate identity, and begins to conceive himself as identified with Nature. As a consequence of this, the *Purusha* becomes passive and begins to give automatic sanctions to the movement of Nature, and as such, instead of being Lord and Guide of
Nature he becomes subject to it. In short, he becomes a slave to Nature instead of being her master. Sri Aurobindo calls this “the normal state of our ignorance.”

In the condition of perfection, Purusha does not consider himself as identified with Prakruti. He remains detached from the works of Prakruti and knows the Nature and her process and witnesses it in the state of independence.

For the perfect man of Samkhya, this world and life is a lila, a sport. He knows that to live this life is like a game which he should play very positively with fullest of his energy, but without forgetting fact that it’s a lila, a game. Then only he will not be bound by joys and sorrows of this game and can really enjoy it as well as can come out of this game successfully.

Samkhya philosophy and Sri Aurobindo have certainly different ideas about the life of perfect man after the achievement of perfection.

In Samkhayas, the liberated soul, or perfect man, after realization, remains in body until the Samskaras have been exhausted; and after death, enjoys an ultimate and eternal kaivalya. Thus, Samkhya
philosophy mainly talks about individual perfection and doesn’t go beyond that. In *Samkhya*, there is neither indication of a Gnostic being nor of the divine life. The liberated soul in *Samkhya* is not ordained to do any thing for the mankind though he may do it until he lives. It means helping other evolving souls is optional to him. In *Samkhya*, the divine life has not been hinted at.

On the other hand, individual perfection is only first important stage in the process of world perfection for Sri Aurobindo. His main idea of perfection belongs to the divine life on earth which is absent in *Samkhyas*. The perfect man of *Samkhya* enjoys *Kaivalya* or eternal joy in the ‘other world’ after his death which is his liberation. But Sri Aurobindo’s perfect man believes in the perfection of earth and in the world in which he lives. He doesn’t believe in enjoying eternity in ‘other world’.

Thus Sri Aurobindo’s idea of perfection is broader and more social than that of *Samkhya’s*. 
Shankara Philosophy and Sri Aurobindo

The absolute Reality for Shankara is Brahma. The Brahma is the real cause of the world. It is eternal, impersonal, above the duality and is creator of the world. It is omnipresent and defies all definitions. According to Shankara, all differences are illusory, and are due to the existence of False-Knowledge. It is the cause of all the distinctions of subject and object, cause and effect, good and evil, birth and death etc. It is removable by attainment of true knowledge. There is no difference between the soul and the Brahma ultimately. It is only after realization of its identity with Brahma, it is liberated from the clutches of maya.

Most of the critics of Shankara philosophy including Sri Aurobindo believe that Shankara denies value to the world and affirms that the Brahma alone is real. However, Brahma of Shankara is not the Brahma of Sri Aurobindo. In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo points out that “Shankara’s conception of the undifferentiated pure consciousness as the Brahma”\(^\text{22}\) is only a “first step and not the goal”\(^\text{23}\) of his Integral yoga.

The liberated soul or perfect man in Shankara is not the ‘Gnostic being’ of Sri Aurobindo who tries to elevate the fallen masses to the
higher levels of the consciousness. However, the perfect man of Shankara is not necessarily indifferent to the betterment of the world. He seems to be concerned to it but doesn’t work for it as the aim of his life. Jivamukta or liberated soul acts but without insistence or inclination when the illusory nature of the world is realized. For the ‘Gnostic being’ however, the world-activity is a necessity. In fact, his ideal is not an isolated salvation, but a divine life in which the whole world will participate. In Shankara, there does not appear any idea of any such attempt to evolve the masses to higher grades insistently as a prime task of those who pass beyond the ignorance. The perfection of Sri Aurobindo is not an ‘isolated salvation’ as it appears in Shankara, but the establishment of the divine life on the earth. The ‘Gnostic being’ need not go beyond earth to enjoy the bliss of the ‘divine life’. Sri Aurobindo’s concept of perfection is necessarily related with the earth and earthly life, when Shankara’s perfection needs detachment from earthly life.

According to Sri Aurobindo this theory is incomplete because experience of oneness with the Brahma is only an important step in the process of complete perfection. He thinks that Shankara’s realization of the world as illusion is not the ultimate realization. After that, one has to realize that the world is not illusion, but as real as Brahma itself because it is Brahma’s constituent poise. So Sri Aurobindo’s perfect man works
for the world perfection after his individual perfection. On the contrary Shankara’s perfect man ultimately realizes his unreserved identity with the Brahma and enjoys Kaivalya after the death.

