CHAPTER III

THE NATURE OF MAN

"Man is a developing Spirit trying here to find and fulfil itself in the forms of Mind, Life and Body."

- Sri Aurobindo
MAN IN DIFFERENT TRADITIONS

Man has been the most mysterious of all creatures in the universe. From times immemorial he has been making sustained efforts to understand himself. Even in this age of scientific and technological revolution, he has not ceased to be mysterious and evoke interest. We need to know more and more about him.

Different traditions present different conceptions of man. The question is whether we have to accept these diverse conceptions of 'man' or search for one concept underlying these different conceptions. We propose to discuss in this chapter the nature of man as presented in different traditions with a focus on Sri Aurobindo's concept of man.

1. MAN IN GREEK THOUGHT

We witness no short distinction between soul and body in pre-Socratic thought. Life and consciousness were
considered the outcome of the physical body. Homer held the view that the soul is a kind of ghost which is associated with the living body like a shadow. Though it survives death, it is believed to lack all awareness when it is associated with the body. The Orphic religion considers soul as super human and super personal agent which enters the mind in sleep and in all states of mystic ecstasy but is divorced from the person in his state of waking life.¹

Socrates held that, man is social by nature. He requires a society to survive and fulfil his basic needs. The ideal of man is not the gratification of his sensuous appetites but fulfilment of his inquisitiveness for knowledge which is rooted in reason. For him soul is the core of the human being. It is that which is opposed to the body and governs it. The body is subjected to change but soul remains immutable and it survives the disintegration of the body at death. He considers that soul to be so important in man that when it is corrupted, it ruins the man and also society. Corruptions like ignorance and vice which affect the soul are worse than the diseases of the body, since they lead to a misdirected life. It is for this reason that Socrates exhorted that the chief obligation of every man is to tend his own soul and help others in tending theirs.²

2. Xenophon, Mem., 4,3,14.
Plato took clues from his master Socrates and elaborated his views further. He accepted the Socratic theory that soul is different from body and it is central to man. He held that there are two forms of knowledge, the sensuous and the non-sensuous. The former is the knowledge of the physical objects obtained through the sense organs, whereas the later refers to the knowledge of Ideas that are immutable. Genuine knowledge is the knowledge of immutable ideas and not the fleeting objects. The soul prior to its association with the body, the soul lived contemplating in the world of ideas. It was full of knowledge. But when it enters the body, its knowledge is obscured and gets limited because of the limitations of senses imposed on it. It looses its direct contact with the ideas and knows the evanescent objects indirectly only through senses. Senses are not the gateways of knowledge according to Plato, but are only limitations imposed on the soul. They are the blinkers of knowledge. Prior to its association with the body, the soul had no such limitations. It had direct knowledge of the ideas. In fact Plato considered knowledge of Ideas alone as knowledge proper and the so called knowledge of objects got through senses is not knowledge proper but only a 'opinion' since the senses very often mislead us.1

1. Theaet., pp.159-60.
An ideal man, according to Plato is one who acts on the basis of his knowledge of ideas and not on the basis of knowledge of objects.¹

The soul is immortal according to Plato. Plato's conception of soul comes very close to the Hindu conception of soul. Like Hindu systems of philosophy, Plato believed in re-incarnation of the soul.

Man, according to Aristotle is quite distinct from the other beings of nature. He is a hylomorphic being (composed of matter and form in union) who is subject to change, and who has arisen as the result of a long process of cosmic evolution.² The human soul is bound to its body and even the power of reason cannot function without the assistance of the corporeal organs of sense. This human soul is the first animating form of a natural body and cannot as a whole exist without it.³ Human body is the first physical thing located in space and subject to the laws of motion. At a certain stage in its accidental development, received the rational form of man. Thus the body and soul, according to Aristotle are not two separate entities, but two interdependent principles, each of which exists only by virtue of the

1. Republic, p.450.
3. Ibid., p.414 A29.
other. Therefore Aristotle believes that Man is a union of body and soul. Without the human body, there would be no soul and without the soul, no human body. Each is distinct but not separable from the other, like form and matter they are inseparably related. If body is Matter, Soul is its form.

