

**Deliberations on**  
*The Life Divine*

(Chapterwise Summary Talks)

Volume Three

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**Deliberations on *The Life Divine*  
(Chapterwise Summary Talks)**

**Volume Three  
Book One: Chapters XIII-XVIII**

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Puducherry, India**



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*Dedicated to  
my Amma*

***V. Radha Reddy***

*One who supports me  
in my spiritual endeavour...*



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This volume may have many defects, inaccuracies etc. and it may attract many critical comments from the readers, but for me what matters is that this book is a form of expressing my love for the Mother and my adoration for Sri Aurobindo.

This book is my puja offering to Them. In Their acceptance is my reward.

## CHAPTER XIII

# The Divine Maya

Those who have any contact with Indian philosophy will find that the word 'Maya' is a most mysterious one and often used in Indian philosophy and Indian life. Wherever we find that something is inexplicable, we simply say it is the Lord's Maya. Either we say that this world or life is the Maya of the Divine or all this is the Lila of the Divine. The ordinary man in India seems to be a great philosopher, always using such philosophical terms as Maya and Lila! I suppose at the psychological level it is a great solace to take refuge in these philosophical terms. It is the philosophers who seem to rack their brains about Maya. The word has, in fact, perturbed even the great thinkers. With the explanation given by Sri Aurobindo this concept has gained immense clarification.

Indeed, Maya is a very elusive term. Philosophers have explained that the Divine has created this world out of Maya. In the Gita, Sri Krishna says, "I have created this world out of my Maya." So what is this Maya?

To help explain, let us take a look at the process of creativity. How does any creative work like writing poetry, drama or something of this nature happen? In fact, a great painter, or any artist for that matter, brings forth what is latent in him. It is a reflection of the level of his own consciousness, and that is why consciousness becomes the base of all creativity.

Let us take an apt example. People are usually very impressed by modern painters, so one day a disciple asked the Mother about modern painting. She narrated a real life story which went something like this. She knew a painter who was a student of Gustave Moreau. Although he had great talent, his paintings were not selling and he was very poor. To help him, a friend sent an art dealer to him to look at his paintings.

The art dealer looked at all his best paintings which were displayed on the walls and on the floor of the artist's studio, but could find nothing that he thought could be sold. Just as the dealer was about to leave, he noticed in one corner a canvass filled with daubs of various bright colours in no particular shape or pattern. The dealer said, "Here is something magnificent; if you have paintings like this and I will buy them and make you famous." What was the painting? The painter explained that it was not a painting; it was only the scrapings of the paint from his palette that he cleaned the night before. The dealer told him, "Keep that between you and me, but give me paintings like this and I will sell them." The Mother explained that the painter was so poor that he agreed to make paintings in the same style for this dealer, and he became very famous in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

So this is modern art, where there seems to be no reflection of a deeper spiritual truth. What it reflects is precisely the artist's subconscious mind, his confused feelings and thoughts, his troubled consciousness. There seems to be no clarity or purpose anywhere. So what the modern artist does or what the classical artist has done only reflects his state of consciousness.

To resume with this chapter's explanation, we see that Sri Aurobindo begins by saying that all these forms of creation, all the rhythms of creation, are nothing but the forms of one conscious force, created out of the great delight of existence. And then he adds,

if there is any goal, any completeness towards which things tend, then it can only be the completeness,—in the individual and in the whole which the individuals constitute,—of its self-existence, of its power and consciousness and of its delight of being.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the emergence of the infinite consciousness in the individual form is the only final goal possible for all these finite forms.

The Supreme, Sachchidananda, out of the infinite possibilities of self-expression, could have created this world any way he wanted. But his choice was to bring himself out of the darkest opposite possibility. That was the most challenging thing. You see, to manifest himself when everything is beautiful and good is easy, but when there are difficulties the challenge becomes greater. Sri Aurobindo says that

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Sachchidananda became the very opposite, and out of the inconscience, darkness, and falsehood, he is now manifesting himself gradually and fully through the process of evolution. And what is the end of this evolution? All that is there in the original Existence, Conscious-force and Ananda must manifest fully in the individual and in the collective. That is the aim and purport of evolution.

Now the next question is, how can it be possible that the goal of this evolution is that man will one day become divine? Is man capable, does he have the capacity? Is he not a bundle of weakness, limitations and evil or anti-divine forces? This is where Sri Aurobindo's theory of Involution helps us to understand the nature and destiny of man. The first step of Involution is self-absorption. Self-absorption means that the supreme Spirit becomes Matter and in this Matter he loses himself. He becomes so deeply absorbed, in Matter is that he becomes totally lost to his own self-consciousness. That is why we call it self-absorption. Then begins the evolution. And what is the secret of evolution? It is self-emergence; there is this emergence or a coming forth of the Divine, in three steps: the formal being, the living being, and the thinking being. So the self-emergence or evolution has three forms, Formal being is Matter; Living being is all the forms of Life; Thinking being is Man himself. Then there is the next step, that of self-realisation. Involution is the stage of self-absorption of the Self and evolution is that of self-emergence. On this stage, It is the Divine who is revealing himself, and therefore it is the Supreme who is really experiencing this world. After the emergence of the Self through Mind, there is still another step, that of self-realisation. In the last of these three steps the Self will completely take over all manifestation—that is the stage or level of the gnostic beings.

This is very much in brief, and I am not going too deep into the philosophy of involution and evolution at this point, because we are concentrating on the idea of Maya, but Sri Aurobindo mentions that this is the process and aim behind Maya with which we have to start.

Sri Aurobindo contends that we have the key to the riddle, but we have still to find the lock in which it will turn. We know the Reality of the universe, but we do not yet know the process by which the Reality has turned itself into this phenomenon. What is the process? This

is where Sri Aurobindo is unique in his contribution to philosophy. We may find some of the process of creation in Western philosophy and some of it in our ancient Indian philosophy, but Sri Aurobindo presents a radically new explanation of the process of the becoming of the universe. Most of the philosophers in India—including the great Shankaracharya, Madhwacharya and Ramanujacharya—have not envisioned this important process of involution and evolution.

Here an important question arises: if there is a law, or rhythm, or a process of the becoming of the universe, is there any consciousness behind it? A scientist, for example, would say it is energy that has created or become this world. But we have seen in the previous chapters of *The Life Divine* that this infinite force has got an infinite consciousness behind it, that there is a great intelligence behind what is happening in the universe. So it cannot be said that it is only an infinite force without any intelligence behind it. On the contrary, it is—

self-determining power in universal consciousness, a capacity in self-awareness of infinite existence to perceive a certain Truth in itself and direct its force of creation along the line of that Truth, which has presided over the cosmic manifestation.<sup>3</sup>

But this is still too theoretical, philosophical or metaphysical. Sri Aurobindo is interested in finding out how it all became. But you might say why are we asking this question? The Bible says that God said, “Let there be Light and there was Light.” So God can create directly. Why does he need a process or an intermediary consciousness? We can also say that Brahman has become this world, that he decided to bring forth this universe and he simply brought it forth. But Sri Aurobindo does not seem to be satisfied with this argument.

What do we see in this simple sentence? When God said, “Let there be Light,” he could have said “Let there be Sweetness, Let there be Beauty, Let there be Ananda, Let there be Darkness,” or a million other things, but he did not say that. He said “Let there be Light.” So what has happened? Out of the millions of things which could be there, there has been a selection. That is the first step—out of the infinite possibilities God has chosen one particular mode of becoming. He said “Let there be Light.” And when he said that, something happened, something

became; there was a process that took place. It is not just saying, “Let there be Light,” and there was Light!

The most important sentence in this chapter is this:

Infinite consciousness in its infinite action can produce only infinite results; to settle upon a fixed Truth or order of truths and build a world in conformity with that which is fixed, demands a selective faculty of knowledge commissioned to shape finite appearance out of the infinite Reality.<sup>4</sup>

First he says that “Infinite consciousness in its infinite action can produce only infinite results...” Take, for example, a dramatist. When Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* or *Othello*, *King Lear* or *Macbeth*, what did he do? When he sat down to write he had many possibilities in front of him. Out of those possibilities, he said to himself: I will write a drama on the theme of *Macbeth*. So what has he done first? Out of the many possibilities, he selected one possibility on which to write. So too the Divine made a selection of one possibility out of the infinite possibilities of self-manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo continues his sentence with this: “to settle upon a fixed Truth or order of truths and build a world in conformity with that which is fixed...” Once the Divine selects he has to proceed along with that selection. If Shakespeare had said that he will write *Macbeth*, he cannot bring in the character of Hamlet or King Lear into that, because they do not fit. They have no relevance and no reference to *Macbeth*. They are there as realities: Hamlet is a reality, King Lear is a reality. But they do not come into the play called *Macbeth* because they have no direct relevance there. Shakespeare has to disregard these other characters and take only *Macbeth* and all the characters that fit into *Macbeth*. Similarly, the supreme Divine has to select one possibility, and work out an order of truths according to this possibility, disregarding all other possibilities.

Just like Shakespeare who presents his drama through Acts 1 to 5, similarly, the Divine also seems to present his divine drama through different Acts! We have gone through Act 1, the stage of matter, Act 2, of flora, Act 3, of animals, Act 4, of man. In a Shakespearean drama there are only five acts—the fifth is the finale, the conclusion. Our

divine drama is also awaiting Act 5, the climax of the supramental race. So, this is how there is an ordered self-revelation of the Supreme. Shakespeare could not have put Act 5 first, or Act 1 in the third place. That is what Sri Aurobindo talks about ‘an order of truths’.

And then the sentence concludes: “...demands a selective faculty of knowledge commissioned to shape finite appearance out of the infinite Reality.” This is an important sentence: it says that there is a selection and a process of ordered truths that follow from that selection. There is a perfect order in this creation: there is the Supermind, the overmind, the intuitive mind, the illumined mind, the higher mind, and mind. This is what we call the ordered truths. We will come to that in greater detail later, but this is what we have to understand as the process of the becoming of the universe. All this process, in one word, is the divine Maya. Maya is, as he calls it here, the ‘selective faculty of knowledge’, or the faculty of the Divine which selects and creates in an ordered fashion.

For Sri Aurobindo Maya is not illusion. *Ma* means “to measure,” and very interestingly even in the Sanskrit word ‘*mata*’ or the Hindi word ‘*ma*’, as the human mother, you can see how mother is also a “measurer” in the sense that she gives birth to a finite, limited form. The Divine Mother, Aditi, is called *Mata* because she has “measured” the Supreme out of the unmanifest into manifestation. Aditi has created this world, and “created” means she has delimited the supreme Sachchidananda into this limited universe. That is why she is called *Ma*, or *Mata*. This divine Maya of the Vedic Rishis becomes the Supermind in Sri Aurobindo. They are basically the same.

Sri Aurobindo says this power is to measure out and delimit:

This power was known to the Vedic seers by the name of Maya. Maya meant for them the power of infinite consciousness to comprehend, contain in itself and measure out, that is to say, to form—for form is delimitation—Name and Shape out of the vast illimitable Truth of infinite existence.<sup>5</sup>

We have arrived at the definition of divine Maya, but we have not yet explained the word ‘divine’ in this context. We have understood the word Maya, but why is it that Sri Aurobindo is calling it the ‘Divine

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Maya? He has particularly used the word 'divine'; so, obviously, he has something in mind. That means there is another Maya which is not divine; otherwise he would not have said 'divine' Maya. There are therefore two kinds of Mayas—divine and undivine.

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo makes a distinct analysis of the higher Maya and the lower Maya. The higher Maya is called the divine Maya. What is the characteristic of this divine Maya? The divine Maya is that force and consciousness which apparently separates Sachchidananda, which otherwise is the one unitarian consciousness; it is indivisible, inseparable. But the divine Maya apparently separates it into Sat, plus Chit-Tapas, plus Ananda. A kind of distinction comes into the unitary consciousness. It is only a distinction, not a division. It is like saying if you see one black line going across the page in my hand, it does not mean the paper has been divided into two. We can distinguish saying that there is one right side and one left side on this page, but the page is not split into two. That is what we mean by a distinction which is not a division, not a separation. So Sat and Chit and Ananda can now be recognised as separate entities; this is the power of the divine Maya.

Next we could put the question to Sri Aurobindo: "Where is this Maya coming from?" Of course, he doesn't reply: "from outside of Sachchidananda." Does he then say: "from within Sachchidananda?" Yes, he says it is part and parcel of Sachchidananda itself. Can you separate fire from heat and light? No, you cannot, and yet the very word 'fire' denotes heat and light. So it is not a question of indivisibility, because Sri Aurobindo's concept of Sachchidananda is not one of a unitarian aspect of indivisibility or immutability. It is a multifaceted Divinity; it has got a million facets to it; it does not fight shy of facets. So it is not just one aspect of peace, or joy, or compassion or delight. It is like a diamond having a hundred different facets. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that Maya is 'within' Sachchidananda, it is an indivisible part of it.