According to Sri Aurobindo, “Brahma or the Supreme Reality, is that which being known all is known.” It is not as Shankara believe, which being known, all become unreal and incomprehensible mystery. This world is not illusion for Sri Aurobindo but the field of mighty souls and divinize this world is the real challenge and ultimate aim. Thus the world is unimportant for Shankaras on the contrary, it is very important for Sri Aurobindo.

Shankara’s perfect man is lost in eternal happiness after he attains individual perfection. There does not appear any idea of the ‘Gnostic community’ in Shankara which is of so vital important to Sri Aurobindo. There is no indication of any probability of the ‘Divine Life’ being established on earth in Shankara, which is the main aim of Sri Aurobindo. Shankara seems to be content with individual salvation and there does not appear in him any conscious and obligatory attempt, individual or collective, done towards the spiritual betterment of the society. Shankara’s spiritual perfection - Kaivalya, can be enjoyed after earthly life. On the contrary, Sri Aurobindo’s concept of perfection is
necessarily related with earth since the divine life is to be established on
the earth.

Thus, Shankara and Sri Aurobindo, both agree that man must go
onwards towards the unfoldment of the inner Divine spirit. But they
remarkably differ in their content. It seems that Sri Aurobindo’s concept
of perfection is wider than Shankara’s.

Warkari sect and Sri Aurobindo

Warkari sect is one of the most famous and popular sect in
Maharashtra which has a living tradition of philosophy and spirituality
with its own distinguishing features. Yoga of the Natha sect and Bhakti
are the two main basic principles of Warkari sect. It is said that
Dnyaneshwara laid the foundation of Warkari sect and Tukaram was the
zenith of it. This sect has rich tradition of many gifted saint poets like
Dnyaneshwara, Eknath, Namdeo, Tukaram, Tukdoji. But the present
study is intended to compare only Dnyaneshwara and Tukaram, the
major saint poets of this sect with Sri Aurobindo, so far as his concept of
perfection is concerned.
Dnyaneshwara and Sri Aurobindo, in spite of minor differences, have shown a surprising degree of agreement in their approach to the goal and its attainment. Both believe that liberation is not withdrawal from the world. On the contrary the liberated soul with the most stable and profound delight, work for the ‘God’s Labour.’

The first common bond between Dnyaneshwara and Sri Aurobindo was that they both belonged to the Nath tradition. Mr. Lele, who initiated Sri Aurobindo into yoga, was a follower of Dattatraya and yoga of Nath sect. Before initiation Sri Aurobindo told him “I want to do yoga but for work, for action, not for sanyasa and Nirwana.” Dnyaneshwara’s spiritual master Niwrattinath was also from the same sect. It has been the tradition of this sect that the perfect yogi works for the perfection of others in this world. They pass rest of their life in this noble task and take painstaking efforts for it. In the missionary work of Saint Dnyaneshwara and Sri Aurobindo this tradition of working for the world perfection seems to be continued. Thus origin of their concept of perfection can be found in their starting of Yoga Sadhana with Natha sect.

The vision of Dnyaneshwara and Sri Aurobindo hold the promise of restoring the present age, and of regarding spiritual poise and enrichment of earthly life. Their vision presents a unified and complete
view of human life charged with Beauty, Truth, Power, Love, Knowledge, Consciousness, Ananda and Wisdom. According to both of them, Divinity is the greatest reality in the world and within man. What is the greatest task in human life is to recognize this Reality through all appearances and unite our thought, action, life, speech and being with It and find our unity with our fellows bearing the same Reality. However, this vision does not deny any worldly aim of human life, but transforms them by giving them a spiritual sense and direction. Both Sri Aurobindo and Dnyaneshwara, while talking about human perfection, have mainly discussed the characteristics of man who has achieved perfection on earth and whose main work is to transform the whole world into the state accordingly.

As Dr. M. P. Pethe has rightly observed the greatness of Dnyaneshwara’s philosophy lies in its synthesis of two so called different or apposite visions, spiritual and material. There is synthesis of vision about this world and the world above. Dnyaneshwara is always against the people who wrongly interpret religion and think that one has to neglect mundane life for the sake of spiritual life. For he believes that successful earthly life which inevitably includes successful material life is a strong foundation for spiritual life. Problems of life have to be dealt efficiently and skillfully and one who does it proceeds on the path of
spirituality. As Lord Krishna says, “He, whose secular life does not have fullness, what can he do with regard to his otherworldly life?”

Sri Aurobindo, at many occasions said that he neither worked for solitary salvation nor for Mukti the traditional religious sense. Once he said to his friend, “A yoga which requires me to give up the world is not for me.” He even added, “A solitary salvation leaving the world to its fate was felt as almost distasteful.” He always thought that yoga can help man in making the earthly life better and happy rather than end in mere escape from life.

In Dnyaneshwari, Dnyaneshwara says, “there can be rare being, found going to Kailasa (Heaven) but Sadhus have transformed this earthly world into Kailasa.”