2. MAN IN JEWISH THOUGHT

In Jewish thought, Man occupies a unique position. The Bible is not a theology from the point of view of man but rather an anthropology, from the point of view of God. As a natural being, Man is determined by natural laws, he must frequently choose, confined in his existence, unrestrained in his will. His acts do not emanate from him like rays of energy from matter.

Man is 'a little lower than the Divine' and a little higher than the beasts. Like a pendulum he swings to and fro under the combined action of gravity and momentum of the gravitation of selfishness and the momentum of Divine. Man is a critical stage between the animal and spiritual. He is more than what he is to himself. In his reason he may be

2. Psalm, 8:5.
limited, in his will he may be wicked, yet his relation of
God constitutes the essential meaning of his life. He is
the knot between Divine and Matter.

In this tradition they believe Man is Man not because
of what he has in common with God. The Greek thinkers
sought to understand man as a partner of God. According to
this tradition Man is an artifact, formed in a special act,
created in an 'image' according to a 'likeness'.

However, Man is made not of the ground which is the
source of all vegetation and animal life, nor out of water
which is a symbol of refreshment blessing and wisdom. He is
made of arid dust, the stuff of desert which is both
abundant and worthless. Man holds within himself a breath
of God. "The Lord formed man of the dust of the ground and
breathed into his nostrills a breath of life; and Man became
living Soul." 3

3. MAN IN CHINESE THOUGHT

Generally speaking, the fundamental belief of Chinese
is that human nature is basically good. Negotiation,
arbitration and compromise have become general practices in

2. Zephania 1:17
China because, they believe in original goodness of human nature. Confucian school of thought contributed to this view.

In Chinese thought nature means the nature endowed by heaven. This has some similarity to the Jewish conception that Man has a Divine spark. Confuscious said that by nature people are near to one another, but through practice they have become apart. In other words, Man by nature is social, but in practice he becomes individualistic and self-centred. Mancius said that human-heartedness (Jen), righteousness (Yi), Propriety (Li) and Wisdom (Chih) are found in human nature itself. Chinese thought mostly analysed the human nature from ethical point of view. Some of them also explained Man as part of cosmos. Their explanations remained occult, mystic, rationally unsystematic and did not contribute much to a psycho-physical analysis of the human individual.¹

4. MAN IN INDIAN THOUGHT

Broadly we witness two approaches to Man in Indian thought. Some thinkers like the Lokayatas hold that Man is nothing but the conglomeration of the elements of matter viz., fire, earth, air and water. As against this view,

¹. Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p.33.
others, the followers of Vedic tradition hold that Man is different from matter. He is basically of the nature of Spirit, fundamentally different from matter and essentially opposed to it.

It is basic to Upanisadic thought that Man is an integral unity of ātman, the unconscious bliss body (Ānandamaya kośa), reason (Vijñānamaya kośa), mind (Manomaya kośa), life (Prānāmaya kośa) and matter (Annamaya kośa). Matter is not the ātman of anything and the ultimate ātman is not the body of anything. The lower is the body of the higher and the higher is the ātman of the lower. This is explained in Taittiriya Upaniṣad clearly. It gives an account of the structure of man. Already by the time of the Upaniṣads, the distinction was drawn between body and spirit. The ātman is considered to be one’s real and ultimate self. Here the question arises that: is not one’s self the body? Do we not identify ourselves with the body and say 'I am so and so'. The Upaniṣad answers negatively.

From the ātman, which is Brahman, Ether is born (Ākāśh); from it air, from air fire; from fire water; and from water earth. From earth are born plants and from

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1. Taittiriya Upaniṣad, II - 8.
2. Ibid., Brahmavalli (225-229), pp.383-386.
plants food is derived and from food Man is born. But according to Upanisads this is only the physical body to which we refer as 'I'. This 'I' disappears at death.

