CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

"He who knows that as both in one, the knowledge and the ignorance, by the ignorance crosses beyond death and by the knowledge enjoys immortality"

- Ṛsha Upaniṣad (XIV)
Sri Aurobindo is the child of Vedic culture; he was inspired by it and imbibed it. It is this culture that shaped his thinking and way of life. It is his conviction that Vedas to epics constitute one continuous tradition. There is no antagonism between Vedas and the subsequent developments in the form of Purāṇas, Itihāsas etc., in Hindu culture. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of man and spirituality are rooted in this framework.

Sri Aurobindo followed tradition and he described himself as a traditionalist and orthodox. It was his desire to renew Indian tradition. In a letter to Mother, written probably in 1913*, he described his mission in India, particularly in Pondicherry. First he wants to re-explain Sanātana-dharma from a new stand point. He claims that Lord Krishna, has shown him the true meaning of Veda and revealed a new science of philology. He says "a new Nirukta could be

formed and a new interpretation of the Vedas based upon it.¹ Sri Aurobindo re-explained the Veda. First it was his conviction that India was the centre of religious life of the world and it was his desire to restore its past glory. Second, Sri Aurobindo aimed at establishing a basis of Vedic knowledge. Finally, his mission was to evolve a perfect humanity, for that society is to be remodelled so as to be fit to contain that perfection.²

A tradition is not created in a day or two. The beginning of a new tradition takes centuries to strike roots, develop and yield fruits. We can unhesitatingly affirm that Sri Aurobindo had planted seeds of a new philosophical tradition in our country. His analysis of different levels of human existence - the physical, the vital, the mental, the spiritual and the divine; his distinction between spiritual existence and divine existence, his concept of superman - stand for unique contribution of Sri Aurobindo for the contemporary Indian philosophy.

Brahman is the reality of things which fills and supports their idea and form.³ Whatever reality is in existence by which all the rest subsists, that is Brahman.

2. Ibid., (combined edition), pp.433-34.
3. Sri Aurobindo, The Hour of God and Other Writings, p.166
An eternal behind all instabilities, a truth of things which is implied is called Brahman. It is the highest in all. There is none beyond and there is none other than it. To know it is to know the highest and by knowing the highest to know all. For as it is the beginning and source of all things, so everything else is its consequence. As it is the support and constituent of all things, so the secret of everything else is explained by its secret. As it is the sum and end of all things, so everything else amounts to it and by throwing itself into it achieves the sense of its own existence.

In relation to the universe the Supreme is Brahman, the one Reality which is not only spiritual, material and conscious substance of all the ideas, forces and forms of the universe, but their origin, support and possessor, the cosmic and supra-cosmic spirit. Our Supreme Self and the Supreme existence which has become the universe are one spirit, one self and one existence. The individual or Man in nature is one expression of the universal Being or Brahman in spirit an emanation of the transcendence. If man finds his self, he finds too that his own true self is not this natural personality, this created individual, but is a universal Being in its relations with others and with nature and in its upward term a portion or the living front of a supreme transcendental spirit.¹

Sri Aurobindo's system maintains that Brahman, world and souls - all the three are equally real. The world may be less fundamental in its inconscient state but surely not less real than Brahman, the transcendent. His understanding that the world is real provides the much needed consolation for those who are disturbed by the māyāvāda of Advaita Vedānta. According to Sri Aurobindo 'Māyā' has two aspects viz., the consciousness of unity (Vidyā) and the consciousness of multiplicity (Avidyā). Standing originally for the comprehensive and creative knowledge in the Veda, subsequently, māyā acquired a pejorative sense of fraud or illusion. Sri Aurobindo liberated 'Māyā' of its pejorative sense.

Unlike the classical Hindu philosophers, Sri Aurobindo introduced a new concept 'Supermind', the dynamis of the transcendental reality, Saccidānanda. He claims, the traces of supermind in Vedic tradition. He introduced this novel concept for transforming the entire nature of man through what Sri Aurobindo calls comprehending, apprehending and projecting aspects of Supermind. Here we have to remember that Sri Aurobindo never claimed any of his doctrines to have fallen from his head. He has traced all of them to the Vedic tradition. He claims that he is only unerthing or making manifest what is unmanifest in Vedas.

