"Brahman is truth; Brahman is knowledge; 
Brahman is the Infinite"

- Taittiriya Upanishad
1. NATURE OF REALITY

Following the Upanisadic tradition, Sri Aurobindo accepts Brahman as the Supreme Reality. It is absolute self-existence, self-awareness, self-power and self-delight of Being. It is Saccidananda. It manifests itself as Atman, Purusa and Iswara. This reality is the ultimate of philosophy and the limit of man's intellectual aspiration. It answers our intellectual need for the complete unification of diversified experience. In the words of Prof. Haridas Chaudhuri "It is an heuristic maxim for our intellectual operations - the highest speculative ideal."¹

Although Brahman is Absolute, it takes all relativities in its bosom. This is how Sri Aurobindo justifies the Upanisadic assertions that - that all this is Brahman - Mind is Brahman, Life is Brahman, Matter is Brahman. Brahman is the power that underlies, sustains and supports and controls

¹ The Philosophy of Integration, p.78.
everything in the universe - the man, the demon, the beast and the bird - in short both the animate and inanimate. He is the consciousness in conscious beings and the consciousness in the inconscient entities too.

The Infinite or the Absolute is organic to the very structure of our intelligence, organic to the structure of the world. It is the final synthesis of all fundamental notions or categories which the mind evolves for the explanation of the multiple facts of experience. It is an integral whole* of interconnected parts and not a concatenated series of disjoined items. It is an all comprehensive unity, not a loose combination of mutually exclusive and self-contained entities. The first implication of the idea of the Absolute is that reality is at bottom of the unity or that all the diversities of empirical existence are unified in one ultimate principle of integration. The second major implication of the idea of Absolute is that it is infinite, unlimited and unconditioned.

The Absolute in Sri Aurobindo's view, is altogether different consciousness from any of which we have knowledge.

* It should not be mistaken for a whole made of parts in the Nyāyavaiśeṣika sense. It stands for perfection and organic unity.
So its content cannot be identified with any of the logical categories known to us. It is neither Being nor Becoming nor cause nor substance. It is also not possible to describe the Absolute through pairs of contradictions.

Sri Aurobindo envisages ultimate reality as an ineffable multipoised unity. In one poise of Being, the Absolute is Nirguna devoid of all qualities; in another equally real poise, it is revealed as Saguna, possessed of infinite qualities. The mystic's experience of the supra-cosmic spirit and the philosopher's apprehension of the principle of supra-rational synthesis are combined in Sri Aurobindo's 'Absolute'. His Absolute is an Absolute in richness and not in emptiness. In his opinion, the higher is always the richer, the fuller and the more concrete. The march of evolution for him is from the abstract to the concrete, from the individual to the collective, from unharmonised to the harmonised. "A structure of conscious unanimism."\(^1\)

Sri Aurobindo does not identify Reality either with Being or Becoming, but looks upon both of these as poises of reality. "To deny one or the other is easy; to recognise

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the facts of consciousness and find out their relation is the true and fruitful wisdom." 1 Therefore, the Absolute is beyond the two, it is eternal and infinite. It is not describable either by negations neti, neti, or by affirmatives iti, iti. Yet this supreme reality manifests itself to our consciousness in the universe by real and fundamental truths of its Being which transcend the universe and are foundation upon which the universe rests. These truths present themselves to our intellectual knowledge as the fundamental aspects in which we see and experience the infinite Reality.

This Supreme reality or Brahman is an eternal and absolute self existence, self-awareness and self-power and self-delight of Being. Its self existence appears in three forms viz., 1) Self (Atman), 2) Conscious Being or Spirit (Puruṣa), 3) God or the Divine Being (Īsvara).

The self stands for spirit untainted by the stains of life such as ignorance, desire and ego. It refers to the immutable principle in the midst of the mutable qualities of the body. In its intrinsic nature it is the same as Paramātman. Puruṣa stands for the witness of the works of

nature (Prakṛti). Although it is related to Prakṛti in its empirical existence, in its intrinsic nature it keeps aloof from the changes (Vikārās) of Prakṛti.