As we will see in the later chapters on Sat, Chit, and Ananda, only one of these aspects is Maya. Out of the three aspects which one is Maya? Actually, it is the Chit that is the source of Maya. Why? Remember that the function of Maya is to bring forth forms out of Sachchidananda, and that which gives forms is the Chit-Tapas. So Maya is basically

nothing but the Chit-Tapas. We can have different names for it: in the Vedic language the divine Maya is the Aditi, in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga the divine Maya is the Supermind, and for many devotees the divine Maya is simply the Divine Mother herself. It is the creative consciousness-force. So let us not be confused by the word Maya. This power and consciousness are inseparable parts of Sachchidananda. So Maya is within as a potential. When Sachchidananda says "I wish to become," then Maya or the Chit-Tapas is brought forth which then becomes this creation.

Let us move on to get a fuller picture of this idea. Sri Aurobindo says:

It is by Maya that static truth of essential being becomes ordered truth of active being,—or, to put it in more metaphysical language, out of the supreme being in which all is all without barrier of separative consciousness emerges the phenomenal being in which all is in each and each is in all for the play of existence...<sup>6</sup>

So what do we understand of this 'separative consciousness'? We have here three stages: first "all is all," second "all is in each," and third "each is in all." Now "all is all" is Sachchidananda undivided. That means it is the state of consciousness where there is not yet any separation or division, that is, the multiplicity has not yet come in, or the multiplicity is not yet born. "All is all" means there is one supreme consciousness, and there is no multiplicity. Then, in the second stage, where "all is in each" multiplicity comes in. So "all" means the consciousness of unity, or oneness. This consciousness of unity still pervades all the multiplicity or individuals. There is no separation, but there is demarcation. Now, the third stage is "each is in all," where each individual has the sense of the oneness. So first there is complete undifferentiated unity. Next, the unity is still strong, but there are demarcations of the individual beings. These demarcations are Jivatmans. The third level is where there is a separation and individuals are born, but they feel they are united, they are not separated. So this is the process of creation—how oneness becomes differentiation and that differentiation becomes the individual yet with the sense of oneness. The next step is the lower Maya or mental Maya, the Maya of the Mind. Strictly speaking, it is the overmental Maya. What does it mean? Here

Sri Aurobindo defines it:

This play of all in each and each in all is concealed at first from us by the mental play or the illusion of Maya which persuades each that he is in all but not all in him and that he is in all as a separated being not as a being always inseparably one with the rest of existence.<sup>7</sup>

Now what is this mental Maya? It is that consciousness in which we lose completely the sense of unity. That means we become totally separated individuals forgetting any sense of oneness around us. We become completely separated individuals. That is why we call this mental Maya, because Maya is that which measures and separates. But the difference between this and the higher level is that in the divine Maya there is not a complete division. But on the level of the Mind, in the mental consciousness, separation and division are complete. Therefore, the real truth of our true being is forgotten. We are not conscious that all is all, all is in each, and each is in all. The only thing that exists is myself: "I am the center of the universe." I do not see that all of you are part of me. I have only an egoistic kind of oneness, thinking that I am in you, but you are not in me. That is the sorry state of affairs with this mental consciousness which completely separates the individual from other individuals.

Let us take up the concept of Maya from the angle of the Advaita Vedantin who understands Maya as illusion. That is very important, because Shankaracharya explains that Brahman did not bring about this world. Brahman cannot create this world—how interesting! He says how can the unchanging Brahman change himself into this phenomenal world? If he does then he is not Brahman. So he went strictly by the definition of Brahman as the One who is unchangeable, immutable. That which is unchangeable cannot change.

So if Brahman has did not create this world, then who created it? Here, he comes with the explanation that it is Maya which has thrown this world upon Brahman. For example, imagine that from a film projector we throw images on a screen, and Brahman is that white immutable, unchangeable, pure screen; it is not affected by the images, it remains pure. But as long as there are images projected onto it, Brahman seems to be full of colour, activity, qualities etc. But if we stop operating the projector, what do we get? We get back the

pure white screen of Brahman. So Shankaracharya very astutely kept Brahman unchangeable, immutable, and pure, and at the same time he has shown the possibility of the creation which is this world, by way of the projector, or the Maya. So one's realisation occurs the moment when one realises that this world is not real, that it does not exist, it is only a projection of Avidya, a projection of our ignorance.

Earlier we were given an example of how Shankaracharya rejects all works in this world, because works bind us to the world. The more we work the more we get involved in ignorance. So, he recommends us not to work; all work is useless. Withdraw from the world; meditate upon Brahman and one day we will suddenly realise that when we switch off this projector or Maya, there is only the white screen of Brahman!

But then the question arises: "Where did the 'projector' come from? How did it come about?" If we say the 'projector' is outside the 'screen', then we get into trouble because that means there are two realities, Brahman and Maya, which is self-contradictory, because Shankaracharya says there exists the Brahman alone. So logically it cannot be outside Brahman. Then where is it?

If it is within Brahman then too there arises a controversy. Can one who is unchanging have identity called Maya within himself? The moment there are two entities within Brahman, there is no more the pure Brahman, because there is division in Brahman—there is Brahman and Maya. That means, if Maya is within Brahman, then Brahman is divisible and holding a false force within him.! Thus Shankaracharya seems to fall in a trap because Maya is neither outside Brahman nor within him.

Then Shankaracharya explains that Maya is '*anirvacanīya*', meaning 'that which cannot be described'. So he seems to tell us, 'You cannot describe Maya. Especially with your mental terms you cannot describe it, you won't understand.' So, he says it is *anirvacanīya*, that which cannot be described at all. That is how he argues about this tangled position of Maya.

Before I proceed further with the passage in *The Life Divine*, I would like to take up a passage from the Bhagavad Gita. Here you will see a different concept of Maya. This concept has been taken up by the Upanishads, the Vedas and the Gita, not to mention Shankaracharya. It has been one of the favourite topics of every great philosopher. Thanks

to the distinction Sri Aurobindo makes between the higher and the lower Maya, we get a better understanding of the confusion that the concept of Maya creates in our minds.

The Gita speaks of Maya, but only as a bewildering partial consciousness which loses hold of the complete reality, and lives in the phenomena of mobile Nature and has no sight of the Spirit of which she is the active Power, *me prakritih*. When we transcend this Maya, the world does not disappear; it only changes its whole heart of meaning. In the spiritual vision, we find not that all this world does not really exist, but rather that all is, but with a sense quite other than its present mistaken significance: all is self and soul and nature of the Godhead, all is Vasudeva.<sup>8</sup>

Now when we come to the Gita, we have a different concept again. As we have said—to give the exact words—it is a “bewildering partial consciousness.” So Maya is a partial consciousness, but this comes later. In the beginning he calls it ‘*mama maya*’, it is ‘my’ Maya. Sri Krishna says, “Out of my Maya I have created the world,” and yet, there is also another partial consciousness which he says separates us from the total knowledge. So Sri Aurobindo’s concept of Maya is in a way already found in the Gita. In Sri Aurobindo’s concept we have different terms such as the higher Maya and the lower Maya which are similar to what the Gita calls the higher Prakriti and the lower Prakriti.

We should remember that Sri Krishna was not a philosopher per se; he gave his vision in the Gita out of his overmental consciousness and intuition. It is Sri Aurobindo who in his book *Essays on the Gita* translates the overmental vision into intellectual terms. That is why for those who want to understand the Bhagavad Gita, there is no greater book than *Essays on the Gita*. It is as if Sri Krishna gave the Gita first to Arjuna and then to Sri Aurobindo! It is an extraordinary explanation of the Gita. Everything is there in *Essays on the Gita*; we have metaphysics, philosophy, ethics, and psychology. Those notions which are not clear in the Gita, Sri Aurobindo explains them in clear rational terms. That is why reading *Essays on the Gita* before taking up *The Life Divine* could be of great help. But we should not think that *Essays on the Gita* is a book we can just read through. It is highly philosophical

and metaphysical. People in India think they know the Gita just because they can recite some verses from memory. But each of these verses is deep philosophy and it is only in *Essays on the Gita* that we get the real substance of the Gita. Sri Aurobindo says,

The world for the Gita is real, a creation of the Lord, a power of the Eternal, a manifestation from the Parabrahman, and even this lower nature of the triple Maya is a derivation from the supreme divine Nature.... For the Gita insists that we can and should, while we live, be conscious in the self and its silence and yet act with power in the world of Nature.<sup>9</sup>

Sri Krishna says when you see the Brahman, or when you have the realisation of the Purushottama, you see the world with different eyes, with a deeper understanding, and you begin to see the will, the plan, and the work of the Supreme in this world. Therefore, Sri Krishna would say after the realisation of Purushottama that you must continue to work in this world, for the sake of *Loka Sangraha*, for the welfare of humanity.

To return to our discussion, in the Gita we have seen that Maya is referred to as a partial consciousness. Now, this comes very close to Sri Aurobindo, because the mental Maya is ignorance, and ignorance means that you are aware only of yourself and individuals but not the totality. If we can understand this division between the lower and the higher Maya then we can really understand the making or the formation of this world. This mental Maya and the divine Maya are two stages in our existence. I will read out this very important line again:

The lower, present and deluding mental Maya has first to be embraced, then to be overcome; for it is God's play with division and darkness and limitation, desire and strife and suffering in which He subjects Himself to the Force that has come out of Himself and by her obscure suffers Himself to be obscured.<sup>10</sup>

This is a very interesting distinction he makes—this mental Maya is that state where force dominates consciousness. That is a new idea. Prakriti dominates over Purusha. This is why in all of us the Purusha, the soul, the Atman, is veiled behind and Prakriti dominates our

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nature. He calls this “God’s play with division and darkness and limitation.” What is the play? He gives full freedom to Prakriti, to act as she wants because, as we have seen, the principle of creation is freedom. He wants Prakriti or the outer force to develop as much as it can. The Purusha remains quiet and inactive, only guiding, and witnessing, but not interfering. This is the stage of mental Maya.

But Sri Aurobindo writes here that all of us have first to embrace this mental Maya and then we must overcome it. ‘Embrace’ it means that we have to live and participate in this world. We have to go through this experience of life where we have division because even in this division, there is a meaning of the Immutable. And therefore he would say that we should not escape this lower life. It is a kind of training, a period of maturation, a period of effort and sadhana which is needed in order to attain and sustain the higher Maya, the divine Maya. Without embracing the lower Maya you cannot reach the integral reality. In fact, the same idea is in the Upanishads. The Sachchidananda consciousness has been directly experienced by some yogis. For example, Shankaracharya experienced the Brahman consciousness, but ultimately professed that this world is an illusion. This is the danger of not going through the ‘embrace’. We must first conquer the lower nature, otherwise by going straight to the Brahman consciousness we may reject this world as Maya or illusion. So Sri Aurobindo and the Upanishads tell us to learn to live first in this lower Maya. The lower Maya means this world of mental consciousness, where the predominant factor is division, where the principle dynamics is that of energy, force, and not the supreme Purusha or the Atman. They will come only at the second level. Here is what the Isha Upanishad says:

Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance,  
they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the  
Knowledge alone.<sup>11</sup>

The distinction between the higher and lower Maya, or the Divine and mental Maya, is important and needs to be understood well. A lot of the classical thinkers have proposed that it may be the mental Maya which is the cause or creator of this world. There is a truth in that, the truth being that there are different levels or different stages

of creation—the Supermind, Overmind, intuitive mind, illumined mind, higher mind and mind. The Supermind is the divine Maya. The next involutory step downwards is the Overmental consciousness, where for the first time the individuals begin to recognise themselves as separate. So actually, this is the mental Maya, the birth of ignorance. Ignorance means separative knowledge, which starts at the overmental level and becomes complete at the mental level. As it goes down in the involutory stages, at each level, the difference becomes greater and at the mental level it is completely separate. So when the illusionist philosophies said that “... the mental Maya, or perhaps the Overmind, is the creatrix of the world...” there is a meaning although mental Maya is not the ultimate creator in the true sense. The slow division began at the level of Overmind, and on the level of mind it is complete. So, we can conclude that:

... Mind is only one of His instruments in the descent and the ascent. It is an instrument of the descending creation, not the secret creatrix,—a transitional stage in the ascent, not our high original source and the consummate term of cosmic existence.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of this conclusion, we realise that “Mind is not sufficient to explain existence in the universe.” To deepen our understanding of this conclusion, it would be important to follow the characteristic of Mind as described by Sri Aurobindo in this very chapter:

But Mind is not a faculty of knowledge nor an instrument of omniscience; it is a faculty for the seeking of knowledge, for expressing as much as it can gain of it in certain forms of a relative thought and for using it towards certain capacities of action. Even when it finds, it does not possess; it only keeps a certain fund of current coin of Truth—not Truth itself—in the bank of Memory to draw upon according to its needs. For Mind is that which does not know, which tries to know and which never knows except as in a glass darkly. It is the power which interprets truth of universal existence for the practical uses of a certain order of things; it is not the power which knows and guides that existence and therefore it cannot be the power which created or manifested it.<sup>13</sup>

Suppose we have a brilliant mind, a mind which has tremendous imaginative capacity, rational thinking etc. Say we pool all the best minds together—Einstein's, Shakespeare's and many others—and we create a super brilliant mind. Can that mind be called a creatrix mind? Sri Aurobindo would say “no,” because even if it is a very powerful mind, made up of all the greatest scientists and artists put together, still it is a mind which receives. Maybe that kind of powerful mind can receive more knowledge, greater inspiration, a subtler knowledge, but it is still a receptive instrument. For example, at home my TV can catch BBC, CNN, Star Plus, Doordarshan etc. Some channels I receive better than others and some other channels I don't get as good as the others because there may be more or less interference between the transmission and the reception, and the receiving capacity is limited. Similarly, if it is a very powerful mind, it could get wonderful intuitions, but still it remains always as a receiver and not as a creator of knowledge.