Hence body is not the true 'I'. What disappears at death is 'life', the vital principle, then the vital principle 'prana' must be atman, the 'I'. But even now, we have not traced out the real Atman. When a man is asleep, his life is present, but he does not respond, if we call him. The 'I' therefore, is absent here. More specifically what is absent here is mind (Manas).

Mind, therefore, may be the atman and life its body. But we cannot stop even here. A lunetic may say 'I am dead long ago' and yet his mind is operating. What is lacking lunetic is reason. So reason is the atman and mind is its body. But even here we cannot stop. Man may be in deep sleep when his reason does not work. We cannot say that his self has disappeared. It exists.

Therefore we have to say that there is something still deeper than reason and that it is unconscious bliss in deep sleep in which man attains the unity of subject and object and intensity of Being. Bliss is the intensity of Being.

2. Ibid., (257 & 258), p.405.
Because this is unconscious and the Ātman has to be conscious. Even the unconscious bliss is not the Ātman but only its body. Thus we get the following levels: Ātman, the unconscious bliss body, reason, mind, life and matter.\(^1\)

Thus Upaniṣads viewed man as basically spiritual in nature. He is the same as Ātman.

However different schools have different conceptions of Ātman. The Sāṅkhya and Yoga hold the view that it is of the nature of pure consciousness. It is a witness (Sākṣi), neutral (Madhyasthya), free from three-fold misery and non-agent (Akartṛbhāva).\(^2\) The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school believes that atman is a substance wherein qualities like cognition, feeling etc. inhere in. It is difficult from body, whereas body is material, Ātman is non-material. Though it is spiritual, consciousness does not constitute the essence of the soul according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. It is an accidental quality that arises in it under certain conditions as when it is in contact with the external world through mind and senses. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika believes that the soul in bondage is subject to cycle of births. When Man follows path stipulated by scriptures for realisation, the soul gets liberated i.e., it does not any more suffer the cycle of births and deaths. The Vedantins believe that

Atman is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss (Sat-Cit-Ānanda).

According to Jainism soul is a conscious substance. Consciousness constitutes the essence of the soul. In its intrinsic nature, it is characterised by infinite intelligence, infinite peace, infinite faith and infinite power. But in its empirical existence these features get obscured or eclipsed. It is peculiar to Jaina theory of soul that it admits variability of its size in its embodied state. It is supposed to expand and contract according to the dimensions of the body with which it gets associated.

In Buddhism, we see a different version of man. Man, in their theory, consists of five Skandas: Rūpaskanda (the aggregate of matter); Vedana-skanda (the aggregate of feelings and sensations); Sanjñā Skanda (the aggregate of the ideas), Sāmkāra Skanda (aggregate of instincts, propensities, impressions etc.) and Vijñāna Skanda (aggregate of consciousness). Hence Man is an aggregate of five Skandas. There is no such thing as Atman in the Upanisadic sense of the term over and above five skandas. Buddhism recognises transmigration and re-birth but it is not an immutable soul that transmigrates and gets the birth.

1. Gunaratna, Commentary on Saddarśana Samuccaya, p. 74.
Although all orthodox schools agree in general that Man is a psycho-physical-spiritual complex, when it comes to the question as to what the essence of Man is, they are one in their affirmation that Man is of the nature of immortal and immutable spirit. The great Hindu scripture Bhagavad Gītā brings out this view very clearly and emphatically. Gītā describes ātman as that which is unborn (Aja), eternal (Nityam), permanent (Sāsvata) and primal (Purāno). It is not slain when the body slain.¹ Weapons cannot cut it, fire does not burn it; water does not drench it nor does the wind wither it.² Just as a person discards wornout clothes and puts on new ones so too the embodied self casts of old and wornout bodies and enters into other new ones.³ Accordingly Man is of the nature of Ātman.

SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPTION OF MAN

Although Sri Aurobindo's conception of Man as of the nature of spirit, is not basically different from the orthodox system of Indian philosophy, it has its own uniqueness. Let us discuss his view.