God in Sri Aurobindo's system is the same as Saccidānanda. "There is nothing in existence which is not God but God is not anything in that existence except symbolically, in image to His own consciousness."¹ God is one stable and eternal reality. He is one because there is nothing else, since all existence and non-existence are He. He, being beyond space and time remains immutable. Supermind is the nature of God or Divine Being in its action as the Lord and creator of its own worlds. This is the truth of that which we call God.²

Similarly its self-awareness appears in three forms. 1) Māyā, 2) Prakṛti and 3) Śakti. Māyā is the force of the Absolute consciousness, conceptually creative of all things. Prakṛti is the Nature, working out all things under the supervision of Supreme spirit. Śakti is the conscious power of the Divine Being which is both conceptually creative and dynamically executive. Sri Aurobindo claims that both Bergsonism and Advaita-Vedānta failed to understand the

1. The Hour of God, p.52.
the logic of Māyā of Brahman. "Its logic is magic to them, because it refuses to come under their narrow logical categories." Its logic is the logic of the universal being of Brahman and the infinite intelligence.

In its true nature the 'Absolute' of Sri Aurobindo is the transcendent. It is indescribable (Anirvacaniya). However from the point of view of the Finite consciousness, it can be described as existence (Sat), consciousness (Cit), bliss (Ānanda). It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo often refers to his Absolute as 'Saccidānanda'.

What is the place of the world of plurality in Sri Aurobindo's system? Is it an appearance (Vivarta) of Saccidānanda or creation by Saccidānanda (Ārāṁbha) or transformation (Pariṇāma) of Saccidānanda? The Advaita Vedānta, according to which reality is one believes that the world of plurality is merely an appearance (Vivarta) of Brahman. The world has no being apart from the being of Brahman, just as the snake has no being apart from the rope in the 'rope snake illusion'. The world is neither created by Brahman nor is it a transformation of Brahman but an appearance of Brahman.

The followers of Nyāyavaiśeṣika believe that world is a creation out of the pre-existing atoms of earth, water, air and fire. God plays the game of creation according to
the rules of Adrṣṭa. The world of plurality before it is created by the combination of atoms does not exist in atoms. It begins to be having not existed before. Hence its theory of creation or causation is known as the doctrine of the production of prior non-existent effects (Asatkāryavāda or Āraṁbhavāda).

The followers of Sāṅkhya-Yoga contend that the world is a product of transformation (Pariṇāma) of the primordial Prakṛti. Prakṛti, the first cause contains in its bosom everything that comes into existence. According to its theory of causation there is no production of the non-existent and destruction of the existent. What exists already in an implicit form becomes explicit after causal operation. The world according to Sāṅkhya is the product of transformation (Pariṇāma) of Prakṛti.

Sri Aurobindo rejects the Vivartavāda of Advaita Vedānta. The world is not an illusory appearance of the real, Brahman. He rejects the Nyāya-Vaśesika's Asatkāryavāda as an untenable position, for what is non-existent can never be brought into existence. He accepts the Satkāryavāda and the Pariṇāmavāda of Sāṅkhya.

It is basic to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy that unity and plurality, being and becoming co-exist. The absolute of
Sri Aurobindo is an integral reality, accounting for unity and multiplicity, being and becoming. Accordingly Sri Aurobindo accepts the reality of the world, the reality of the change and the plurality. He has to explain all these on the basis of Saccidānanda, his philosophical absolute. But they cannot be explained on the basis of the existence (Sat), and consciousness (Cit) aspects of Saccidānanda.

Sri Aurobindo accounts for them on the basis of the bliss (Ānanda) aspect of Saccidānanda. "World existence of is the ecstatic dance of Śiva which multiplies the body of God numberlessly to the view; it leaves that existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole object is the joy of the dancing."¹ The world of plurality must be accepted as a real world since it is the outcome of the bliss of the absolute.