Dnyaneshwara’s Sadhus can be compared with Sri Aurobindo’s Gnostic Beings who go beyond traditional seekers of Mukti for embodiment of perfection and work to bring perfection everywhere and everything in the world.

His perfect being feels the entire universe as his house. He lives with this stable thought. In other words, he feels oneness with everything
in the world. The concept of globalization was introduced to the world by Dnyaneshwara and was upheld even by Sri Aurobindo. According to him, the perfection is attained by entering into the superconscient. All other experiences merge into a supernal unity with the ineffable. This is the culmination of all divine knowledge. This also is the source of all divine delight and divine living.

After reaching this state the seeker identifies the existence of the Lord in all beings. All types of beings, the wise and ignorant, the friend and enemy, man and animal, the saint and sinner, all is himself. It is all in one and one in all experience. Out of this feeling he happily works for all. Sri Aurobindo observes in Savitri:

Even if the struggling world is left outside
One man’s perfection still can save the world

Dnyaneshwara in his Haripatha says that he sees the same element of divinity in people, in nature and in himself. This constant, stable and forever feeling of oneness with the world as well as creator and creatures is the basic feature of Sri Aurobindo’s perfect man or Gnostic being. It is this feeling that inspires and motivates him to work for the world perfection.
Dnyaneshwara’s famous prayer, *Pasayadana*, is the wish of the perfect soul for the perfection of all. Both Dnyaneshwara and Sri Aurobindo emphasize this truth that perfection is not an ascetic withdrawal from the world. In fact the liberated soul relishes the world with the most stable and profound delight. He moves among the objects of this material world with a mind which is absolutely dispassionate. This quality of perfect mind gives him a radiant joyousness of spirit. Their perfect man adopts an integral attitude of life. He inhabits in the realms of pure *sattva* and always be in full possession of equanimity of mind and the joy of realized soul.

In *Dnyaneshwari*, Lord Krishna says, “If I were to remain engrossed in the self after reaching perfection, how would people cope up with life? Therefore, particularly, a capable person who is enlightened should not abandon actions”\(^{31}\) Sri Aurobindo teaches the same principle to his followers. He says, “An integral yogi must learn rather the catholic injunction of *Gita*, that even the liberated soul, living in Truth, should still do his works of life so that the plan of the universal evolution under a secret divine leading may not languish or suffer”\(^{32}\)

After all, we should not forget that both Dyaneshwara and Sri Aurobindo were deeply influenced by philosophic teaching of *Gita*
and followed it in their own lives. Both thought that individual perfection is the first step towards world perfection. Moreover, heaven can be and has to be brought in this earthly world.

Tukaram is the zenith of Warkari sect. He is not only one of the greatest Bhakti poets in Marathi but also the first truly modern Marathi poet in terms of temper and thematic choice, technique and vision. Tukaram gave new existential dimensions to Bhakti. In this he anticipated the spiritual anguish of man who is somewhat like us all. He was also anticipating a form of personal, confessional poetry that seeks articulate liberation from the deepest traumas man experiences and represses out of fear. Tukaram’s poetry expresses pain and bewilderment, fear and anxiety, exasperation and desperateness, boredom and meaninglessness in fact all the feelings that characterize modern self awareness. Tukaram’s poetry is apparently easy to understand and simple in its structure. But with deadpan irony, paradoxes and a savage black humor it has many hidden traps. So Tukaram is an accessible poet and yet his poetry is very difficult because of the complexity of deep experiences verbalized in it.

There is thematic and source wise resemblance in the poetry of Tukaram and Sri Aurobindo. Both claim that their poetry has been
originated from the divine consciousness. Both confess that their poetry is not written out of human efforts but it has come out with ease as the outcome of their inner churning and they believe that in the process of writing poetry, they served as medium of divine force. Both Sri Aurobindo’s and Tukaram’s poetry, by and large, consists of spiritual autobiographies revealed in its myriad facets. If Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri is a mantric poetry according to some scholars, Tukaram’s poetry is recited as Mantras by thousands of Warkaries in Maharashtra. Sri Aurobindo’s concept of ‘overhead poetry’ is perfectly applicable to Tukaram’s poetry.

However there is one major difference in their poetry as well. Sri Aurobindo’s poetry is said to be exotic for general reader. It requires certain conditions and qualifications of human consciousness to understand it. Since Sri Aurobindo’s is the Yogi’s poetry, it is complex for understanding. For making his poetry and writing accessible to general readers, his followers had to create a special book on terminology used by him. On the contrary, Tukaram’s poetry is Bhakta’s poetry with simple poetic diction, natural ease and music. It is sung by even illiterate people. If prose is walking and poetry is dancing as Paul Valery says, Tukaram’s poetry is like pure dancing. Tukaram gave literary form to colloquial speech, drawing his vocabulary from everyday usage of
ordinary people. Poetry was, for him, a precise description of the human condition in its naked totality.