Sri Aurobindo considers man as an uncreated undestructable soul that has housed itself in a mind, life

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². Ibid., II:23.
³. Ibid., II:22.
and matter. Man is a spirit or soul using mind, life and matter, sometimes subservient to them but always struggling to establish mastery over them transcending their limitations. He achieves that transcendence when he reaches the stage of supermind or superman. Man, the predominantly thinking being, being of the nature of Saccidananda aims at transcending the constraints of mind also.

The spirit (ñâtaëan) is metaphysical different from mind, life and body. The spirit uses these principles and cannot be identified with them. This spirit is metaphysically identical with Saccidānanda.

Man in his empirical existence has to be viewed from different perspectives namely the perspectives of his body, life and mind. He has the physical existence, the vital existence, the mental existence and finally the supramental existence. Hence to a question what is Man, we have to offer different answers depending on the nature or level of his existence according to Sri Aurobindo. In this context we need to explain the different levels of existence of Man in order to ascertain his true nature. We have to examine whether Man in his true sense stands for the physical man, the vital man, the mental man or the supramental man.

Sri Aurobindo clearly explains how man evolves from his physical nature to the highest order of supramental existence in his scheme of evolution. Unless we know his scheme of evolution, we cannot understand different levels of his existence. It is therefore necessary to give an account of Sri Aurobindo's scheme of evolution.

1. SCHEME OF EVOLUTION

It is basic to Sri Aurobindo's thought that what is implicit in a thing becomes explicit in course of time. Evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo consists not in the production of the de novo but in the progressive realisation of what is implicitly present already. Man is at heart the spirit. The supramental consciousness is present in every sphere of nature including what we call inconscience or the inert matter. Evolution or progress is nothing but the manifestation of this inner spirit the Saccidananda, to its fullest extent by overcoming the constrains of matter, life and mind. Consciousness proper or Saccidānanda transcends the constraints of matter, life and mind. It is supramental in nature.

Man, therefore, to realise his true nature, has to transcend even the mental. As long as the functions under the guidance of mind he would not achieve or realise the supramental Saccidānanda and hence, evolution is a must in Sri Aurobindo's system.
Evolution according to Sri Aurobindo is not to be understood as a change from one stage of existence to another or as the development of the ape into a man or something like that but it stands for total transformation in its ultimate sense.

Broadly we discern two levels of progress in Sri Aurobindo's system designated variously as evolution and transformation. Evolution refers to the progress of man from his stage of physical existence to the stage of mental existence through the vital existence. But transformation refers to the progress of man from his mental to the supramental existence which is made possible by the descent of the supermind.

The difference between man's physical, vital and mental existences are no doubt different, but the difference between man's mental existence and supramental existence is something radical, qualitative and fundamental involving a break, a leap. Hence it is termed transformation and not mere change.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of two stages in terms of descent and ascent of the spirit, the involution and evolution. Broadly they stand for the principle of evolution i.e.,
change. Whether the Spirit descends into matter and again ascends into Spirit, it is all a process of change and hence evolution. Sri Aurobindo's evolution is a 'plunge of Spirit into ignorance'. The Spirit Saccidananda is Omnicient and Omnipotent. It does not lack anything to achieve through evolution or involution. Yet the Spirit descends by way of involution and passes through different stages of involution and evolution not to achieve or fulfil something which is hitherto does not possess, but in the Spirit of Sport (Lila). According to Sri Aurobindo, involution precedes evolution. Let us now explain the process of involution.

2. INVOLUTION

The unmanifest or hidden powers of nature become manifest by the process of involution. Sri Aurobindo says that the Absolute manifests in two forms viz., Being and Becoming.¹ The Being is the fundamental reality and the Becoming is an effectual reality. The manifestation of the Being in our universe takes the shape of an involution which is the starting point of an evolution. Matter is the nethermost stage and spirit the summit. The evolution of matter is possible only because there has been an involution of the spirit into matter. Had there not been a deposit of

the Spirit in matter, the latter could not have evolved. So we cannot talk of evolution and yet deny the spiritual element in Matter. As with matter, so is it with life, mind and soul. Ascent without descent, evolution without involution is unthinkable.