We have a tendency to reject the phenomenal world since it appears to be the opposite of Saccidānanda. The Saccidānanda stands for pure existence (Sat) but the world appears illusory; the Saccidānanda is pure consciousness, but the world appears to be at heart, blind and inert: the Saccidānanda is pure joy whereas the world appears to be

¹ The Life Divine, p.119.
full of pain and sorrow. But if we can understand that the world is nothing but the product of 'leela' or joy of the absolute; our doubts disappear.

It is Sri Aurobindo's conviction that the evolution cannot be understood unless we understand the process of involution. The 'Life Divine' clearly brings out how the absolute of Sri Aurobindo in its ecstatic state descends from the level of pure consciousness to the level of crude matter. However the involution and evolution are the descent and ascent of the 'Absolute' cannot be explained without reference to what Sri Aurobindo calls the 'Supermind'.

According to Sri Aurobindo all that exists is Brahman and Brahman is all that exists. All existences are eternally contained in Saccidananda and have been manifested out of that reality. However this manifestation is not a direct one of Saccidananda for "infinite consciousness in its infinite action can produce only infinite results." ¹

In other words if Saccidananda were simply to pour itself out, the result would be not an ordered cosmos within the confines of time and space. But it produces an indefinite, infinite, undifferentiated chaos. What exactly

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we are experiencing is a cosmos with an order. It is not simply a magic act of Supreme Being. Sri Aurobindo asserts that behind the Divine Command there is some conceptual act of Divine consciousness. Creation must be the product of a dual process of Divine Consciousness, conceptual and executive.

Sri Aurobindo believes that there must be a Divine mind which can conceive of the universe, formulate an idea in time and space. Saccidānanda in itself is a circumferenceless and centreless pure unity, in itself indivisible without variation or extension. In order to act creatively, it needs a determining principle which helps to formulate its infinite nature in finite terms i.e., time and space. Sri Aurobindo points out "Indivisible consciousness is undividing consciousness and cannot originate division and differentiation."  

To accept 'Indivisible Consciousness' is nothing but to agree with Mayāvadin's position. They characterised the universe ultimately as an illusion. Sri Aurobindo did not accept this view. He says that there is no reason to

2. Ibid., p.118.
suppose the infinite consciousness (Cit) without content and power. It must have both knowledge of its own existence (Sat) and power to express that knowledge. Knowledge and will are in perfect harmony which help the Absolute to manifest itself into a real universe according to its supreme purpose. This knowledge and will together constitute Sri Aurobindo's 'Supermind'.

2. NATURE OF SUPERMIND

The Supermind is the sole instrument of Brahman for its manifestation. If there is no agency such as Supermind, we cannot have the knowledge of ultimate reality as Saccidananda. It cannot be known because it is totally undifferentiated and absolutely unknown. Hence Sri Aurobindo's Supermind is an indispensable principle for relating and reconciling the phenomenal world of multiplicity and change to the changeless oneness of ultimate reality. Without the Supermind the opposition between an eternally immutable one and an ever changing many cannot be solved without cancelling either of the one. Either the reality of the many is denied and the sole reality of the one affirmed or the reality of the many is affirmed and the reality of the one denied. The first position is that of Māyāvādins and the second that of Cārvākās and Sarvāstivāda Buddhists.
Sri Aurobindo accepts supermind, the infinite intelligence of Brahman as both. In other words on the one hand he accepts the absolute existence of the one and on the other the reality of the many. By the agency of this finitizing intelligence, the Brahman can manifest into a real universe. It can become many which it potentially is without ceasing to be the one it eternally is.