Tukaram believed that this world is the ‘lila’ or sport of the divine and individual alone is responsible for his own spiritual liberation. His mysticism was not rooted in a rejection of reality but rather in a spirited response to it after its total acceptance as a fact of life.

Tukaram is the spiritual man who has strong bonds with the physical world in which he is living. Tukaram has written on social problems, superstition, education, economics, environment, human nature and everything related with the life of man who wants to see this world changed and reformed. Social activists point out even the present social ills with poetic quotations of Tukaram. Tukaram is an eternal source of inspiration and motivation for social reformation movement. Tukaram’s concept of perfection does not celebrate the dream of heavenly joys. On the contrary, he wants to take birth here on earth again and serve this world for making it heaven.

Like Sri Aurobindo’s Gnostic being, the first step in Tukaram’s concept of perfection is self perfection that is to experience divinity. Although many poems written by Tukaram are songs of a devotee in love
with God, there are considerably large numbers of poems written on service to mankind. Tukaram realizes:

Too scare to occupy an atom,
Tuka is vast as the sky.\(^{34}\)

Once he experiences that the whole universe is tied with the element of the divine oneness, Tukaram finds only one reason to stay on earth that is to serve and save other beings on earth. Compassionate and yet with indifference to self, the poem cited above he concludes with the following lines:

Says Tuka, now I remain here
Only to oblige.\(^{35}\)

While defining the saint or the perfect man, Tukaram emphasizes on the social commitment,

He who identifies
With the battered and the beaten
Mark him as a saint
For God is with him.\(^{36}\)

Thus working for the battered and the beaten is essential quality of sainthood or the person who have achieved perfection according to
Tukaram. In the terminology of Sri Aurobindo, such person is the Gnostic being or the perfect man who’s next step is working for the world perfection.

According to Tukaram, once the seeker achieves sainthood or perfection, he realizes that he has to be worker to enlighten the masses,

We are the residence of Heaven
Have come to refresh and simplify
Whatever is preached by Rishis
We will clean the path of saints
Since the world is full of ignorant people.\(^{37}\)

Thus he expresses his mission of life. Since the world is full of ignorance, he has to follow the path of knowledge as well as simplify the wise words of saints. In another poem Tukaram says:

Salvation is not difficult to us
It is openly bound with us
Says Tuka you can happily give us the worldly life.\(^{38}\)

So the perfect man who is always capable to dissolve into salvation is happy to live the worldly life because the celebration of life in divine happiness they enjoy here in the company of saints is something more
valuable than salvation for Tukaram. This feeling of celebration of divine happiness in life he expresses thus-

In the pond of happiness,
There are ripples of happiness \( ^{39} \)

But he is not lost in his divine ecstasy. Instead, he wants other to come and experience the same by accepting his path. He is aware of the thing that ignorant people need help on this way to perfection hence he appeals-

Let us help each other on the noble path \( ^{40} \)

In another poem Tukaram says:

He, who is related to God,
makes all creatures of this world his relatives. \( ^{41} \)

When yogis and other spiritual seekers aspire for salvation, Tukaram never thinks that *Moksha* is his final destination. In the Bhakti of God and his service on earth, he would like to come again and again on earth rejecting the heaven or *Moksha*. In his one poem he declares:

Because of this,
Liberation has been made insignificant,
We have to take birth in every age. \( ^{42} \)
Thus, many poems of Saint Tukaram carry the same philosophy that once the perfection is achieved, the life in this world becomes life divine and the whole concept of human life changes drastically. Then the individual need not to dream for any alien land like heaven but he becomes capable to create the heaven on the earth. Since he has becomes conscious of the divinity within himself and is capable to channel it for others, he can definitely do that. Tukaram also says that after the realization of the ultimate truth, there is no other cause left to stay on earth than to serve for the divine by guiding and helping the aspired people.

Thus, self perfection or the individual perfection is the first stage and its extension into the world perfection is the next stage as per Aurobindonian philosophy with which Tukaram seems to be very much similar though he has his own way of working for it. It seems that there is serious sense of responsibility or sense of duty in Aurobindo’s Gnostic being while working for the world perfection as ‘God’s labour.’ On the other hand, Tukaram would like to do the same work while singing and dancing that means, with a sportive spirit while enjoying the sport of life and the world.
To conclude, Aurobindonian concept of perfection differs from Samkhya and Shankara philosophy in its ultimate goal but is similar to Warkari sect in its basic aims and objectives of self perfection and the world perfection.
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