The Spirit involved in Matter possess all its powers so as to manifest into life and mind. In this process of involution of Spirit, we can clearly distinguish seven principles of manifested Being viz., Sat, Cit, Ānanda, Supermind, Mind, Life and Matter.

The first three namely, Sat, Cit and Ānanda are the original and fundamental principles. They form universal states of consciousness to which we can rise. When we do so, we can become aware of the unity of the Divine existence, the power of Divine consciousness and the Bliss of the Divine. The fourth principle, what Sri Aurobindo calls as 'truth consciousness' or supermind is always associated with them. It is the characteristic power of self-determination of the Infinite. This quadruple power of the supreme existence, consciousness and bliss along with the supermind constitutes the upper hemisphere of Spirit's manifestation. In this plane we find the pure presence of reality. We also find complete freedom and knowledge in
them. The other three powers and planes of Being viz., mind, life and matter form a lower hemisphere of manifestation. We find physical, mental and vital man in the lower hemisphere of this evolutionary process.

The Spirit (Saccidānanda) having descended into the lowest viz., matter, it begins to evolve and shoot up further and culminate in its original Being viz., Saccidānanda.

Sri Nolini Kanth Gupta points out "This process is not a resolution and dissolution, it is a process of greater fulfilment and synthesis or sublimation as well as of integration."¹ Sri Aurobindo says about evolution as an ascent of spirit by integration and hightening of the process of Spirit. In short it stands for hightening, widening and integration. In his own words, "All evolution in essence a hightening of force of consciousness in the manifest being so that it may be raised into the greater intensity of what is still unmanifest, from matter into life; from life into mind, from the mind into the Spirit."²

Sri Aurobindo believes evolution is not merely an ascent from a lower to a higher state of Being. It is also

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an integration of the higher with the lower states. This means that when a higher principle emerges, it descends into the lower ones and causes a transformation of them and gets integrated with them.

Matter is the starting point of evolution. It is a physico-chemical unity. Sri Aurobindo says that "Matter is a form of Spirit, a habitation of Spirits and here in matter itself there can be a realisation of Spirit." When the matter is taken up by the life, it undergoes a change and it becomes the basis and receptacle of a living organism. Here we can trace the emergence of a physical man.

3. PHYSICAL MAN

In the state of his physical existence, man is exclusively pre-occupied with his physical needs and physical organisation of life. At this stage the life energy and mental process are used to cater to the physical existence of Man. Man at this stage is incapable of raising questions about knowledge and spirit. His questions centre round his physical and biological urges. He can be equated with an animal. Sri Aurobindo points out "physical man who attaches most importance to objective things and to his

outer life, has little intensity of the subjective or inner existence and subordinates whatever he has of it to the greater claims of exterior reality."¹

The physical man has a vital part but it is mainly made up of the smaller instinctive and impulsive formations of life-consciousness. It contains sensations, desires, hopes, feelings, satisfactions which are dependent on external things and external contacts. It is concerned with practical and the immediate realisables.

He has a mental part too, but this is customary, traditional, practical and objective. It respects mind for its utility and entertainment of his physical and sensational existence. It is just because the physical mind takes its stand on matter and the material world on the body and the bodily life on sense-experience and on normal practical mentality and its experience.²

In this order, the physical mind builds up a restricted super-structure dependent upon the external sense-mentality. It regards them as imaginations, feelings, and thought abstractions, not as inner realities. Though it receives them as realities, it does not feel them concretely

¹. The Life Divine, p.717.
². Ibid., p.717.
and substantially in their own proper substance. In this type of mental formation there is no power for progress. If there is, it may be only for a material progress.