Sri Aurobindo maintains that "the existence of the supermind is a logical necessity arising directly from the position with which we have started."\(^1\) If anybody accepts Vedantin's position that the fundamental reality of existence is spirit and not just mind and matter, then the existence of supermind, according to Sri Aurobindo, becomes necessary. There is nothing irrational in accepting supermind as a necessary means for Brahman to manifest into the universe. Sri Aurobindo characterises the supermind as "the Self-realising, Self-determining, Self-fulfilling power of the infinite."\(^2\)

One can feel that the supermind as the second hypostasis of the Absolute, the first being Saccidananda. But Sri Aurobindo clearly states that the supermind is not other than Saccidananda itself. According to him

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1. The Life Divine, p.133.
"Saccidānanda is not resting in its pure infinite invariable consciousness but proceeding out of this primal poise or rather upon it as a base and in it as a continent, into a movement which is its form of energy and instrument of cosmic creation."\(^1\)

The 'primal poise' of Saccidānanda is evidently that primordial condition in which consciousness force is in a state of Self-absorption. Here the Infinite Being is in a state of total quiescence. Its consciousness and power of consciousness withdraws into its existence. This is a state of Samadhi. Even in this state of absorption, consciousness is not altogether inoperative. Being is ever Self-conscious, ever aware of its infinite nature.

However in this state of quiescence, there is already a concentration of the power of consciousness, 'tapas' upon its self-existence producing thereby an idea or knowledge (Vijñāna) of its infinite reality - i.e., its infinite oneness as an infinite multiplicity.\(^2\)

Thus the Divine consciousness becomes 'mobile'. It moves from a state of absorption to a state of self-knowledge. The Supermind is this active consciousness

2. The Īsha Upaniṣad, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry (1951), p.84.
of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo says "It is not only a state of knowledge, but power of knowledge." In other words the Supermind is the Divine will as well as Divine knowledge. It is a will which follows from and yet is one with the knowledge, for what Brahman knows, it wills. 'Knowledge' and 'will' are the two primary determinations of consciousness force (Cit-Sakti) inherent in the very nature of Absolute.

In actuality knowledge and will are two aspects of the creative power of divine existence in its mode of Self-manifestation. What the divine knows, it wills to express and what it knows is the truth of its own infinite being. The expression of the truth of Being in time and space is the universe of phenomena. Thus the supermind expresses itself as Self-knowledge and creative will of Divine consciousness.

It is Saccidānanda, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "not indeed in its absolute self-existence but in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds." The Supermind

1. The Life Divine, p.115.
2. Ibid., p.286.
3. Isha Upaniṣad, p.38.
is the truth of that which we call God. All the God's are nothing but powers of Supermind. They are born in it, seated in it as in their proper Home.¹ Sri Aurobindo says that the Supermind has a Vedic name 'Rta-cit' or 'truth consciousness'. It means the consciousness of essential truth of Being (Satyam), of ordered truth of active being (ṛtam) and the vast Self-awareness (brhat) in which alone this consciousness is possible.

Sri Aurobindo takes Bhagavadgītā as another scriptural support for his conception. He interprets the third verse of the fourteenth chapter of Bhagavadgītā that "My womb is in the Mahat Brahman; into that I cast the seed; thence spring all beings"², as the Mahat Brahman or womb of Brahman is the infinite, 'idea Being' (Mahat) made pregnant by infinite 'idea force' (Vijnāna).³ Conscious force (Cit-Sakti) dwelling in concentration upon its infinite existence (Sat) generates the idea or knowledge of Being. And this idea is energized by conscious force or will which is called Supermind.

The substance of the Supermind is the 'truth consciousness' of Being, Saccidānanda. It contains all the

¹. The Life Divine, p.116.
³. The Synthesis of Yoga, p.553.
infinite possibilities of existence. They are realized in the temporal spatial universe by 'idea-force' (Cit-Śakti) or Divine will. The universe is an ontological reality in Sri Aurobindo's view. It is a manifestation in time and space of Saccidānanda as the Supermind. It is equally present and operative everywhere. It realises universal and individual existences according to the eternal truth of Being.