In any case, creation can be achieved only by that consciousness which is omniscient. Without omniscience, which means having all knowledge simultaneously—knowledge of the past, present and future—any creation of the universe is not possible, at least logically. What is omniscient is also omnipotent; they go together. You cannot just have knowledge and not power. That is the characteristic of Supermind; it has both knowledge and power. Mind may have knowledge regarding one subject but not the power to manifest it. Or sometimes you want to do something, but don't have the necessary knowledge. Supermind is that consciousness which is both omniscient and omnipotent. So Sri Aurobindo would say that this world can be created only by the supramental consciousness or the divine Maya, which is both omniscient and omnipotent.

He further explains that if and when we ascend beyond mind, we will see that beyond this entire creation there is one powerful Truth and a powerful Will which is realising itself. This powerful truth is Sachchidananda. This powerful will is Chit-Tapas, which is realising itself through the constancy of Ananda. Thus it can be said that “The world expresses a foreseen Truth, obeys a predetermining Will, realises an original formative self-vision,—it is the growing image of a divine creation.”<sup>14</sup>

In that way this entire world is predetermined—that is very important to understand. It is a predetermined will realising “an original formative self-vision.” We will discuss these ideas at length later when we take up the chapters on Supermind. Let us just say for now that this world, whether we like it or not, is predetermined. There is a self-vision of the Supermind which is working itself out. We may think that if it is all predetermined, then there is no freedom in this world. But from the spiritual point of view, the whole world, every activity, down to every detail, has been foreseen in the Supermind. It has been previsioned and forecast in the supramental vision.

Let us not get into the small incidents, asking whether my breakfast today was predetermined by Supermind? But largely, the entire rhythm of this world, and the details of our life have been predetermined. Now, we may wonder, why instead of being among the beautiful, green romantic forests of Nainital or any other wonderful place we have come to this hot place? That also was predetermined. Don't think that we have come here by chance. Now, we may not like this. It all depends on the attitude with which we want to look at life. If we believe this world is self-becoming of Brahman, there cannot be anything happening by chance, because there cannot be anything outside the Brahman consciousness. It is all within him, not only within him, but it is the first status of Supermind. It first conceives on the conceptual level, it makes a blueprint of this world, and then it manifests. That is what we are going to see in our next chapters on the Supermind as the Creator.

In *The Life Divine*, there are some chapters which are exclusively Aurobindonian. These questions of divine Maya, of conscious-force which we have seen till now, we could find them in the Vedas, a bit in Upanishads, and a bit in the Gita, but especially the next four chapters on the Supermind are peculiarly Aurobindonian.

We may choose to look at this question of creation from the angle of a creative consciousness or shakti or Conscious-Force. Unfortunately, there is little mention of Shakti in that in the Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita. Shakti is in the background and she does not get sufficient importance. Therefore the Gita always speaks of surrendering to the Purushottama. To get an overview of the evolution of Indian spirituality, we may say that we have had phases of spiritual evolution. The first phase laid a complete emphasis on the Purusha or the Purushottama,

and the Brahman aspect. Then, with the coming of Tantra, we had a great shift with the recognition of the Shakti aspect. But, it remained in the background, as is witnessed with rise of Saivism, Vaishnavism, and philosophies in India. There remained a dominance of the Purusha and Purushottama concepts. But in Sri Aurobindo there is a balance between and synthesis of Tantra and Vedanta, and he brings together both Brahman and Maya, or the Ishwara and the Ishwari. But he does not ask us to surrender to the Brahman or to the Purushottama, he asks us to surrender to the Mother, to the Shakti aspect. Why? Because it is the Shakti that does the work of the transformation of our nature.

If we want to escape from this world and live in a blissful state of consciousness, we don't perhaps need Sri Aurobindo's yoga. We can take up any yoga; there are hundreds of them, where each guru speaks of surrendering to God. The whole motive there is that of moksha, liberation. The thing is, most of these yogas and these philosophic systems tell us that moksha is the only way to escape from the miseries of the world. But, I wonder, if that is feasible at all!

Sri Aurobindo tells us right from the beginning to transform our nature, the external nature and not to escape from the difficulties of this life. And for this transformation it is the Shakti whose support is required. This world is the manifestation of the Chit, of Consciousness and it is only through the Chit that we can achieve this transformation. So he is very clear; if we want exclusively liberation, or moksha, we need not come to Integral Yoga. There are hundreds of different paths, some good and others not so good. But if we think "No, I want to transform my nature," then there may be only the Integral Yoga for us. If we are somewhat disappointed and disgusted with this terrible limited nature of ours—"What is the use of going inside? When I meditate, I can have my peace, but the moment I go to my office or workshop, or anywhere else, the old nature of tamas and rajas returns,"—then we can take to Integral Yoga. But, if we say, "No, I'm quite happy with myself, my nature," then nothing need bother us. Nobody will force us to change except may be ruthless circumstances. But if we are sincere, at some point we will feel, "What is this terrible thing, how come I can't become a transformed person? Why can't I have a quiet control over my nature?" When we begin to feel the necessity to change our nature, we won't be able to avoid the role of Shakti.

There are shaktis at different levels, so we ought not to confuse them. There is Shakti and shaktis. But Sri Aurobindo asks us to surrender only to the Supreme Divine Mother. If we say, “I don’t know who the Divine Mother is,” it doesn’t matter. If we know that we have to willingly surrender only to her, even not knowing her, we can start saying, “O Divine Mother, come into my being, transform me, transform my consciousness, and let me realise my psychic being.” It could be a mental prayer, a mental formation, but this mental formation, slowly as we go along, crystallises itself. When this happens, we begin to feel a Presence. We may or may not see the Form. Some may say, “I don’t even know the Mother’s Form.” Fine, it doesn’t matter. Even with a formless Presence we will feel that someone is near us, someone is around us, and we also feel someone is doing things for us, often without our asking. Slowly, we will see a form emerging through, and that form could be one that matches our own aspiration, our own tradition, our own cultural background, or our own religious ethos. So if you are from a Christian background, you may see Mother Mary in front of you or around you. The Divine will appear before us in the form that we want her to come. Somebody who is from another religion, Vaishnavism, for example, may see Radha, the Divine coming as Radha. It doesn’t matter in what form she comes. But if we can feel her presence it brings the transformative power of the Divine Shakti.

Times have changed, the Vedanta period is over; we need to transform the world, and transform ourselves. To escape from the world is an ancient ideal; even if we want, we cannot escape. The world is being transformed with such great rapidity that we are all caught up in it. That is why our lives are being crushed. All the resistances in us are being broken down. Sometimes we wonder, “Why is this happening? I was pretty cozy all my life. Yet now I feel as if the whole earth under me is shaken.” It is because that cozy stability of ignorance is shaken up, and we are being asked to move forward. We are asked to change ourselves. We are not only asked, but we are pressurised, and we don’t understand things sometimes. We blame our circumstances, we blame our boss, our family, but nobody is really responsible. The only responsibility is with the supramental consciousness which has undertaken the transformation of this

world. If we really don't want to be in this transformative yoga, then we have to plead with the Supermind, saying "Please leave me alone, I am quite comfortable with my ignorance." Otherwise, if there is one little iota of aspiration for a true spiritual life, we become candidates for spiritual transformation.

So it is a kind of blessing, but a blessing which in the beginning may seem to be torturous. We may get divided from our spouse, from our families, from our country, from our circumstances, but we must just keep on. We must try to see within, be quiet, and face all challenges boldly.

Long back when I was just twenty-four years old—I was in Auroville at the time—I wrote a letter to that Mother regarding a few things, and she said, "Change your nature." But a young man of twenty-four feels like he is the Prince Charming. "Why change my nature?" I asked myself! But that was the kind of battering with which she started beating me. All this external confidence is false; it is like the picture of Dorian Grey. Do you know the story of Dorian Grey? I faintly remember the story. There was a young man who used to paint, and he painted a beautiful, ideal picture of himself and hung it on the wall. Every time he entered his house, he would see it and think "I am that—all beautiful, all noble," and he would take great pride in it. But within himself he started becoming rotten by indulging in all kinds of immoral activities. Well, that is an error—this superficial judging of oneself. From Sri Aurobindo's "Thoughts and Aphorisms" we can understand the deeper source of this error:

The obstinate pertinacity with which we cling to our meager, fragmentary, night besieged and grief-besieged individual existence even while the unbroken bliss of our universal life calls to us, is one of the most amazing of God's mysteries. It is only equaled by the infinite blindness with which we cast a shadow of our ego over the whole world and call that the universal being. These two darknesses are the very essence and potency of Maya.<sup>15</sup>

With this quote, we return to our discussion on Maya. There are two things that are the essence of this lower Maya, the first one is a sense of individual separation, and the second is that we cast a shadow of our

ego on the universe and call that our universal being. That is how we mistranslate the “each in all.” I feel I am all this, not as a being connected to the universal being, but all the universe as an extension of my being.

To give a simple example, imagine a father at home with his wife, children, parents etc. He says, “What I say is the law here.” He feels that the children, wife, and all the members in the house are extensions of his ego. He says to himself and to all of them, “You are all my possessions,” like a dictator. He says, “I am the law,” which means that he puts his ego first. He does not see the real oneness, he sees the false extension. This is the nature of the mental Maya.

It is but natural that “So long as we work only through the mentality governed by appearances, this something beyond and behind and yet always immanent can be only an inference or a presence vaguely felt.”<sup>16</sup>

It is only when we go beyond this mentality that we realise that the source of “Reason is identical with the Knowledge that acts as Law in the world. This Knowledge determines its own law sovereignly because it knows what has been, is and will be and it knows because it is eternally, and infinitely cognises itself. Being that is infinite consciousness, infinite consciousness that is omnipotent force, when it makes a world,—that is to say, a harmony of itself,—its object of consciousness, becomes seizable by our thought as a cosmic existence that knows its own truth and realises in forms that which it knows.”<sup>17</sup>

This Knowledge that determines its own Law of action is none else but the Supermind, the Creator, about which we shall study in detail in the next chapter.

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### Lecture Notes

- I. All creation is the self–manifestation of the absolute:
  - a) Therefore all manifestation is nothing but itself.
  - b) The goal of manifestation is the recovery of the truth of itself by self-knowledge and by self-realisation.
  - c) The process of self-realisation goes through the triple movement of:
    - i) Involution
    - ii) Evolution
    - iii) Realisation
  - d) The modern theories of evolution are in line with the ancient truths of Vedanta.
- II. There is a definite process by which Supreme Reality turns itself into this phenomenon.
  - a) The necessity of the process is there because without the selective faculty of knowledge there would be infinite possibilities of simultaneous creation.

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- b) The selective faculty which brings static truth of Reality into an active truth is Maya.
- c) In Higher Maya all is in each and each in all for the play of Existence.
- d) In Lower Maya each is in all but NOT all in each.
- e) Both the Mayas need to be over passed and the Supreme realised.
- f) The difference between the Higher and Lower Maya is the cause of the misunderstanding of the Illusionist schools.

III. Two schools of thought:

- a) Noumenal: Cosmos is created by mind. Here the problem is that Idea / Mind may not have any link with the phenomenal world; the Absolute may be aloof.
- b) Idealistic: Mind is the mediator between Reality and Phenomenon.