The physical man mainly occupied with his corporeal life and habitual needs, impulses, life-habits, mind habits, looks very little or not at all beyond that. In the physical man there are other elements also present. He cannot live altogether as the human animal concerned with birth and death, procreation, satisfaction of common impulses, desires and the maintenance of the life and the body. This is his normal type of personality. If the inner physical purusa insists, he can arrive at the idea of a finer, more beautiful and perfect physical life or attempt to realise it in his own existence.

Man cannot remain always at this stage of human evolutionary order. Slowly he evolves further to realise his own nature. In Sri Aurobindo's system we find vital man next to physical as the progressive stage.

4. VITAL MAN

Vital Man has a mentality to fulfil his desires. At this stage man has a narrow thinking. He is full of

passions, cravings, revolts, pleasures and pains. Vitality means life-force. Where there is life, in plant or in animal or in man, there is life-force. Without the vital there can be no living action. Sri Aurobindo says that the psychic touch governed by the spiritual light is necessary to the vital part of our body. Hence the vital man grows slowly towards the Divine through his mental development.

Sri Aurobindo says "The vital man is the man of desire and sensation, the man of force and action, the man of passion and emotion, the kinetic individual."¹ He lays stress on the material existence. But he gives it up, when there is a push for life-experience, for force of realisation, for life power and for life-expansion which is nature's first impetus towards enlargement of the Being.²

Sri Aurobindo points out that "At a highest intensity of this life impetus, he becomes the breaker of bonds, the seeker or new horizons, the disturber of the past and present in the interest of the future."³ He has a mental life which is often enslaved to the vital force and its desires and passions. He seeks to satisfy them through

2. Ibid., p.719.
3. Ibid., p.719.
mind. The vital mind at this stage is a great force in the working of evolutionary nature.

The vital man along with mental man, according to Sri Aurobindo have an immense effect upon the earth life. They carry humanity from the mere human animal to what it is now. But it is only within the bounds of already established evolutionary formula of the human being that they can act. They can enlarge the human circle but not change or transform the principle of consciousness or its characteristic operations.

Sri Aurobindo says that "The Nature of the vital man is more active, stronger and more mobile, more turbulent and chaotic, often to the point of being quiet unregulated, than that of the physical man who holds on to the soil and has a certain material poise and balance; but it is more kinetic and creative; for the element of the vital being is not earth but air; it has more movement, less status."¹

A vigorous vital mind and will can grasp and govern the kinetic vital energies, but it is more by a forceful compulsion and constraint than by a harmonisation of the being. However, a strong vital personality, mind and will can get reasoning, intelligence to affirm his own being.

¹. The Life Divine, p.899.
This leads to a strong self-affirmation in life and action. This helps vital man to ascend further.

5. MENTAL MAN

A greater change is brought about only when the matter is taken up by the mind. Only at this stage, we find a mental man. The drive of evolution is a constant and a permanent feature of nature and she is in travial to bring about higher and higher stages of material transformation. In Sri Aurobindo's system mental man is an evolute of vital man. Man in his principle a mental being, but not one living in a mind world, but in a dominantly physical existence; his is a mind encased in matter and conditioned by matter. 1

"Above the level of vital mentality" says Sri Aurobindo "is a mind-plane of pure thought and intelligence to which the things of the mental world are the most important realities; those who are under its influence, the philosopher, thinker, scientist, intellectual creator, the man of the idea, the man of the written or spoken word, the idealist and dreamer are the present mental being at his highest attained summit." 2

The mental man has his life-part which contains passions, desires, ambitions and hopes of all kinds. This is his lower sensational and physical existence. This lower part can often equilibalance or weigh down his nobler mental element so that, although it is the highest portion of him, it does not become dominant and formative in his whole nature. But this is not typical of him in his greatest development, for there, the vital and physical are controlled and subjected by the thinking will and intelligence.

The mental man cannot transform his nature but he can control and harmonize it and lay on it the law of a mental ideal. It imposes a balance or a sublimating and refining influence and give high consistency to the half-constructed man or being. He can be the observer and governor of his own mind and life. He can consciously develop them and become to that extent a self-creator. The mental man along with the vital, will have an immense effect upon the earth-life. They have carried humanity from animal status to the present one.