In the process of cosmic creation the Supermind differentiates itself as existence (Sat), consciousness (Cit) and bliss (Ānanda) as three distinct principles of the infinite. It establishes a trinity of the indivisible unity of Brahman. It manifests the many and various self determinations of the Divine - Ṭīṣvara, Puruṣa, Śakti, Māyā, Prakṛti.1 The Supermind, then, as the 'Real-idea' of Saccidānanda contains the seeds of all possibilities of existence. Each seed is related to all others, such that "All is in each as well as each in all. Therefore, every seed of things implies in itself all the infinity of various possibilities but is kept to one law of process and result by the Supermind."2

Hence everything that exists expresses by virtue of the seed within it some truth of infinite Being. It is

1. The Life Divine, p.120.
2. Ibid., p.120.
predetermined and executed by the knowledge and will of the Supermind. Therefore, the cosmic evolution is not governed by chance. But it is a sort of Divine necessity inherent in the very nature of things. This is the reason why the universe is emerging.

As Sri Aurobindo declares "from the beginning the whole development is predetermined in its Self-knowledge and at every moment in its self-working; it is what it must be at each moment by its own inherent truth, it will be at the end that which was contained and intended in its seed." To say that the development is predetermined is not, however, to exclude what might be called a "free play of possibilities." In other words, though the possibilities of cosmic existence are innumerable, the actualization of any one possibility is conditioned by and dependent upon the free play of all the others.

Thus the Supermind is the alpha and omega of the creative process. It is that from which all has originated and that towards which all creation is moving in perfect fulfilment. Sri Aurobindo calls it as the Logos, the Divine Lord out of which and by which all things are created. The Divine knowledge and will is eternally hidden within the

2. Ibid., p.273ff.
depths of Infinite. But it comes out by the force of pure delight of Being (Ananda). This knowledge and will organizes the action of Infinite consciousness. It also determines all things—matter, life and mind as the real-idea of Being. In Supermind the Silent Godhead becomes the creative God.

3. MIND AND THE SUPERMIND

The very term 'Supermind' is self-explanatory in that it transcends the mind. It is qualitatively different from the mind. Therefore, there is nothing mental in the Supermind. To know more about the nature and activity of the Supermind in the creative process it is necessary to distinguish it from 'mind'. It is clear that Sri Aurobindo does not mean by 'Supermind' simply some supracosmic version of the human mind. He does say that consciousness is one and there are many levels of consciousness. Our mental consciousness is a level vastly inferior to the supramental consciousness.¹ The mind is nothing but an expression and a means to know the universe. However, Sri Aurobindo rejects the idea that the universe could have been created by mind, even an infinite mind.² He says "An infinite mind constituted in terms of mentality as we know it could only

1. Sri Aurobindo Letters - First Series, pp.100-104.
create an infinite chaos, a vast clash of chance accident, vicissitude wandering towards an indeterminate and after which it would be always tentatively groping and aspiring."¹

Mind can reflect on what already exists. It can also construct possible images in it other than the existing facts. It means it can represent to itself phenomena which may be, but not those which necessarily will be. In other words, mind is limited in realizing its own inner creations because it can never assure that what it formulates or predicts will be as formulated or predicted. An infinite mind of this type could not achieve an ordered and real universe. It can only struggle to work out its imaginations in a cosmic process which would be neither real nor totally unreal, a cosmos lacking all basis of imperative truth.² Supermind alone possesses such an order and absolute reality of an omniscient and omnipotent nature which can create this universe. The Supermind is an altogether different order of knowledge and power from that of mind.

Mind sees parts but not the whole. It is an instrument of analysis and synthesis. It divides the totality of

¹ The Life Divine, pp.110-111.
² Ibid., p.111.
existence and then considers these divisions and delimitations as a whole. Moreover, it analyses the whole into its parts and then regards each part as a separate entity. Mind, says Sri Aurobindo "Knows only its own analysis of the object and the idea it has formed of it by a synthesis of the separate parts and properties that it has seen."\(^2\)

In addition to this, mind's conception is very limited. It seems the universe as an unrelated diversity of events and objects of instability and disharmony. On the contrary, the Supermind, being the nature of infinite consciousness, acts universally, comprehending and pervading all. It also regards each and all individual centres of conscious existence in the universe as terms of an infinite oneness of Being.