IV. Going beyond the mind we realise that the source of Reason is a higher Knowledge and Will.

## CHAPTER XIV

# The Supermind as Creator

Today we begin with Chapter XIV, ‘The Supermind as Creator’. These chapters from XIV to XIX are some of the most important chapters of *The Life Divine*. Sri Aurobindo deals here in great detail with the concept of Supermind. It is only in the end of *The Synthesis of Yoga* that you will find complementary chapters, and in fact if those could be read together you would get the full concept of the Supermind. Here in *The Life Divine* we get the ontological position of the Supermind—ontological in the sense of what is Supermind vis-à-vis Sachchidananda and the world. What is its position, what is its role, why it is there, what is its status? In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, we find more about the characteristics of the supramental consciousness and the way to approach it.

In the previous chapter, we had taken up the question that if this world is really Brahman, as it is said to be in the Rig Veda and Upanishads, then how did Brahman become this world? It is not simply that he waved a magic wand and said “Let there be Light” and there was Light. In the manifestation of the supreme Brahman as the world there is a well-defined process. Sri Aurobindo is interested in finding out that process and to present it, on a rational basis. He notes that there are two reverse processes: the Being moves towards Becoming this is what is called Involution, and the Becoming returning towards the Being, that is called Evolution. The involution, the movement towards becoming was due to a power of Brahman called Maya. Later, the Advaitins viewed Maya as a negative power which hid the Brahman rather than manifested him.

Sri Aurobindo asks whether it is possible that there could be an intermediary power above Mind that manifests Brahman in the world? Some philosophers believe that it is the Mind which has created the

world. But Sri Aurobindo examines and explains the nature and limitations of the mind and concludes that it could not have created the universe. He argues that there must be something beyond mind which does not have these limitations and which could be the cause and origin of the universe.

Sri Aurobindo opens the chapter with this sentence:

A principle of active Will and Knowledge superior to Mind and creatrix of the worlds is then the intermediary power and state of being between that self-possession of the One and this flux of the Many.<sup>1</sup>

Straightaway he sees the necessity of an intermediary power. Now what is this intermediary power? Is it something like what was said earlier about Maya that it is unexplainable and beyond our reach? No, he says that this intermediary power, though far from the present human mental consciousness, is not alien and is not something unapproachable or unreachable. The first immediate and important conclusion he makes is that this power is within man, within the reach of human endeavour, and he calls it the supramental consciousness. It seems distant, perhaps, but in reality it is not something outside of us or unreachable by us. Having said that, immediately he questions: if there is such a power, can we really accept it? When we look at the hard reality of this world, can we really accept that there is a supreme supramental power behind it which is organising it at all levels? The contrast is so vast between this world of ignorance and that world of perfection that it becomes difficult to accept such a concept. He tells us that this objection "... is strongly suggested also by the apparent contradiction in both essence and operation between human mentality and the divine Supermind."<sup>2</sup>

But he warns that if this hiatus or difference is too great to be bridged then the question of transformation will not be there, and the whole attempt of a life divine is futile. He accepts that the difference is enormous, but at the same time he gives us the promise and the hope that we can reach Supermind because the mind is after all a delegate power of Supermind. It is the Supermind which has come down in the involutory process and become the Mind. So Supermind and mind are not really separated. The distance from Pondicherry to Delhi

is great, but that does not mean that Delhi does not exist anywhere or that it is impossible to reach Delhi. Likewise Supermind exists far from our normal mentality, yet it is the consciousness of Supermind which has become in the process of involution the mind. Therefore mind can return to Supermind because both mind and Supermind are essentially a single consciousness. So the mind, if it heightens itself sufficiently can reach levels of consciousness that are close to Supermind. Therefore we cannot negate or reject the concept of Supermind just because our present reality is far from it.

Here we may ask whether Sri Aurobindo himself is proposing this concept of the Supermind. Is this the case of a philosopher changing the word Maya into Supermind and saying 'this is how I would like to explain it?' Does it have any previous support? Indian philosophy is not an intellectual conjecture, it is darśana, a seeing. One does not just give a new philosophy and new terminology for the fun of it. This integral philosophy is based on experience, and Sri Aurobindo experienced the supramental consciousness. Then he explains that his experience was mentioned previously in the time of the Vedic Rishis. Now it becomes very interesting to see the experiences of the Vedic Rishis regarding the Supermind.

We then have a small paragraph to explain the name Supermind. He says that Supermind is not the mind enlarged or heightened to its maximum, it is an altogether different consciousness. It is a new rung of consciousness. Although it is ontologically linked, it is completely different. Sri Aurobindo was aware that the term Supermind had been used by the German philosopher Nietzsche in a different sense than what he means, and that there might be this kind of misunderstanding, so he clarifies here that Supermind should not be taken in the sense of a super-eminent mind that is radically different.

Then he takes up the concept of Supermind as it is reflected in the Vedas. Now let us first see who the Vedic Rishis were. The German philosopher Max Muller had argued that the Rishis were barbarians and criticized the Vedas saying they were hymns to imagined gods of Nature to give them things like rain and cows, and this had become the prevailing view in Western scholarship. But Sri Aurobindo indicates that they were for long Rishis who out of their tapasyā and meditation had revealed supreme truths of spirituality.

Why is it that after the Vedic Rishis nobody spoke about the Supermind until Sri Aurobindo? Was it a lack of receptivity on the part of the later Rishis during the period of the Gita, the Tantra, and the later times? Why was it that they did not speak of the Supermind? There is something peculiar and unique about the Vedic Rishis. The time period of the Vedic Rishis was perhaps a few thousand years ago, and some even say it was more than five thousand years ago.. That is not so important for us; what we are interested in is the consciousness of these Rishis. In one of her conversations, the Mother gives an interesting clue about the Vedic Rishis. She says that they were involutory beings. Involuntary beings means that they were not human beings who evolved on earth, but beings who descended from above. Then she adds, that their body was the result of evolution. These beings came down from higher spiritual regions and used these bodies. They were lodged in these human bodies, but their consciousness was already something belonging to the higher regions. So they were not like an evolved sage, a great realised man. The evolved Rishis and yogis came later during the Upanishadic period. But the Vedic Rishis brought down the knowledge from above and what they perceived could never have been perceived by evolved beings of that time. They brought down this knowledge of the Vedas with them. The Mother further clarifies that all the Vedic Rishis were not involutory beings, but they had leaders. It was these great leaders who were involutory beings. Once we are clear about this, then the question as to how these Rishis knew about the Supermind becomes a little easier to understand.

Though the Vedic terminology doesn't give much description about the Supermind, it has given us these words: Satyam, Ritam and Brihat. Brihat means Vastness, Satyam means Truth, and Ritam means the eternal Law. These are the very simple translations of the words and don't fully explain their meaning. Let's take up these words one by one to better understand their inner meaning and what the Vedic Rishis understood by the Supermind. Sri Aurobindo tells us,

Vast all-comprehensiveness; luminous truth and harmony of being in that vastness and not a vague chaos or self-lost obscurity; truth of law and act and knowledge expressive of that harmonious truth of being; these seem to be the essential terms of the Vedic description.<sup>3</sup>

Before I go further with this chapter from *The Life Divine*, let me give you an explanation given by Sri Aurobindo in *The Secret of Veda* where he says that in the Upanishads we come across a conception of Truth that is derived from the Vedas which includes the expression Satyam, Ritam, Brihat—the Truth, the Right, the Vast. This truth is spoken of in the Vedas as a path leading to felicity and immortality. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

This psychological conception is that of a truth which is truth of divine essence, not truth of mortal sensation and appearance. It is Satyam, truth of being; it is in its action *rtam*, right,—truth of divine being regulating right activity both of mind and body; it is *brhat*, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, *bṛhat*, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation. The one is described as *bhuma*, the large, the other as *alpa*, the little. Another name for this supramental or truth consciousness is Mahas which also means the great, the vast. And as for the facts of sensation and appearance which are full of falsehoods (*anrtam*, not-truth or wrong application of the *satyam* in mental and bodily activity), we have for instruments the senses, the sense-mind (*manas*) and the intellect working upon their evidence, so for the truth-consciousness there are corresponding faculties,—*drsti*, *sruti*, *viveka*, the direct vision of the truth, the direct hearing of its word, the direct discrimination of the right.<sup>4</sup>

There is one more paragraph I would like to quote before giving an explanation. He says:

This hidden Truth is the Vast because it dwells free and manifest only on the supramental plane where existence, will, knowledge, joy move in a rapturous and boundless infinity and are not limited and hedged as in this many-walled existence of the mind, life and body which form the lower being. That is the wideness of the higher being to which we have to ascend breaking beyond the two enclosing firmaments of the mental and physical; it is described

as a divine existence free and large in its unbounded range; it is a wideness where there is no obstacle nor any siege of limitation; it is the fear-free pasture of the luminous herds of the Sun; it is the seat and house of the Truth, the own home of the Gods, the solar world, the true light where there is no fear for the soul, no possibility of any wound to the large and equal bliss of its existence.<sup>5</sup>

He uses here the word Brihat which means vastness. It also connotes wideness where there is no obstacle or any limitation. Satyam is the essential Truth which means the Truth of Being. It is static Truth, not in the negative sense, but static as opposed to movement. Now Ritam is Truth in movement or motion; it is a dynamic Truth. So you can see the difference: Satyam is the passive or static Truth in its essence, whereas with Ritam the manifestation and movement begins.

When the movement begins, Sri Aurobindo explains in another chapter in *The Life Divine*, there is an outward movement, an expansion. Space comes in, vastness comes in. The very first act of the supreme Sachchidananda is that Truth moves forward in “a wideness where there is no obstacle nor any siege of limitation.”<sup>6</sup> Here is another wonderful description: “it is the fear-free pasture of the luminous herds of the Sun.”<sup>7</sup> The Sun, he shows later, is representative of the supramental consciousness, and the rays of the supreme Truth move about in this vastness. They expand in ‘the fear-free pasture’. Later, when involution comes down to the level of Overmind, these very herds are full of fear. Why? Because thereafter on the overmental level begins the division. There begins the Avidya, and all the opposite things. On the level of Supermind there is no division and no opposites, so the herds can move about freely, but as we come down, they are no longer free. It is at the overmental level where the division begins.

Describing the Supermind, Sri Aurobindo says,

This supramental vastness is also the fundamental truth of being, *satyam*, out of which its active truth wells out naturally and without strife of effort into a perfect and faultless movement because there is upon those heights no division, no gulf between consciousness and force, no divorce of knowledge and will, no disharmonising of

our being and its action; everything there is the “straight” and there is no least possibility of crookedness. Therefore this supramental plane of vastness and true being is also Ritam, the true activity of things; it is a supreme truth of movement, action, manifestation, an infallible truth of will and heart and knowledge, a perfect truth of thought and word and emotion; it is the spontaneous Right, the free Law, the original divine order of things untouched by the falsehoods of the divided and separative consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

When we say “truth in movement,” there is one word that inevitably goes with it and that is “ordered.” Truth in movement is dynamic but it is an ordered movement. It is not chaotic; it is perfect order. When we look at this world we may question whether it is in a perfect order. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that Supermind has perfect order. One of the essential meanings of order is harmony. Ritam is the ordered movement of Truth, a Truth which has full knowledge of what must be. So its movement is not haphazard. Our movements are pell-mell, chaotic and haphazard because we do not have the truth-consciousness. Only when we know a thing very well is our movement and action well-ordered. If there is something absolutely clear in your mind, you will see that your actions will reflect this clarity of understanding and truth. So Ritam is ordered harmony and it bears within it the Truth.

Supermind can be called all three—Satyam, Ritam, Brihat, but essentially it is Ritam which is the dynamic truth. It is not just Brahman or Sachchidananda. Brahman and Sachchidananda could be the fullness of oneness or fullness of Truth, but Truth in motion is Supermind. Sri Aurobindo continually refers to it as ‘truth-consciousness.’ Not just truth, not just consciousness, but the truth-consciousness. This is Chit, consciousness, but consciousness inseparable from Tapas and inseparable from Truth. Therefore, the word truth-consciousness refers to that truth which is a dynamic manifestation. We use the word dynamic because here consciousness is united with Tapas, Force. Although Sri Aurobindo sometimes calls the Supermind the Real-Idea, the best word for Supermind is truth-consciousness, or Satyam-Ritam. Brihat is more its objective nature, which is vastness. The subjective nature of Supermind is truth-consciousness. Then, once it starts moving, it moves in the Brihat, the vastness.