Sri Aurobindo points out that the mental man tends to subordinate to him mental self-expression, mental aims, mental interests or to a mental idea. Because of this mental subordination, it is at once more difficult for him
and easier to arrive at a harmony of his nature. It is easier because the mental will once in control can convince by the power of the reasoning intelligence. It controls, regulates the life and the body and their demands, arrange and harmonise them, force them to be its instruments.

It is more difficult because life and body are the first powers and if they are in the least strong, can impose themselves with an almost irresistible insistence on the mental ruler. Man is a mental being and the mind is the leader of his life and body. But this is a leader who is much led by his followers and has sometimes no other will than what they impose on him. Even then Man tries to come over from all these limitations and evolves into higher and higher levels of his existence.

Man evolves slowly through different stages of mentality and ultimately transforms himself into a supramental being. Now let us see how he passes through different mental stages.

A) MIND

Mind uses life and matter as means of its expression. It is a consciousness which measures, limits cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. It conceives, perceives,
senses things. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it looses itself in a foreign element, where it can neither perceive nor conceive nor sense. Mind is an instrument of finitization.

In the original consciousness, there is no ignorance but a subordinate process of delimitation. Hence the mind is only a subordinate and not really a separate working of the 'Real-idea'. Man at this stage limits himself to the qualities of Mind. His thinking becomes limited because his nature will not allow him to think above at this stage. But gradually, in the process of evolution, he enters into the next higher stage of consciousness i.e., Highermind.

B) HIGHERMIND

Highermind is a mind of large clarity of Spirit, a luminous thought-mind, a mind of spiritual conceptual knowledge. Sri Aurobindo says "An all awareness emerging from the original identity carrying the truths, the identity held in itself, conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudiously, formulating and by self power of the idea effectually realising its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge."¹

In highermind what we know is the totality of things though not an integral knowledge. A totality stands for an aggregate and not a whole. In a whole a relation between parts is more well-knit better organised whereas there is no such integration in a totality. It is the self-revelation of an eternal knowledge. It can freely express itself in single ideas but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality or truth-seeing at a single view.

The relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth are not established by logic, but pre-exist and emerge already self-seen in the integral whole. Besides the cognitive aspect, we have the effective aspect of the highermind. It purifies, delivers and creates thorough knowledge.

"It acts as an intermediate state between the Truth-light above and the human mind, communicating the higher knowledge in a form that the Mind intensified, broadened, made spiritually supple, can receive without being blinded or dazzled by a truth beyond it."¹ Our first decisive step out of our human intelligence, our normal mentality is an ascent into a highermind.

Here we do not have any obscurity but a large clarity of the Spirit. Feelings, will and actions become the vibrations of this higher wisdom. This wisdom generates force-form proper to it, and imposes it on our mind, life and matter. Sri Aurobindo feels that Man evolves both bodily and mentally into a higher stage. This means that both physical and mental transformation takes place in this stage accordingly. Man has to enter into the next stage i.e., illuminedmind which leads him to further heights.

(C) ILLUMINEDMIND

The descent of highermind only prepares the base for the descent of a yet higher power, the illuminedmind. This is a mind of spiritual light, a luminous inner force which effects a rapid transformation in comparison with the slow and deliberate process of the highermind. Here, thought is subordinated to vision which catches the truth itself, and not merely its image.

Sri Aurobindo says "As the highermind brings a greater consciousness into the Being through the spiritual idea and its power of truth, so the illuminedmind brings in a still greater consciousness through a Truth-sight and Truth-light and its seeing and seizing power."¹

As the highermind transforms and fulfils the thought, so the illuminedmind transforms and fulfils vision. It can effect more powerful and dynamic integration. It brings a spiritual insight into the heart and a spiritual light and energy into its feeling and emotion. In his own words, Sri Aurobindo says "There is also in this descent the arrival of a greater dynamic, a golden drive, a luminous "enthusiasms' of inner force and power which replaces the comparatively slow and deliberate process of the highermind by a swift, sometimes a vehement, almost a violent impetus of rapid transformation."¹

This illuminedmind infuses into the senses a direct and total power of Spiritual sensation so that our vital and physical being can contact the Divine being in all things. It throws a transforming light on the physical mind, which breaks its limitations, inertia and narrow thought power and doubts.