Mind starts from the individual and proceeds to the universal and then to the transcendent. Whereas Supermind starts from the transcendent and sees the universal and the individual in relation to it as its formulae.\(^2\) While mind possesses partial knowledge, the Supermind possesses complete knowledge.

1. The Life Divine, p.119. It is interesting to note that Henry Bergson arrives at similar conclusion on the nature and function of the mind or intellect. For details refer his works 'Creative Evolution' and 'Creative Mind'.

The knowledge that Mind possesses is not intrinsic to it; it is something acquired by means of senses and its own logic or analysis and synthesis. On the other hand the knowledge of Supermind is intrinsic to it. It is not obtained from without from sense contact. Sri Aurobindo says in his commentary on the Kena Upaniṣad "Supermind starts from the whole and sees in it its parts and properties; it does not build up the knowledge of the whole by an increasing knowledge of the parts and properties; and even the whole is to it only a unity of sum, only a partial and inferior term of the higher unity of infinite essence. 1

Another characteristic of Supermind, as Sri Aurobindo understands it, which clearly distinguishes it from mind is that in it, 'will' is not separated from knowledge, Sri Aurobindo illustrates this by drawing an analogy between the relationship of the light-power of a fire to the substance of the fire itself and the idea power of the Supermind to the substance of the Supermind. 2 In other words just as light-power is not different from the substance of the fire; so will or idea-power is not different from the substance of the Supermind. In our ordinary conception the relationship between knowledge and will is quite different.

2. Ibid., p.59.
We differentiate idea from will, while in the Supermind will and knowledge are intimately fused. In it power of will, knowledge, and action, icchā-jñāna - and kriyāsakti - are one.¹ On the other hand will and knowledge are always in conflict in Mind. We have an idea, perhaps of the 'right' but have no will to express it and possibly we even have a counter will. At times we have will but no clear knowledge or idea appropriate to the will. In other words there will be no co-operation between our will and knowledge.

4. THE SEVEN-FOLD CHORD OF BEING

Supermind is the intermediary term between Saccidananda and the manifested universe of matter-life-mind. There is seven distinguishable terms of Being - or what Sri Aurobindo calls the 'the seven-fold chord of Being' - Sat-Cit-Ānanda - Supermind - Mind - Life - Matter.² This seven-fold chord of Being represents the manifestation of Brahman. In the beginning, the Absolute (Parabrahman) is a unitary Being containing triple aspect of existence-consciousness-bliss. In this state they are indistinguishable and inseparable. However, with the birth of the 'Supermind', these aspects of Being are differentiated as

2. The Life Divine, Book I, Chapter XXVII.
triune, though inseparable. The next phase of the manifestation constitutes the creation of the phenomenal universe, the lower nature (apara prakṛti) with its three aspects of matter, life and mind.

In the seven-fold chord of being, we can distinguish two hemispheres. The higher comprising of existence (Sat); consciousness (Cit); bliss (Ānanda) and Supermind and the lower comprising of mind, life and matter. The higher is "the worlds of illuminated divine existence."²

Sat stands for the pure infinite and undivided aspect of Brahman. Sri Aurobindo characterises 'Sat' as "the Divine counterpart of physical substance."³ It is pure being wherein we cannot make any distinctions like substance and attribute: part and whole; cause and effect. It is not a substance providing the substratum for attributes to reside in, it does not stand for parts wherein the whole inheres, it cannot be interpreted as a cause producing an effect. It is pure, unsullied existence.

Cit stands for the divine consciousness. It is to be distinguished from consciousness that arises out of interaction with the external world. It is intrinsic and independent of the external stimuli.