Now, let me quote these lines from *The Life Divine* where Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Vedic conception of the Supermind:

Light is here one with Force, the vibrations of knowledge with the rhythm of the will and both are one, perfectly and without seeking, groping or effort, with the assured result. The divine Nature has a double power, a spontaneous self-formulation and self-arrangement which wells naturally out of the essence of the thing manifested and expresses its original truth, and a self-force of light inherent the thing itself and the source of its spontaneous and inevitable self-arrangement.<sup>9</sup>

Sri Aurobindo says that according to the Vedic Rishis, Supermind has a double power: first, a self-formulation, a self-arrangement, and second, a self-force of light which is the source of its spontaneous self-arrangement. The word self-arrangement refers to “ordering.” Self-formulation and this movement of self-ordering are innate characteristics of Supermind. The moment it is born, it is dynamic: self-formulation takes place as a self-arrangement or ordering. This self-arrangement and ordering proceeds spontaneously due to the light of perfect self-awareness which is inherent in its being. The self-awareness is perfect in the sense that is complete and all-encompassing; it is united by identity with the One Being, from which all proceeds. This is the basic concept of Supermind as described in the Vedas.

Next Sri Aurobindo discusses two important faculties of the truth-consciousness that were mentioned by the Vedic Rishis.

The Vedic seers seem to speak of two primary faculties of the “truth-conscious” soul; they are Sight and Hearing, by which is intended direct operations of an inherent Knowledge describable as truth-vision and truth-audition and reflected from far-off in our human mentality by the faculties of revelation and inspiration.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to see that the Vedic seers have given us these two faculties of the truth-consciousness, what we call *drsti* and *sruti*, or sight and hearing. Sri Aurobindo also adds a third character often spoken of by the Rishis, which is *viveka*, discrimination. At the level of mind we

have sight, hearing and discrimination, and all these are reflected on the supramental level. With the supramental consciousness we don't just become an impersonal unembodied being, the supramental being will have all the five senses as well as a kind of discrimination. This tells us that when all these faculties are heightened and transformed they reach the supramental consciousness, whereas they would be different in the Supermind, where there is still a link with the corresponding mental faculties of revelation and inspiration.

Now what is meant by this supramental *drsti*, the supramental vision or sight? To give an example of supramental vision, there is a fine essay in the book *Adventure of Consciousness*, most of which is paraphrased from Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*. I will quote a couple of paragraphs:

The supramental vision is a global vision. The mind cuts off little bits which it puts up against one another; the overmind regathers everything in a single beam, but its beam ends in only one point, and it sees all from its own point of view; it is unitary and universal through exclusion of other angles or through annexing them. The Supermind sees not only the whole world of things and beings in a single vision, which gathers up all the beams without opposing anything, but it sees the viewpoint of each thing, each being, each force—it is a rounded view which does not end in a central point but in myriads of points: *A single innumerable look ...*<sup>11</sup>

Do you see the difference here between the supramental vision and mental vision? The mind cuts off and chops up the truth into bits and says this is right and that is wrong; this is this and that is that. It cannot have a unified vision, so it sees truth in piecemeal and that is the mind's function to divide things into manageable pieces. Whereas in overmind, you have these pieces gathered into great masses. To give a very apt example here, let's take religion. Hindus have one mass of Hindu philosophy and the Christians have one mass of Christian theology. In Hinduism, there are branches or clusters, and similarly in Christianity there are other branches or clusters, but they are both masses which exclude each other. This is the overmental working. Overmind gives us masses of truth, but they exclude each other. So we

understand now why Sri Aurobindo tells us that the time of religions has come to an end, because now the supramental consciousness is taking over. Till now, the world has been under the sway of the overmental consciousness, and has been separated in different masses of cultures, religions, castes and so on. And separation means clash. But with the coming of the supramental consciousness, these masses synthesise into one consciousness where there is neither separate religions nor separate nations. It means no more separate nations, but the unifying concept is human unity. These concepts are growing amongst the human elite because of the new supramental consciousness which does not recognise these divisions, but moves towards unity and oneness. That is the difference between mind, overmind and Supermind.

Supermind sees the viewpoint of each thing, each being and each force. It is a rounded view. The supramental vision sees the truth of both the individual and the totality. Why is it that there are clashes of nations, cultures, religions? It is because of the need to validate separate viewpoints. But the supramental consciousness has this uniqueness that it sees the truth of the individual and at the same time sees the individual in connection with the totality. Religions, creeds, ethics and morality don't adequately take into account the truth of the individual. Hinduism recognised the truth of the individual, but as a sannyasin who leaves the society and lives apart. The supramental consciousness can take full account of the individual because its vision is total and from within. See how it is put here by Sri Aurobindo:

He sees things not as one on the levels surrounded by a jungle of present facts and phenomena but from above, not from outside and judged by their surfaces, but from within and viewed from the truth of their centre.<sup>12</sup>

The Supermind alone gives us the full freedom and self-expression of the individual, yet remains fully aware of the transcendental oneness. It is that consciousness in which alone the individual and the transcendent can be united in a single body. That is in fact the purpose and acme of the evolutionary process. Till now that has not been achieved. Either there was a superconscious oneness or the multiplicity; there has never been a meeting point of both. It was as though either you belong to the Brahman

or you belong to the world. The mind, which sees only the surface of things, would like to clip all that is in excess and reduce this world to a uniform truth which it views as proper. The supramental consciousness holds all the points of view, sees all the forces which are at work behind each thing, and because it can see the whole simultaneously, it has power. There is an automatic concordance—being able to see totally necessarily implies having power. Seeing totally means we have seen it from within and from above, not just from outside. So the supramental consciousness sees the individual from the external point of view—who is this individual in society? Where is he working? Where is he studying? At the same time, it can see the person from within—what is his aspiration? What is his demand? What are his limitations? What is it he is trying to do? The individual can also be seen from above—what is his role? What was his role in the past? What will be his role in the future? This is what we call a global vision, or as Mother would call it, a spherical vision. These are the characteristics of the supramental vision.

To continue our quote from *The Adventure of Consciousness*:

... the supramental power does not obey our logic and our morality, it sees far into space and time; it does not seek to chop off the evil to save the good, it does not work by startling miracles; it disengages the good which is in the evil and applies its force and light on the shadowy half so that this may consent to its luminous counterpart.<sup>13</sup>

Do you see the beauty working here? I came across a question today and, the question was, “Will the Supermind destroy some things in the world and keep other things for the Divine.” There is no question of destruction by the Supermind, it will only throw its light on the darker side. All of us have a darker side which needs to be transformed. If we have to eliminate all that is bad, then the whole of humanity has to be eliminated. The working of the Supermind is transformation. In contrast, the object of religion, ethics and morality is elimination—that is, to throw evil out—“He is a bad person, get rid of him!” “Their religion is bad, condemn it.” This is the mentality of religion—to get rid of evil and to keep the good. But what is evil? Can we really define what evil is? In one of her conversations, the Mother said that fundamentally there is nothing that

is evil. It all depends upon its place in time and circumstance. What is good today becomes evil tomorrow. What is evil today may seem good tomorrow. It is like a jigsaw puzzle: if a piece is put in the wrong place it becomes evil; if it is put in the right place, it becomes the perfect thing. It is not a question of the piece itself; it is how it is placed, in what time frame and circumstance that makes all the difference.

While speaking about Shankaracharya's philosophy, the Mother said it is not a question of whether or not the world is an illusion that we have to think about. She said that if you have the supramental vision, what you realise is the falsehood of the world, not that the world is false—there is a distinction. The world is not *mithya*, it is not a falsity, but it has a wrapping or covering of *mithya* or falsehood. The supramental vision and power can distinguish and disengage this wrapping, and once the wrapping is removed, you will find this life to be beautiful and true. Removal of falsehood is again not by destruction but by transformation. Satprem paraphrases Sri Aurobindo to describe this aspect of the supramental vision:

The Supermind does not set truth against truth to see which will stand and survive, but completes truth by truth in the light of the one Truth of which all are the aspects.

Then referring to Sri Aurobindo, Satprem says,

...he spoke of the light of the Thought that carries in it its own opposites. This is what the Mother calls, thinking spherically. One always gets the feeling of being frightfully dogmatic and systematic when speaking of Sri Aurobindo, due undoubtedly to the drawback of our language which levels its searchlight at one point rather than another and casts shadows whilst Sri Aurobindo embraces everything, not by a sort 'of tolerance', which is a mental substitute for Oneness, but by an undivided vision which is really one with each thing.<sup>14</sup>

We have been speaking of the supramental vision, and if you read *The Life Divine*, it is an apt example of such a vision. It is not that Sri Aurobindo has accepted all the world views, tolerating them and

saying this is all part of philosophy or morality. He shows how each one of the views fits in a single pattern of the world puzzle. He gives the essential idea of each view, occupying the right place in the integral Truth.

This character of the supramental vision is expressed by Sri Aurobindo in the following:

Nothing to the supramental sense is really finite: it is founded on a feeling of all in each and of each in all: its sense definition . . . creates no walls of limitation; it is an oceanic and ethereal sense in which all particular sense knowledge and sensation is a wave or movement or spray or drop that is yet a concentration of the whole ocean and inseparable from the ocean.<sup>15</sup>

He puts it so beautifully here: “a wave or movement or spray or drop that is yet a concentration of the whole ocean and inseparable from the ocean.” You see the crux of this vision? Each of us, and not only we human beings but everything which is animated by the life force, is a “concentration of the whole ocean.” Each form in the entire universe is a concentration of the same supreme supramental consciousness. So how can we say this is wrong and that is bad, or this is dispensable and that is indispensable? Can the ocean say, “this wave is bad because it is five meters high and that wave is good because it is one meter?” Each drop is the ocean. When you go to the seashore what do you see when the spray comes up? You often see both the individual drops in the spray and the ocean. This is a simple example of the kind of vision that the Supermind has of the individual and the transcendent simultaneously. This is the essential character which repeats itself in the arena of sense perception.

To summarise, we have said that Sri Aurobindo’s experience of supramental consciousness not only gets a confirmation but a certain reflection from the Vedic Rishis. We have also described some of the characteristics of the Supermind as shown in the Vedas and by Sri Aurobindo. We have also seen that the Supermind is that power which the old philosophies called Maya. We are beginning to see its ontological position. We have seen what the Supermind is in itself, now we will see what is it vis-à-vis Sachchidananda and Mind.

Sri Aurobindo uses one image which is very catching. He says, "Supermind is the child of Brahman and the parent of mind." Now what does it mean? There are what are called the higher hemisphere and the lower hemisphere, and Supermind is the link. What is the role of Supermind? Its essential role is that it brings in the differentiation. The Supermind brings in a distinction, a differentiation but not a division. Once the Supermind creates differentiation, then manifestation begins, which means that the Chit or the Truth-consciousness starts becoming this world. That is why Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind 'the child of Brahman and the parent of mind.' It is the link between the oneness and the many.

It is the meeting point of the "one in many" and the "many in one." The one, Sachchidananda, becomes the trinity of satyaloka, caitanyaloka, anandaloka. So you see already the "one in many" has begun, but without divisiveness. There is only a distinction, not yet a division. That is the one in many. Then comes Supermind. Now what is there below Supermind? The many, the infinite multiplicity that we see around us. The infinite many as they evolve move towards the One. They are moving towards the One but we said "many in one." Where is the oneness of the "many in one?" Do we find the One here? We see the multiplicity, but the One is also here. Without the One, the many could not stand, could not even exist. We are many people sitting on the common floor of this hall. So there is a oneness which pervades, and we can experience it physically. On the unconscious level there is again oneness—let us not forget that. Oneness at the superconscious level is Sachchidananda, and there is the same oneness at the unconscious level. The unconscious is not manyness but oneness. Of course there is a difference—while the superconscious is aware of its oneness, the unconscious is not.

To become fully aware one has to first experience multiplicity. To give an example, when a child is sleeping and you wake him up, he will say, "No, let me sleep a little more." You wake him up again and after three or four reminders you inject into the child's subconscious mind the thought "wake up, wake up, wake up." Similarly, this multiplicity is the wake up call to the unconscious. All of us are telling the unconscious to wake up. The unconscious throws out these forms for its own purpose of waking up further to its oneness.

The multiplicity has a tremendous necessity: to wake up to the oneness. All these different forms of life—the different plants, the different animals, the different people—have each awakened the inconscient to some extent. The slumber is broken by the first movement of life and then becomes more and more conscious and it says, “I should wake up, I have some work to do.” And then in human beings the consciousness finally says “We seem to be divided, but in reality we are all one.” This sense of oneness is rapidly dawning on us. This is the magnificent cosmic plan—this oneness which was unaware of itself grows in the multiplicity out of necessity.