Man is not satisfied even with this transformation. He tries further and evolves into a more higher i.e., intuitivemind. Here, i.e., in illuminedmind, physical and vital man disappears. Seeds for a spiritual man starts from

¹. The Life Divine, Book II, p.944.
this stage. Slowly it grows through intuitivemind, overmind and ultimately into supermind.

(D) INTUITIVEMIND

Both higher and illuminedmind depend for their authority on a yet higher power, the intuitivemind. It does not work through cognition but through intuition. It transforms not only mind, but also heart, life, senses and even body. It changes the whole consciousness into will, feelings and emotions. It recasts the life and body in the light and power of truth. Sri Aurobindo says, "The intuitivemind, strictly speaking, stretches from the intuition proper down to the intuitivised inner mind - it is therefore at once an overhead power and a mental intelligence power."¹ This stage is a kind of truth-vision; truth-hearing, truth-memory, direct truth discernment. The true and authentic intuition must be distinguished from ordinary mentality or reason.

Logical reasoning helps to explain ordinary mentality but this is not sufficient to do so with intuition. This is a motion of rapid insight which proceeds by a leap like a man who springs from one sure spot to another point of sure footing - or atleast held by him to be sure. Sri Aurobindo

say..."the intuitive knowledge sees things in the whole, in
the large and details only as sides of the indivisible
whole, its tendency is towards immediate synthesis." 1

Thus at this stage i.e., intuitivemind, Man sees the
truth in its wholeness. His mind goes beyond the
distinctions of knower, known and knowledge.
Spiritualisation starts from this stage. In other words, a
spiritual man emerges but needs to be perfected by overmind.

(E) OVERMIND

Beyond Intuitivemind is the overmind which is the
supermind's delegate to the ignorance. A sharp line divides
supermind and overmind but it permits a free transmission.
In overmind there is no integrity of the supermind and yet
it embraces totality. Sri Aurobindo in this context says
"What to mental reason are irreconciable differences present
themselves to the overmind intelligence as co-existent
correlatives; what to the mental reason are contraries, are
to the overmind intelligence complimentaries." 2

This mind proceeds through an illimitable capacity of
separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the

2. Ibid., p.330.
integral and indivisible all-comprehending unity. In overmind, we have the origin of the cleavage and yet the super structure is still founded on the basis of an implicit underlying unity. All possibilities of combination and relation are freely organised here.

As against mind, overmind consciousness is global in its cognition and can hold any number of fundamental differences together in a reconciling vision. Overmind is a sort of inferior supermind. It is concerned more with oragmatic truth than with absolutes. It is more global than integral.

In overmind alone we realise a true harmony of the whole, which is not possible to the mind. As against to the mind, here remains a harmony, a power of communication and mutuality and a free play of mentality. Its ignorance is limitive but not necessarily falsificative.

The change brought through intuitive mind is completed in overmental descent. At this level, thought, feeling and emotion all become cosmic, allembracing, catholic, infinite and spiritual. Overmind cannot transform the entire nature nor does it guarantee against the downword pull of inconscience. Hence to achieve a complete integral transformation of the entire nature i.e., both physical and
mental, the descent of supermind is imperative. Sri Aurobindo says that supermind or gnosis is the characteristic, illumined, significant action of the Spirit in its own native reality.¹

Thus spiritual man emerges through intuitive and overmind stages. The seeds have been started from illumined mind. Sri Aurobindo, however, believes that the spiritual man being the product of overmind, he is not totally free from the influences of mentality and hence he cannot be the final summit. He has to grow further into supramental status. But this is possible only when the supermind descends. For this he proposes the triple transformation of soul in man which will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹. The Synthesis of Yoga, p.599.