3. The Upaniṣads (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry), p.84.
It pervades the entire universe: the physical, the vital and the mental. Although it is pure, infinite and perfect in its intrinsic nature, when it manifests in the entities of the lower hemisphere, it looks as if it is subjected to the finitude and imperfections of the lower. It is this 'Cit' that gets transformed and assumes the form of 'Supermind' in the higher hemisphere. It assumes the form of 'ratiocination' in the mental realm, emotion and sensation in the vital realm and instinct, impulse and habit in the physical realm.

Ananda is the bliss of the pure consciousness intrinsic to it. It cannot be described except negatively that it is not this, not this (neti, neti...). It is a beatitude opposed to the life of sensations and emotions. Ananda is the divine counterpart of the lower emotional and sensational Being.¹ The Absolute of Sri Aurobindo is illimitable bliss of conscious existence. There is no deficiency, no inconscience in it.

It is, therefore, obvious that Sri Aurobindo's ultimate reality is not void. It is the triune principle of Sat-Cit and Ananda in its higher nature. Sri Aurobindo accepts eternal activity - a communion, so to speak, within

¹ The Upanisads (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry), p.85.
the Saccidananda. "Pure existence, Sat, eternally translates itself into substance, truth and reality, - Satyam; pure consciousness, cit, into power of conceptive and executive knowledge - Jñānam; pure bliss, Ananda into love, freedom, infinity, - Anantam."¹

The Divine descends from its state of pure existence through the play of consciousness-force and bliss aided by creative medium of supermind into cosmic being. Whereas the 'Absolute' descends, we ascend from matter through life and mind aided by the medium of 'Supermind' towards the Divine being.²

The first step in the descending order in the lower hemisphere is mind. Mind is rooted in the principle of division, analysis and synthesis. It is more an instrument of action than that of contemplation. However perfect it is, it can never reach the summit of the 'Absolute'. It works vigorously in the realm of practicality, but can never take us to the heights of divinity.*

Life is a subordinate power of the energy aspect of Saccidananda. It is a force working from the standpoint of


² The Synthesis of Yoga, Part I & II, p.49.

* For a detailed discussion of the nature of mind and its levels - see Chapter III.
division created by mind. It is energy of the spirit subordinated to action of mind and body which fulfils itself through mentality and physicality and acts as a link between them. Life as Sri Aurobindo calls is only a lavish and manifold opportunity given to us to discover, realise and express the divine.¹ It creates, maintains, destroys and re-creates forms or bodies. In this manipulation of life-force, we witness three stages. The lowest is that in which, it remains in the sleep of matter, so as to look mechanical. The middle stage is that in which it becomes capable of a response, still sub-mental. The highest is that in which life develops conscious mentality in the form of sensations.

Matter is the stage when the consciousness is totally dormant. It stands for the stage of "the involution of the conscious delight of the existence in self oblivious force and in self-dividing, infinitisimally disaggregated form of substance."² It is the final form assumed by Saccidananda in its descent aided by supermind.

The descent of the spirit into the Inconscient-matter and its ascent into Saccidananda - all are made possible by the principle of supermind, the dynamis.

5. THE TRIPLE STATUS OF SUPERMIND

This process by which the supermind creates the universe or the ascent and descent of spirit, according to Sri Aurobindo, has three distinct systems. These three movements of Supramental consciousness, Sri Aurobindo has called the 'triple status of supermind'. They are the Supermind as (A) comprehending consciousness, (B) apprehending consciousness and (C) projecting consciousness. ¹ These are not three separate consciousness. They are only three states of the one Divine consciousness - force, cit, sakti.

Sri Aurobindo, further, ascribes three powers to these three states of consciousness. They are the power of infinite self-variation, the power of self-limitation and the power of self-absorption. ² Now we can trace the operation of these powers in the triple status of the supermind.