Now yoga comes into the picture. We can rapidly become conscious that we are all really one. Without yoga we remain in the divisive consciousness of the ego and the mind, where we are all separate. As long as we hold this view of separativity we are in ignorance, or Avidya. As long as you say “I am separate from you,” you are in Avidya. The moment we say, “We are one,” we are growing toward the superconscious oneness. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would tell us that the perfect or full awareness of oneness becomes available or fulfilled only in Supermind.

Also there will be world unity and a sense of oneness with all others. But the Mother tells us that the sense of oneness with others cannot come until we realise the oneness within us. You see how the whole thing is wonderfully linked up! There is the oneness within me, and it is the psychic being or the soul which contains this sense of oneness. The moment we contact the psychic or the soul, then we become aware that actually we are all one. It is the representative of the superconscious oneness within us. So the whole scheme is wonderfully interlinked.

We have said the Supermind is the link between the One and the many. But one of the major arguments of the Advaitins is that Brahman is indivisible. If this is so, how can Supermind divide it? The Advaitins would argue that it is wrong to say that Supermind can differentiate Sachchidananda into Sat, Chit and Ananda. Sri Aurobindo states this argument here in this passage:

But for the unitarian consciousness such a process is inadmissible. Existence is Consciousness and there can be no distinction between them; Consciousness is Bliss and there can be no distinction between

them. And since there is not even this differentiation, there can be no world.<sup>16</sup>

If Brahman or Sachchidananda is indivisible, then the question of the world or the universe does not arise. The moment we admit the existence of this world it means the Brahman has been divided. That brings us to what Sri Aurobindo calls a ‘*reductio ad absurdum*,’ which means we end up in a paradox in which we say that the world is not there and at the same time we experience this world.

Let’s take the opposite view of our own experience. In our day-to-day experience, what do we see? We recognize a physical reality with our mind and our senses and then we cut this reality into smaller parts in order to understand something of this world which we experience. But if we are told that there is a unity behind this world, you may say, “Alright. All the great sages have said this and out of respect to them we accept it mentally,” but on the factual level it is not our experience. We may philosophically accept it, but everywhere we look we see problems, we see divisions. This has been the eternal problem. On one side we say we have the indivisible Reality, and on the other side we experience an essential multiplicity.

To solve this paradox, Sri Aurobindo starts by analyzing the mind. He says the mind is the instrument with which we understand the world, so let us examine the nature of the mind. Then he explains that the mind is an instrument of analysis and synthesis but not of essential knowledge. Its function is to cut out something from the unknown, to delimit the whole, and then to analyse the separate parts which are really separate mental objects.

We see this in our practical way of dealing with the world. A scientist says, “Physical nature is my field. Art, culture, religion, philosophy are not my field. Only what is approachable with my physical instruments is important.” The artist says, “I am concerned with imagination, colours, beauty. Chemistry, biology, and physics are not important to me.” Then the ordinary man says, “What matters to me is getting my daily bread and maintaining my physical life and that of my family—other things don’t matter.”

In trying to understand the world, we have divided it into sections and then subdivided these further all the way down to the sub-atomic

level. Once the mind divides the whole into separate mental objects, it puts them back as a totality? So, basically the mind divides and then gathers the pieces back together of the multiples. It is an assemblage. This is what we call knowledge. Sri Aurobindo concludes that:

Of the whole its only definite idea is an assemblage of parts or a totality of properties and accidents. The whole not seen as a part of something else or in its own parts, properties and accidents is to the mind no more than a vague perception; only when it is analysed and put by itself as a separate constituted object, a totality in a larger totality, can Mind say to itself, "This now I know." And really it does not know.<sup>17</sup>

The crux of this analysis is that the mind goes on analysing into the smallest of bits, and then it puts them together as one plus one. This is not the true knowledge nor is it total knowledge; it is only an assembled knowledge. An assembled knowledge and a true knowledge of the one Reality are vastly different. An assemblage is individual things added up, but the consciousness of oneness is a total consciousness. The mind cannot have this kind of totality of knowledge. Therefore, when we argue whether oneness or the multiplicity is the Reality, Sri Aurobindo says that mind has no business to say that multiplicity is the true Reality because Reality is beyond its conception. It cannot even conceive of the Reality. Mind is an instrument to get the knowledge of individual things, it is not an instrument to get knowledge of the total Reality.

The next question is: "What is the nature of the unity and what is its relation to the multiplicity?" Sri Aurobindo says here,

On the other hand, the unitarian consciousness or indivisible Unity cannot be that impossible entity, a thing without contents out of which all contents have issued and into which they disappear and become annihilated. It must be an original self-concentration in which all is contained but in another manner than in this temporal and spatial manifestation.<sup>18</sup>

In this description of Reality, he says that it is a "self-concentration in which all is contained." To understand this, let us take an example.

We have the scientific theory called the big bang theory, in which it is stated that the entire universe exploded into being from a single, tightly compressed mass. So this, in material form, may be a reflection of that self-concentration in which all is contained. The important idea here is in the phrase “in which all is contained but in another manner than in this temporal and spatial manifestation.” Here we need to understand the meaning of the word ‘all.’ ‘All’ does not necessarily mean the expressed part or the manifested part. For example, when we say the seed contains the tree, in what way does the seed contain the tree? The full tree is not there in the little seed; it is there as a potential. Similarly, in the supreme Reality, Brahman or Sachchidananda, the ‘all’ is there but as a potential and a principle. When we say all is there self-contained, in what manner is it there? He says, “in another manner than this temporal and spatial manifestation.”

Supermind differentiates the trinity of Sachchidananda but does not divide it. Here Sri Aurobindo tells us,

That which has thus concentrated itself, is the utterly ineffable and inconceivable Existence which the Nihilist images to his mind as the negative Void of all that we know and are but the Transcendentalist with equal reason may image to his mind as the positive but indistinguishable Reality of all that we know and are.<sup>19</sup>

We have said that Reality is indivisible and it is a concentration of all, whereas the Nihilist, that is, the Buddhist, would say that Reality is Void, it contains Nothing. What is the link between the indivisible and the Void? As an example, say there are ten chairs in this room. Can we say this room is void? No, we cannot, because it has things in it. When we say it is void it means there is nothing in it. Nothing and indivisible are more or less the same. How? If something is divisible, that means there are potential parts in it. Parts means there is something in it. But if it indivisible, it is a totality, without parts. If there are no parts, we say it has ‘nothing.’ If there is no furniture and nobody sitting here, we can say it is void. There is only air, but air is not divisible. The moment something becomes divisible, that means there is something there. So Buddhists tell us this world or this Reality is void, which means there is nothing in it.

The other side of the argument is, it seems to be void, but it is an indivisible fullness. Similarly, suppose you have a circle: you can see the circle as an empty circle or as a circle which is full, but in either case, there are no parts which you can see. So the Vedantist would say it is a fullness which is indivisible, whereas a Buddhist would say it is a void. These are two different ways of looking at the same thing. But whichever way we look at it, as a fullness or as a void, it is indivisible. If it is the 'all', then it is an indivisible 'all', a potential 'all', but not a manifested 'all' of separate things.

Now, coming back to Supermind, what is the relationship of this argument to Supermind? Sri Aurobindo says that Supermind contains and develops the Brahman. To quote Sri Aurobindo:

Supermind is the vast self-extension of the Brahman that contains and develops. By the Idea it develops the triune principle of existence, consciousness and bliss out of their indivisible unity.<sup>20</sup>

We saw a bit of this previously when we said Supermind develops the unitary oneness into the trinity Sat, Chit and Ananda. Supermind develops Sachchidananda—what does this mean? What does it mean when you develop your faculty of art, or singing? Development means manifestation, self-expression, or creation. If I develop my sense of art, it means I bring out from within me the artistic ability. And what is the meaning of 'bringing out'? Expressing it on the canvas in colours and in forms. So this development means to bring it out into manifestation. If Supermind develops Sachchidananda, that means it brings out Sachchidananda into manifestation. In bringing it out, it first differentiates the one into a trinity of Existence, Consciousness, and Ananda, though it does not yet divide them. That is the first step. Then he says:

And it acts by the same operation on all the principles and possibilities which it evolves out of this all-constituent trinity.<sup>21</sup>

Here a very important idea comes in—he says there are in effect two involutions. This is a crucial point in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. What do we mean by 'two involutions'? First, we have Brahman or

Sachchidananda in which all is involved, everything is in it, but not in the sense of an assemblage of individuals. “Everything” means all the infinite possibilities are there involved in Brahman—that is the first involution. Then what happens is that this first involution comes down. He says there is a devolution downward, which means that it is brought forth. Brahman brings out of himself one possibility of creating the universe. Remember, Brahman could have brought about this world in infinite ways. But he chooses one particular method, that one way which we see now in manifestation. He manifests or evolves downwards, not spatially, but towards a single focus. Brahman zooms down or he plunges downwards to what we say is the last point, the inconscient.

When he plunges downward into the inconscience, the whole of Brahman is plunged into the Inconscient. So this is the second involution. Involution here means that Brahman is completely involved in the inconscient, just as all is completely involved in the oneness of Brahman. From the position of involution in the inconscient the upward evolution begins. Here Sri Aurobindo is using these terms somewhat differently. Instead of saying involution is the bringing out of Being into manifestation, he says there are two involutions, one in which all is involved in Spirit or Brahman and one in which all is involved in the Inconscient; and in between these there are two evolutions, the devolution downward towards the inconscient and the evolution upward towards the Spirit.

From the Inconscient in which the Brahman is involved, things begin to evolve or develop. Remember, the word develop means manifestation. Now this is precisely the work of Supermind. It is Supermind that first brings Sachchidananda down into the Inconscient. When we say Supermind “brings” it is a bit odd, it is not that someone else is pulling down the Sachchidananda—it is the same Chit consciousness of Sachchidananda which is undergoing the involution downward. And it is the same Chit consciousness that becomes the Supermind. Did we not say Chit is Truth-consciousness? Truth-consciousness is another name for Supermind. So Supermind or Truth-Consciousness comes down into the inconscient and lies dormant. The end product of the two involutions is that all is in each and each is in all. Why is that important? Because it means the Supermind is involved at every level,

it pervades every level of existence and all of life. So the conclusion is that all is Brahman. Yes, this has been stated before in the Upanishad, but it has never before been so thoroughly explained as to how all this is the Brahman.

Next we have the most important idea in this chapter: what is the essential contrast between our mental consciousness and the Truth-Consciousness? Sri Aurobindo later gives a specific chapter called “Mind and Supermind,” where he goes into detail about the differences; here he mentions the differences in brief. The first difference he mentions is that mind makes a “fissure between thought and reality.” What does it mean? Fissure is a division. He says,

We regard thought as a thing separate from existence, abstract, unsubstantial, different from reality... The first business of Mind is to render “discrete,” to make fissures much more than to discern, and so it has made this paralysing fissure between thought and reality.<sup>22</sup>

Here is an example to help us understand what the mind does. If I say, “I have a wonderful glass,” it means the object is outside of me. That is the meaning of having an object. Similarly, when I say “I got an idea,” it means that I got this idea from somewhere else outside of me. If we analyse this simple sentence it leads us to the notion that thought is a thing separate from existence. The fact I say “I got an idea” means that I and the idea are separate. The whole language itself speaks the consciousness of the mind, which is always making divisions. Sri Aurobindo uses a strong word, “paralysing fissures.” This division between the idea and me, the other and me, has been so instilled into our consciousness that it becomes a habitual patterns of thought, a fundamental quality of the mind.

“But in Supermind all being is consciousness, all consciousness is of being, and the idea, a pregnant vibration of consciousness, is equally a vibration of being pregnant of itself..”<sup>23</sup> Put more simply, for Supermind, an idea is a vibration of its consciousness and equally a vibration of its being. It is itself in a movement of expression, a coming out in creative self-knowledge of that which lay concentrated in uncreated self-awareness.

When the supramental consciousness says, “I have an idea,” how is it different from the mind saying, “I have an idea.” For the Supermind there is no difference between me and the idea. It is not something outside of itself which it is getting. It is something that belongs to itself. What we must understand is that all these forms in the universe are nothing but the formations of the one consciousness. Sat provides the substance, Chit provides the form, and Ananda is the bliss and joy of existence which is also its cause or *raison d'être*.