Sri Aurobindo's conception of man is a unique feature of his philosophy. Unlike the other traditional systems, he accepts the spiritual evolution of the soul in his philosophy. The ideal of human being consists not simply in returning to the bosom of the infinite from which he was separated through ignorance, but in functioning as a perfect medium of self-manifestation of the divine in material condition and under the aspect of temporality. Accordingly man passes through physical, vital and mental stages in the course of evolution. At the mental level man has to pass through higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, overmind before he realises the stage of Gnostic being. Moreover man is related closely to matter and also Brahman, because the spirit in him is same as the spirit in matter and also Brahman.

Man in his true nature is not different from the highest reality Brahman or Saccidānanda. Matter is the form of substance of Being which the existence of Saccidānanda assumes when it subjects itself to the phenomenal action of its own consciousness and force. Man, as a psycho-physical existence, is related on the one hand with matter and on the other with Brahman. Matter is the basis and starting point of the order of evolution. It is a form of manifestation of the Spirit and contains within itself the life, mind and
other spiritual powers. It is because of this that they can be brought forth in the course of evolution into overt manifestation in material conditions. Matter contains the promise and potency of all terrestrial life including man.

Man, according to Sri Aurobindo, is not contented with his physical, biological and mental existence. In him, there is a discontentment and hence the desire for an improvement. His discontentment with his physical, biological and mental existence, coupled with the urge of the spirit in him to get back to its original nature, naturally lead to higher and higher realms of his true being. The truth is that man is not merely matter or life or mind. He is basically of the nature of spirit - Saccidānanda. One does not feel at home in an unnatural state of existence. Being of the nature of spirit, man cannot feel happy in his physical, biological and mental existences. Man, therefore, spontaneously moves in the direction of his natural being viz., spirit and restore himself to his original nature. As long as that desire to realise his original nature remains unfulfilled, there is bound to be discontentment in man.

Man is basically a spirit, Saccidānanda, Brahman. Sri Aurobindo maintains that the super-conscient spirit voluntarily plunges into the physical existence (matter) for the sheer delight of a novel adventure, the adventure of
self manifestation in the contraries of its nature. This is a miracle of spirit's purposive self-oblivion and exclusive concentration in a particular direction.

When we say, according to Sri Aurobindo 'Man is of the nature of spirit', it does not mean that the other aspects of man namely matter, life and mind are discarded. There are no disembodied or non-bodied men, meaning human beings without body, life and mind. Man even in his liberated state is in association with matter, life and mind. But in his divine existence, matter, life and mind are transformed radically that they are totally free from their imperfections or limitations. This is in tune with integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, where the lower is not discarded but elevated by purging it of its limitations or imperfections as it were. This is unique to Sri Aurobindo's system. In the classical Indian philosophical systems the imperfect, the non-soul or the non-spiritual (matter, senses, mind etc.) always remain imperfect. There is no stage when they are made perfect. Even when one becomes Jivanmukta or Bodhisattva, his body, mind and senses are to be considered basically imperfect. They are simply controlled rendered ineffective but not transformed. Their association is considered unpleasant and undesirable. But in Sri Aurobindo the Gnostic being undergoes a total
physical transformation involving body, senses and mind. This point of difference between classical Indian philosophy and Sri Aurobindo is worth noting. This departure of Sri Aurobindo from the classical Indian philosophy is not only revolutionary but also rewarding.

