

SOME CENTRAL THEMES IN SRI AUROBINDO'S MAJOR WORKS

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Some of the major works of Sri Aurobindo can be listed as *Savitri*, *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *The Synthesis of Yoga* and the *Letters on Yoga*. *Savitri* is the poetic rendering of *The Life Divine*; the two of which constitute the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. *The Secret of the Veda* introduces us to the philosophical roots or the origins of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and gives us the insights into the language that Sri Aurobindo found to describe his spiritual experiences. It can even be said that *Savitri* is the translation of Sri Aurobindo's experience of the Vedas in the English language. *The Synthesis of Yoga* deals with the psychology and application of this philosophy, while the *Letters on Yoga* serve as a day-to-day guide for its practice. The central themes proposed by Sri Aurobindo for the first time in the spiritual history of the earth are as follows:

1. **Concept of Involution and Evolution of Consciousness:** Involution is the process by which the Absolute Reality or the Samam Brahman / Sachichidananda, through the various steps of manifestation, limits itself successively and descends through many grades of consciousness, viz. the Supramental, the Overmental, the Mental, the Vital and finally culminates in the Physical Consciousness. Evolution is the reverse movement, the upward march of this Physical Consciousness back into its Source. It is the progressive development from the first inconscience in matter into life (movement, sensation, etc. and living physical beings), to mind (in conscious being, animals, including the human, the self-conscious thinking animal), to spiritualized mind, culminating in Supermind, the Truth Consciousness (as Supramental individuals, leading to a Supramental, i.e. a divine life on earth.)
2. **Concept of the Dynamic Truth or Supermind:** The crux of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, its recurring theme and its culmination is the Dynamic Truth, the Supermind that can descend into matter and divinise Life on earth. This concept of the Supermind existed in the Vedas and also finds a brief mention in the Upanishads but is lost in the later texts. According to Upanishads, those who ascended into the rays of the Sun, the *Svar*, or the *trirochanas* – the illumined regions of the Mind between the Supermind and the human intelligence, namely, The Intuitive mind,

The Overmind and the Overmental Gnosis regions could come back but those who crossed the gates of the Sun never returned (Chandogya Upanishad). The Vedic Rishis envisaged the ascent into the Supermind but not the descent and the organisation of the Supermind here on earth. Sri Aurobindo enabled the descent of this Supramental Truth, and established it in the earth's consciousness. Some of the properties of the Supermind, as enlisted by Sri Aurobindo include:

- a. Knowledge by Identity: "When it (the Supramental Consciousness) sees anything as an object of knowledge, it yet sees it as itself and in itself, and not as a thing other than or divided from it about which therefore it would at first be ignorant of the nature, constitution and workings and have to learn about them, as the mind is at first ignorant of its object and has to learn about it because the mind is separated from its object and regards and senses and meets it as something other than itself and external to its own being." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 21, p. 757)
- b. Total Knowledge: Supramental vision is transcendental, universal and individual simultaneously. "It knows rightly the relative because it knows the Absolute and all the absolutes to which all the relatives refer back and of which they are the partial or modified or suppressed figures." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 21, p. 758)
- c. It contains all knowledge in itself. "All below that from overmind to Matter is Ignorance – an Ignorance growing from level to level towards the full knowledge." (*Letters On Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 19)
- d. Oneness of movement of Knowledge, Will, Love and Action in a state of intimate fusion as it has the vision of the three times, *trikaladrishti*, seeing them as an indivisible movement and sees too each containing the others.

3. Psychisation, Spiritualisation and Supramentalisation: The evolution of the present levels of consciousness into this Supramental Truth can be progressively achieved through the triple process of Psychisation, Spiritualisation and Supramentalisation. The Psychic entity is the Divine spark in us, which through various lifetimes grows into an independent being, the Psychic Being. Psychisation is the coming forward of this Psychic Being, breaking through the veil of the mental, vital and physical personalities dominant in man, subordinating this triple world of ignorance of the mind, life and body to itself and becoming the leader of our lives. This is the first stage of yoga where the cleavage of the Ego and the True Self takes place and the True Self or Soul becomes the master of Nature. "In psychic transformation all is in contact with

the Divine through the individual psychic consciousness." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, p. 95) Spiritualisation is the next step wherein having realised the True Self in oneself, one sees that same Self everywhere, in all manifestation. It also called Universalisation or Realisation of the Cosmic Being and results in the opening up of the Mind to ranges above it. "Spiritualisation means the descent of the higher peace, force, light, knowledge, purity, Ananda etc. which belong to any of the higher planes from Higher Mind to Overmind." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 106) "In spiritual transformation all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, p. 95) The third and the crowning step is Supramentalisation, which involves the ascent to the supermind and the bringing down of it into the mind, life and body so that they may transform. In the supramental consciousness, "all becomes supramentalised in the divine Gnostic consciousness. It is only with this that there can begin the complete transformation of mind, life and body – in my sense of completeness." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 95)

4. **Divine Fulfillment of Life: Physical Transformation or Physical Immortality:** So far the immortality sought in the spiritual history of India has been the immortality of Consciousness, which constitutes in the Liberation of the Soul merging into the Transcendental Being. For the first time, Sri Aurobindo introduces the concept of Physical Immortality or Physical Transformation wherein not only would the consciousness be liberated, but also transformed; the very physical cells of our bodies would undergo a change, a transmutation of properties and a radical transformation. "Because it aims not at a departure out of world and life into Heaven or Nirvana, but as a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate and incidental, but as a distinct and central object... Here ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent that is the stamp and the seal of the sadhana." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 100)
5. **Integral Yoga:** Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is integral in its aim and its means. Here, the aim is that of total and integral change of the consciousness and nature. It requires the taking up all the aspects of the human being, the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual and educating them through the triple path of Yoga of Knowledge, Yoga of Love and Yoga of Works towards their Perfection. It includes the essence of all the approaches of the past and exceeds them. There is no

element left untouched, no movement left unpurified. Every moment and every movement is offered at the altar of the Sacrificial Fire, Agni, to be transmuted into its Divine counterpart.

6. **Collective and not Individual Achievement Alone:** The aim of this Yoga is not only individual perfection and realization for the sake of the individual, "but something to be gained for the earth consciousness here." This transformation is impossible through individual solitary transformation unconcerned with the work of the earth. "Also, no individual human being can by his own power alone work out the transformation, nor is it the object of the yoga to create an individual superman here and there. The object of the yoga is to bring down the Supramental consciousness on earth, to fix it there, to create a new race with the principle of the Supramental consciousness governing the inner and outer individual and collective life. That force accepted by individual after individual according to their preparation would establish the Supramental consciousness in the physical world and so create a nucleus for its own expansion." (*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, p. 14)

These are some of the central themes discussed in Sri Aurobindo's major works. It can be seen that all the tenets proposed are novel and radical and any attempt to practise them is akin to a spiritual adventure for they have never been attempted before. They have been revealed to the humankind for the first time in the spiritual history of the world. To know them and to aspire to live them is a matter of rare honour and privilege, a direct action of the Grace of the Divine!

By studying carefully what Sri Aurobindo has said on *all subjects* one can easily reach a complete knowledge of the things of this world.

THE MOTHER
CWM, Volume 13, p. 24