Just as there is no division in Supermind between the substance of the Self and the Idea, so also there is no division between the Idea and its Will, the power of the Idea to manifest itself. Sri Aurobindo describes it here:

In Supermind knowledge in the Idea is not divorced from will in the Idea, but one with it—just as it is not different from being or substance, but is one with the being, luminous power of the substance. As the power of burning light is not different from the substance of the fire, so the power of the Idea is not different from the substance of the Being which works itself out in the Idea and its development.<sup>24</sup>

On the mental level, I say, “I have an idea, I want to build a house,” when there are three things: ‘I’ is the subject, ‘the house’ is the object, and the ‘I want to’ is the will. So in every situation we have these three things, the subject, the object and the will. Here we will simplify it and focus just on the division between the will and the object. I said ‘I want to build a house’, but then there is a great deal of effort that must go into this. I must work hard for the building and I may encounter many problems. There are the plans, the architect, the workers, the finances—a whole lot of problems may come in. I have an idea and I have the knowledge but the will behind this knowledge sometimes does not match. We may want to do a thing but we don’t have the will to do it. Will means not only just wanting, but putting the whole being into it, the whole consciousness into it. When the will and the knowledge match each other, then the manifestation can take place quickly. If there is a gap between the will and the knowledge or if they are disproportionate, then delay may happen. We may get disappointed

because we are not getting results, and then there may be a slackening of the will, a kind of depression in the will. So even if the mind has some knowledge, it may not be able to manifest it because it does not have the proportionate will. But in Supermind there is no such gap between the consciousness and the will, because Chit and Tapas are inseparable.

Then Sri Aurobindo brings in another important difference when he says,

Therefore whatever be the truth of being expressed, the idea corresponds to it exactly, the will-force to the idea,—force being only power of the consciousness,—and the result to the will. Nor does the idea clash with other ideas, the will or force with other will or force as in man and his world; for there is one vast Consciousness.<sup>25</sup>

As knowledge is divided in the mind there is always a clash—clash of one idea with another, or clash of one emotion with another. My body wants to do something, my heart wants to do something else, and my mind wants to do yet another thing. There is this kind of clash or confusion constantly. Why? One thing I realised very strongly while reading *The Life Divine* is that the more you understand the basics of this manifestation, the more it brings you real peace. A lot of people say, “I want some peace. Let us go to the temple.” We can go on all the pilgrimages in this world and yet we may never get peace. What really gives peace is true understanding. Not just mental understanding, though mental clarification could be there, but the deeper understanding that *The Life Divine* gives, the understanding of the basic tenets of manifestation. Therefore I say that for me understanding is peace.

Let me give a simple example which is most mundane. Somebody walked out onto this street yesterday and said, “What a complete mess the people are making of this road.” But I said to the person, “Don’t get disturbed, now they are digging it up to make it better because the day after tomorrow there is a major festival in this part of the town. We are especially lucky to be on this road, because had we been on any other road it might take years to repair. Here, once every year everything has

to be repaired and upgraded.” And I added, “Do not be disturbed, you will see within one or two days everything will be smooth and it will become a beautiful road again.” I did not get perturbed because I understood the reason why they were digging it up. The other person was fuming because he could not bring in his motorcycle. He said, “You have so much faith.” I said, “No, I have a simple understanding of the situation.” It is a very mundane reason but it is a factual thing. Now, if we increase this understanding to that of our basic life situation, to the nature of the manifestation as a whole, then the more we understand, the deeper the peace we will have.

It is the same thing with the world situation—when there is a blast in America, when there is war in Afghanistan, people get perturbed by reading the newspapers. But when we read *The Ideal of Human Unity* or *The Life Divine* where these things are foreseen in a way and explained, we do not get so disturbed. Ultimately, the Mother would say, when you reach the supramental consciousness you will feel that there is nothing wrong with the world! Why? Does the world automatically change when you have the supramental consciousness? No, you just understand the world as it is, in its totality. These clashes happen because we see the world in piecemeal. Rather than seeing the world as a full circle, we see only a small arc and do not understand the rest of the circle. This looking at the world by piecemeal brings us all the tragedy.

Imagine yourself as a dramatist. Some of you may be students of literature and have read *Macbeth*. When Lady Macbeth goes to murder the king, the story reaches the peak of the a tragic moment. Of course, she does not murder him. Later when the king really is murdered, some people watching the drama may cry, saying “He was a such a good king.” But do you think that Shakespeare was crying when he wrote the scene? No, because he had the whole plot in his mind. Similarly, the Divine Dramatist has the whole plot of the world in his mind, and for him there is no sadness or tragedy. This is the Supermind. But in the mind we see only a little bit of the world through our eyes and our understanding, through our concepts, our background and our religion. So our lenses are focused in a particular way and we see what they show us and nothing else. We look at the world from a narrow vision, and that is the cause of clashes—the clash of ideas and the clash of people occur only because we have an incomplete picture.

But the supramental consciousness has a global vision, a spherical insight; in the moment it sees eternity. Earlier the first word that we used to describe the Supermind was Vastness, or Brihat—it is the Vast, the comprehensive consciousness. That is the supramental vision.

Now, one more thing that I would like to emphasise is that one of the things that the mind does is to follow a certain process because it does not know the fullness. It goes step by step, because it does not know the final outcome nor does it have the knowledge of the whole. And when it goes step by step, it does not get as much joy. Why? Because when we do a thing by piecemeal, the joy is also piecemeal, meaning it is very limited. Suppose we take up an action and we do a little bit and then stop and go out. We don't concentrate fully, and we do it half heartedly. It might be anything, reading an article, doing a painting, working in an office. If we do not put ourselves totally into the work, the return of joy is also limited. That seems to be the rule of manifestation. If a thing is not done with an involvement of our total being, we will not get the total delight. If we want happiness, we must put the totality of our being into any endeavour that we undertake. We must involve ourselves in the work we are doing, but with our total being—not just our mind, or our heart, or our body, but all these together plus our psychic aspiration.

Most people in the world would say “I do my job,” or “I do my duty,” but we may do our duty because we get money for doing it. If we withdraw the money, will we still do our duty? If no, then we are not doing the work for the sake of joy, but for the sake of money. We have bartered the joy for money. But the truth of spirituality is that we seek joy in the work that we are doing. This is why it is said that work is worship, work is meditation. If we seek joy, we must perforce put ourselves wholly into it, otherwise we should not bother. This is a fundamental rule of existence because on the metaphysical level, consciousness is inseparable from delight. If we put in full consciousness, there is full delight. This is another important characteristic of Supermind. The supramental consciousness gets full delight in all its work, because it puts all its consciousness into each and every work.

In the old days India did not have the concept of “duty,” as it is understood now. We had the word dharma though it is not the same as

duty. During the British occupation we took to the word 'duty' and lost our real roots. Duty does not give us a spiritual attitude; it is dharma that gives it. Corruption is rampant everywhere because we are doing our duty and not our dharma. Sri Aurobindo pointed out many times that we have imported the Western ideology which is not suitable to us because our roots are different and our ethos is different. If we can revert to doing our dharma, that could be one way to get rid of corruption. We must turn within ourselves and ask what is our Indian ideology? It is to do our dharma.

Sri Aurobindo ends this chapter saying that Supermind as creator is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Religion has taught us through the ages that God is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient, but these characteristics are all now explained by the Supermind. Supermind contains Sachchidananda and develops Sachchidananda. When we say God is omnipresent what do we understand? God is around us everywhere. But in what way he is there everywhere? Sri Aurobindo explains how the Supermind in the process of involution has become this manifestation. It is in this sense that God is omnipresent. Religion says that God is omniscient, that he has all knowledge. Why is he omniscient? Because Being and Consciousness are one and inseparable. God is omnipresent, so his consciousness also is everywhere and in each thing. Why is God omnipotent? It is not that he is a powerful emperor or king and we must bow every morning to him because if we don't he will punish us. We have seen that in Supermind, power or Tapas is inseparable from consciousness or Chit. So God being omniscient is automatically omnipotent. It is a magnificent equation, as clear as mathematics.

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17. Ibid., p. 127.
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### Lecture Notes

- I. The Need of an Intermediary Power
  - a) To explain the existence of the universe, Mind as it is, is not sufficient. A principle of active Will and Knowledge superior to Mind and Creatrix of the worlds is then the needed intermediary Power.
  - b) A doubt: Because of the apparent contradiction between Mind and Supermind.
  - c) Mind being a development of Supermind could be resolved into Supermind.

II. The Vedas and the Supermind

- a) The name: Supermind
- b) A vast all-comprehensiveness, luminous Truth; Truth of Law: Brihat-Satyam-Ritam
- c) The double power of the divine Nature
  - i) A spontaneous Self-formulation
  - ii) Self-arrangement
- d) Two primary faculties:
  - i) Truth-Vision
  - ii) Truth-Audition (Divine Sight and Divine Hearing). On the human level: revelation and inspiration. Also, subjective knowledge by identity and objective knowledge.

III. Supermind as the Link

- a) Sachchidananda and the Mind
- b) One-in-Many and Many-in-One: stability and flux

IV. Reductio Ad Absurdum

- a) The indivisible Reality
- b) An essential multiplicity
- c) Solution:
  - i) To consider Mind as only a passage and not a culmination
  - ii) Reality is the original self-concentration containing All, though in another manner than this temporal and spiritual manifestation.

V. Supermind Contains and Develops Sachchidananda

- a) It differentiates the trinity Sat-Chit-Ananda but does not divide it.
- b) Whole creation is a movement between two involutions.
- c) All is in each as well as each in all.

VI. The Essential Contrast between Mental-Consciousness and Truth-Consciousness

- a) Mind makes a fissure between thought and reality. Supermind—The Real Idea—a vibration of Being pregnant with itself.
- b) Knowledge and Will not separated—Example: Fire—in

## THE SUPERMIND AS CREATOR

- Supermind. In Mind, they are divorced and disproportionate.
- c) Supermind being the Vast, Knowledge, Force and Being are not separate but one and comprehensive.
  - d) In Mind there is the process, but in Supermind, there is a single Knowledge-Force.
  - e) Justification of the religious notions of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence.

## The Supreme Truth-Consciousness

While discussing the previous chapter we have said that in Supermind there is an ordering of the self-knowledge by which the One manifests the harmony of its infinite potential. It is the source and keeper of law in the world. The whole development of the multiplicity is predetermined by this self-knowledge. Sri Aurobindo opens the present chapter by making the point that Supermind is the nature of the Divine Being. He says, “We have to regard therefore this all-containing, all-originating, all-consummating Supermind as the nature of the Divine Being, not indeed in its absolute self-existence, but in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds.”<sup>1</sup>

Those of you who are familiar with the Bhagavad Gita may know the word *paraprakriti*, which means the higher nature or divine nature, as opposed to the lower nature which is divided. In fact, in the Gita there is the idea that the Divine creates out of his *paraprakriti*. The word *prakriti* gives the connotation of manifestation, and in the light of the Gita’s terminology, *paraprakriti* and *aparaprakriti*, we may say Supermind is the *paraprakriti*. There is one more clarification: the important phrase here is “not indeed in its absolute self-existence.” This small phrase makes all the difference. Here there is a demarcation. There is the absolute self-existence of Sachchidananda where he is undifferentiated, but the moment he becomes differentiated comes forth the Supermind. So first he is ‘absolute self-existence’, and the moment he begins to create or to become, then the same Sachchidananda could be called Supermind. So there is a difference, because the role of Supermind is to manifest or create this universe. If Sachchidananda were not to manifest, then there would be no Supermind. But the Supreme, as it is said in the Upanishads, was all alone and decided to become the many, this decision to become many means to self-manifest or to become the

creator, which is another name for Supermind. So the first point we have to note here is that the Supermind is the nature of Sachchidananda.

Then Sri Aurobindo says, “This is the truth of that which we call God. Obviously this is not the too personal and limited Deity, the magnified and supernatural Man of the ordinary occidental conception.”<sup>2</sup> But he adds,

We must not indeed exclude the personal aspect of the Deity, for the impersonal is only one face of existence; the Divine is All-existence, but it is also the one Existent, —it is the sole Conscious-Being, but still a Being. Nevertheless, with this aspect we are not concerned at present; it is the impersonal psychological truth of the divine Consciousness that we are seeking to fathom: it is this that we have to fix in a large and clarified conception.<sup>3</sup>

He is stating here that he is not going to discuss the personal aspects of the Supreme, but rather the psychological aspects of the Divine Consciousness. He makes a distinction between the personal aspect of the Divine, and the psychological aspect of the Supermind. The personal aspect of the Supreme, the Supramental Mahashakti, is dealt with in the little book, *The Mother*. In this way *The Life Divine*, and the book *The Mother* complement each other; the same Truth is approached in a different manner.