Sri Aurobindo takes both the materialists and spiritualists to task for their respective 'refusals'. It is common knowledge that the materialists refuse to accept the spirit and the spiritualists deny the matter. In Sri Aurobindo we find a harmonious blend of the two viz., matter and spirit. He observes that "the affirmation of a divine life upon earth can have no base unless we recognise not only the eternal spirit as the inhabitant of the bodily mansion, the weaver of this mutable rope, but accept 'Matter' of which it is made as a fit and noble material art of which, He weaves constantly His garbs."¹

The soul according to Sri Aurobindo has three statuses, first it is a transcendent; second it is immanent and third it is the unique individual being embodied in each of us. This last aspect has been designated by Sri Aurobindo as the 'psychic being'. This psychic being is essentially one with the Supreme. The psychic being in man plays an important role in the spiritual evolution. Through triple

¹. The Life Divine, p.8.
transformation, Sri Aurobindo says that the Soul evolves into its spiritual status and ultimately transforms into the supramental consciousness with the descent of the supermind. This transformation of body, mind, life is unique only to Sri Aurobindo's system. Though he rejects the traditional concept of transmigration, by and large he accepts its views on re-birth. Regarding law of karma, Sri Aurobindo understands, not in the sense of mechanical law, but as 'action' of an individual which directs his destiny. In other words man, in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy decides his own future.

The superman is one who has realised the supermind not only in inner consciousness but also in his body, life and mind. Evidently the superman is yet a thing of the future. Man has evolved only to some extent but he has to evolve further so as to become superman. For this Sri Aurobindo suggested three stages of transformation viz., psychicization, spiritualization and supramentalization. The first one i.e., psychicization would mean the discovery of the psychic being as the dynamic centre of our existence. Spiritualization would refer to a further growth in the height and depth of spiritual experience. This stage is characterised by the realization of oneness with all and as well as with Brahman. At this level, the supermind, the
dynamiss of the supreme descends into our 'body, life, mind' complex. This brings a radical transformation of the entire nature which Sri Aurobindo calls divinization or supramentalization. Here we conceive the emergence of Superman. The triple transformation, that Sri Aurobindo speaks of, profound as it is, is too idealistic to be acceptable.

Sri Aurobindo's superman differs from the traditional concept of Jiwanmukta, Buddhistic concept of Bodhisattva and Nietzsche's concept of superman. The radical difference between Sri Aurobindo's concept of Gnostic being and Jiwanmukta (and Bodhisattva) ideal of classical Indian philosophy is worth noting. Sri Aurobindo's conviction that the Gnostic being does not feel shy of earth existence, earth consciousness and earth life, living in the framework of body, life and mind is again a revolutionary concept. In this he makes a radical departure from ideals of Jiwanmukta and Bodhisattva of classical Indian philosophy whose aim is to avoid such earth existence. Earth existence or earth life of Sri Aurobindo should not however be confused with the mundane existence with entanglements in worldly life.

Sri Aurobindo's superman differs from Nietzsche's superman. Nietzsche's superman is nothing more than an Asura of Indian tradition, whereas Sri Aurobindo's concept is
diametrically opposed to it. The difference is between the fair and the foul, good and evil, sura and asura.

A Gnostic life, according to Sri Aurobindo is a beautiful harmony of all the three aspects of our psyche namely cognitive, conative and affective. Like the Karmayogin in Gita, he (Gnostic being) works dispassionately without aiming at fruits. At this stage, there is nothing unknown to him. He acts for the divine in itself and in the world, for the Divine in all. A spiritual Ananda flows into the body and inundates cell and tissue, so that a total transformation takes place. Sri Aurobindo visualised that this totally transformed man as a Gnostic being emerges into a race not as a single individual, but as societies in future.

Sri Aurobindo's view that one can choose his birth is queer and incredible. Further, although we discern some novelty in his view that re-birth is to be understood as a progress from man's physical existence to spiritual existence and not transmigration of the soul from one body to another, it is too radical to be acceptable.

We need to appreciate his optimism for the emergence of a better human race - the race of Gnostic beings, at a time when the entire world is gripped by terrorism, violence,
vandalism, religious intolerance, international conflagration. A weak-mind, a pessimistic mind would lead to the conclusion that there is no salvation for mankind, he has no other alternative except to live in the midst of fear, insecurity and be prepared to perish at any moment. But, Sri Aurobindo's idea of a 'Gnostic society' in the contemporary times reeling under the weight of fear and insecurity is a symbol of hope and confidence; it stands out like a Oasis in the desert. Man needs this optimism and he lives by such hope for a better future.