The first is Vijñāna, the status of Supermind as "an equal self-extension of Saccidānanda, all-comprehending, all-possessing, all-constituting." ³ Here, we have to note two things about Vijñāna. Firstly, it is not the pure

¹. The Life Divine, pp.135-138.
². Ibid., p.311.
³. Ibid., p.135.
consciousness, cit. Cit is Saccidananda concentrated in itself in total self absorbed. Self-awareness of its absolute oneness, without any kind of extension. However, Supermind is an infinite self-extension, comprehending itself in all and all in itself and all as itself. Secondly in this status of supermind the all which is comprehended as one is not yet the many of time-space existence. In other words in this status Saccidananda knows its multiple oneness and its unity in diversity. Thus Vijñana, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the state of the supermind in which Divine consciousness conceives its existence variously but regards all variations of itself as its one existence, not as many existences. Hence it is said to be (vijñana) an inalienable unity of things.

In order to express as many, there must be a secondary self-formation of the Divine consciousness. This is achieved in the second state of supermind which Sri Aurobindo calls prajñana, the apprehending consciousness. In this mode of Supermind, Divine consciousness stands for names and forms. This represents many aspects of the 'Real idea', separately and individually.

2. Ibid., p.135.
3. Ibid., pp.130, 131, 136 & 137.
This is a state of pure divine ideation in which all names and forms of Divine consciousness exists. The self-concentration of conscious self supporting each individual form is called Jīvātman. Sri Aurobindo calls it as such and he says that "it is distinguished from Universal Divine or one-all-constituting self."\(^1\) Here the universal divine knows all the individual 'soul-forms' and yet has a separate relation with each through its individual self-concentrations (Jīvātman). On the other hand this individual concentration or Jīvātman knows itself as one not only with the universal but with all other individual soul-forms. If this would not be the case, Sri Aurobindo says "the individual would always tend to lose itself in the universal."\(^2\)

Thus prajnana achieves the fundamental division which leads to all other divisions i.e., the Division of one self or puruṣa into many individual puruṣas or Jīvātman. Here we have to note that in the Supramental consciousness these divisions are only furnished and not essential ones. Anyhow the Jīvātman is the meeting place of the dual aspect of the Divine puruṣa and prakṛti.\(^3\) Finally this second mode of

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2. Īsha Upaniṣad, p.39.
Supermind distinguishes among ātman, māyā and the becoming of the ātman.¹

The third and the final status of supermind completes the process of Self-Differentiation of Saccidānanda. This status is called Sanjñāna or self-absorption of the supporting individual concentration of consciousness into the individual form. Here Sri Aurobindo points out, the Divine "views and governs the relation of each soul-forms of Himself with other soul-forms from the stand points of will and knowledge appropriate to each particular form."² In this status of Supermind a dualism between the individual Divine - Jīvātman and the cosmic divine or universal self is clearly visualised. Because of this, we need not suppose that there is a loss of Supramental knowledge or unity.

The individual divine or universal divine in individual concentration of itself as Jīvātman - knows itself as one centre of Divine being and its conscious power of self-creation.³ Though there is a practical duality, there is no metaphysical ignorance - for the individual does not regard himself as an essentially independent existence.

1. The Life Divine, p.130.
2. Ibid., p.137.
3. Ibid., p.137.
Such ignorance does not exist in the supramental plane of consciousness. Ignorance exists only due to the establishment of mind.

Thus these three modes of Supermind are three ways in which the one Divine knows and enjoys itself in and through the Supermind.\(^1\) Here we have to understand always what is known and enjoyed is one and the same Reality; the ways of knowing or enjoying are triple. These three ways of knowing and enjoying are of a three-fold power of infinite consciousness: Self-variation, Self-delimitation and Self-absorption. Without this, Saccidananda could never finitize itself. Thus, Sri Aurobindo's conception of reality constitutes the backbone for his theory of 'Man', 'Spirituality' and his view of 'Gnostic being'.