Sri Aurobindo then says:

The Truth-Consciousness is everywhere present in the universe as an ordering self-knowledge by which the One manifests the harmonies of its infinite potential multiplicity. Without this ordering self-knowledge the manifestation would be merely a shifting chaos, precisely because the potentiality is infinite which by itself might lead only to a play of uncontrolled unbounded Chance. If there were only infinite potentiality without any law of guiding truth and harmonious self-vision, without any predetermining Idea in the very seed of things cast out for evolution, the world could be nothing but a teeming, amorphous, confused uncertainty.<sup>4</sup>

We have come across this idea earlier when we were discussing Ritam or the ordering law. He brings up the same point here that the

Supermind is Ritam, the ordering law. If the Supreme manifested himself without this ordering law, it could have been a chaos of possibilities. We have explained before that the Supreme chooses a particular manner in which to manifest itself. The Mother in one of her conversations makes it clear that there are other universes where the ordering law is quite different. Our world, our universe has a particular Ritam which is determined by Supermind. The Supreme is above Supermind but he has become the Supermind so that he could bring out various aspects of Himself into manifestation. Therefore we can call the Supermind the creator of the worlds.

It should also be clear that everything is predetermined. In every atom, there is already the foreseen future of its manifestation. We may be allergic to the word 'predetermination' because we think it means we do not have freedom. Let us take a small example. To come to this class today you have had to make a choice. You could have made a choice out of several other possibilities. You could have gone to the seashore or to a picnic or could have done something else, but you have chosen to come here. All these possibilities of that moment are already foreseen in Supermind. It is not that to come to the class is not foreseen; it is foreseen as one of the possibilities. So predetermination does not mean that you do not have the freedom of choice, but at the same time it does not mean that the Divine does not know that you are going to come here. Thus, freedom and determination go together: at the level of our practical life we have freedom to choose, but at the level of Supermind our choice is known and predetermined.

Here Sri Aurobindo is speaking more on the cosmic level, and not on the individual level. He says:

But the knowledge that creates, because what it creates or releases are forms and powers of itself and not things other than itself, possesses in its own being the vision of the truth and law that governs each potentiality, and along with that an intrinsic awareness of its relation to other potentialities and the harmonies that are possible between them; it holds all this prefigured in the general determining harmony which the whole rhythmic Idea of a universe must contain in its very birth and self-conception and which must therefore inevitably work out by the interplay

of its constituents . . . Therefore 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 original inherent Truth; it moves to what it must be at the next, still by its own original inherent Truth; it will be at the end that which was contained and intended in its seed.<sup>5</sup>

Let's concentrate on this phrase, "its own original inherent Truth." What is this original inherent Truth? At every moment, not just every *yuga* or every century, at every moment the supramental consciousness is revealing, becoming what it must become, and what it becomes is already there predetermined by Supermind as a potential of creation. What we mean by "potential of creation" is that it selects a certain ordering or arrangement of the possibilities it perceives in its consciousness and its being and brings that arrangement into becoming. Everything is foreseen by the Supermind in its highest comprehending aspect. Once it is seen and decided, it becomes what it is intended to be in its seed formation. This is regarding the creation of the universes.

Next, Sri Aurobindo takes us a little deeper into the nature of Truth-consciousness, and discusses the relation between Supermind and ourselves. In particular, he examines the differences between mind and Supermind with respect to Time and Space. There are five or six major differences, and we will take up one or two at a time. First, Supermind is not situated at a particular moment of time; time offers itself as an eternal present. Similarly, space is a self-extension. In contrast, mind measures time by event and space by matter. Time is a mobile extension, space is a stable extension.

This question of space and time is tricky. Many Western and Eastern philosophers have discussed space and time. They may speak of these in different terminologies, in different concepts, but all that is from the mind's angle, from the psychological angle. But in Sri Aurobindo, we get a description of time and space from that consciousness which is above space and time and yet within them. One who can experience space and time from above as well as within them has a much greater perception of reality. Sri Aurobindo, having achieved the supramental consciousness, was in a perfect position to give us this vision. He says,

Time and space, according to the metaphysician, have only a conceptual and not a real existence; but since all things and not these only are forms assumed by Conscious-Being in its own consciousness, the distinction is of no great importance. Time and Space are that one Conscious-Being viewing itself in extension, subjectively as Time, objectively as Space. Our mental view of these two categories is determined by the idea of measure which is inherent in the action of the analytical dividing movement of Mind. Time is for the Mind a mobile extension . . . Space is a stable extension measured out by divisibility of substance.<sup>6</sup>

In simple terms, we measure time by events. We have events in the past, the present and the possible future. He calls time a mobile extension because we are situated in a particular moment in time with the past behind us and the future in front, but our position keeps moving towards the future.

Our time is inseparably connected with events and time is marked by mobility from one event to the next. Normally we think of time and space together. If I walk from one point to another point of this hall, I may say "I have taken 20 seconds to cross these 50 feet." So we relate the time spent to the distance covered. So Sri Aurobindo coined these words, mobile extension and stable extension, because mobility cannot be there without the backdrop of stability. Even in physics, we cannot talk of movement without the concept of stability. All our thinking, all our knowledge, has got this frame of time and space. If I say that the tree's branches are moving, I know they are moving because it is in relation to the backdrop of the stable sky. But is the sky stable? The earth itself is rotating; it is rotating in relation to the backdrop of space. There is always a backdrop, which we consider at the practical level to be stable. So we move with this concept the of stability in the background all the time. That is as far as the mind is concerned.

What is the Supermind's concept of time? In *The Synthesis of Yoga* there is a beautiful paragraph which gives the essence of the supramental consciousness of time.

The supramental consciousness on the other hand is founded upon

the supreme consciousness of the timeless Infinite, but has too the secret of the deployment of the infinite Energy in time. It can either take its station in the time consciousness and keep the timeless infinite as its background of supreme and original being from which it receives all of its organising knowledge, will and action, or it can, centred in its essential being, live in the timeless but live too in a manifestation in time which it feels and sees as infinite and as the same Infinite, and can bring out, sustain and develop in the one what it holds supernally in the other.<sup>7</sup>

The advantage of the supramental consciousness is that it can focus on time while keeping the timeless as the backdrop. This seems to have been the standard operating procedure for Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They had this parallel consciousness of the timeless and time, and because of this, they could, as he writes here in this beautiful phrase, “bring out, sustain and develop what it holds supernally in the other.” All that they wanted to manifest here in time they could see in the timeless. For example, Sri Aurobindo beautifully describes in *Savitri* the new race and the marvellous children of the Dawn. (\* See end note) This new race, which was foreseen, was not projected by the mind, but actually seen and experienced from the Overmental or the supramental level of consciousness.

Next, Sri Aurobindo says,

Its time consciousness therefore will be different from that of the mental being, not swept helplessly on the stream of the moments and clutching at each moment as a stay and a swiftly disappearing standpoint, but founded first on its eternal identity beyond the changes of time, secondly on a simultaneous eternity of Time in which past, present and future exist together for ever in the self-knowledge and self-power of the Eternal, thirdly, in a total view of the three times as one movement singly and indivisibly seen even in their succession of stages, periods, cycles, last—and that only in the instrumental consciousness—in the step-by-step evolution of the moments. It will therefore have the knowledge of the three times, trikaladrsti . . . not as an abnormal power, but as its normal way of time knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

This word *trikaladrusti*, was used frequently in the *Record of Yoga* by Sri Aurobindo. There he was making experiments with the use of this faculty. He would may be watch a bird sitting on a branch, for example, and through *trikaladrusti* he would try to see what it would do next. This was not a guess work, but trying to see from a higher consciousness whether it would go left or right, up or down.

Let me read out another beautiful sentence before I take up the explanation. He says,

The third state of consciousness is that of the mind of knowledge in which all things and all truths are perceived and experienced as already present and known and immediately available by merely turning the inner light upon it, as when one turns the eye upon things in a room already known and familiar,—though not always present to the vision because that is not attentive,—and notes them as objects of a pre-existent knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

When I walk into this hall, on my right I see something at the door, and my eye focuses on that, but at the back of my mind the whole hall is present. I am not trying to see the chairs on the left, because for the moment I am concentrating on something else. Similarly, though not always present to its vision, the Supermind has a pre-existent knowledge which it can call up just by turning its attention to it. Somebody once asked Mother, referring to someone else in the same class, if she knew what he was going to tell? The Mother answered in the positive. The thing to understand is that even though she was aware of what the person is going to speak, she normally held back this knowledge and intentionally focused only on what the person is saying. As Sri Aurobindo says here, it is part of the power of *trikaladrusti* that the whole knowledge is withheld, and at a certain point in time only what is necessary is used or attended to. He says that this consciousness has to become the normal way of functioning, not an exceptional thing that happens once in a blue moon. Sri Aurobindo practiced this *trikaladrusti* on the birds and the ants and he became so proficient that this same ability was used to see what the Germans were going to do on D-day and he changed the events by his will power born of his own *tapasya*. So this is how the Supermind makes the knowledge of time part of its normal consciousness.

We have seen how the supramental consciousness has the *trikaladristi*, where there is no division between past, present and future. As Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*, “All Time is one body, Space a single look.”<sup>10</sup> In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, he writes that it “links past, present and future in their indivisible connections, in a single continuous map of knowledge, side by side.”<sup>11</sup> That is extremely interesting. How is space connected with supramental knowledge? Space is a single look. The Mother explains in an incredible paragraph that the ordinary consciousness is like an axis and everything turns around this axis. It is fixed in time and everything turns around it. All that happens around this axis of ego is what is my space. But in Supermind, there is no longer an axis, it disappears. Simply imagine this. Once this ego axis is gone, what happens? My extension in space and time can become universal by the simple fact that I have lost my axis. If I drop my axis of ego, I have freedom, I can be anywhere, I can extend myself all over the universe. Mother said once that her body was extended over the whole earth. Of course, losing this axis is a great work. Now you see what happens in the supramental consciousness vis-à-vis time and space. It can use time and timelessness simultaneously, and space becomes a self-extension as large as the universe.

The next idea we will take up is “the constant succession of a developing harmony” in the supermind. A harmony is worked out in time in terms of forms and forces that stand related in an all-containing extension. He says,

...if there were not this factor of the successions of Time, there would be no change or progression; a perfect harmony would be perpetually manifest, coeval with other harmonies in a sort of eternal moment . . . We have instead the constant succession of a developing harmony . . . in which one strain rises out of another that preceded it and conceals in itself that which it has replaced . . . Or again, if Time alone were real, its successions would be a pure development in which one strain would rise out of another in a subjective free spontaneity as in a series of musical sounds or a succession of poetical images. We have instead a harmony worked out by Time in terms of forms and forces that stand related to one another in an all-containing spatial extension . . .<sup>12</sup>

So here the difference between mind and Supermind lies in the mind having a succession of time, which really means a succession of events, for normally we calculate time in terms of one event following the other. In space also we have a succession of spaces, for example, I cross this road to go to the beach road. But in the supramental consciousness, there is one time extension and one space extension. But if the Supermind does not have the past, present and future, how would you measure progress? Sri Aurobindo gives a beautiful phrase for this, “as a succession of a developing harmony.” The Supermind lives in the midst of a harmonious development or unveiling of its possibilities which are worked out through the play of forces and forms in the universe.

Let me read out something from Satprem’s *The Adventure of Consciousness* that will help us understand the idea of Time in the supramental consciousness. He says, “It is difficult for us to imagine what the vision of this universal individual could be and we would be tempted to think from our mental viewpoint that a total knowledge of three times takes away immediately all the surprise of existence.”<sup>13</sup> For example, we might ask ourselves, “If I know the future, where is this surprise, where is the joy? If we have trikaladrsti, would it not be a flat existence? If I know what is going to happen tomorrow, wouldn’t life become boring?” These are pertinent questions indeed, but we have to understand it in a different manner. The passage continues,

But this is to apply to the supramental consciousness the norms and reactions which belong only to the mind. The way of seeing and of living the world is quite different. The supramental consciousness is not anxiously bent over the future as we are; all is there under its eyes, but it lives divinely in time: each second of time is an absolute, a plenitude as complete as the millenniums put end to end; it is on the contrary the perfect perfection of time—in the ordinary life we are never in the moment, we are either projected in the front or drawn behind, by hope or regret, because the moment is never what it is, because it always lacks something, it is terribly hollow, whilst for the supramental consciousness each thing is at each moment fully what it ought to be, as it ought to be. It is a beatitude, constant, inalterable. Each sequence, each image of the

great cosmic Film is loaded with all the preceding images and all those that follow, it falls short neither through the absence of the future nor through the vanishing of the past—“That bliss which is most large and full and without a gap,” says the Rig Veda (V.62.9), that unwounded Delight, says Sri Aurobindo.<sup>14</sup>

So in the supramental consciousness, each moment of the present is loaded with the past and the future. Satprem rightly points out that we do not ordinarily live in the present, and that is one of the defects of the mental consciousness. That is perhaps why we don't get the delight; because we are always away from ourselves between regrets of the past and the hopes of the future, the delight we experience is piecemeal. The supramental consciousness lives in the eternal moment and hence lives in full delight. It lives in the totality of the consciousness—it has the fullness of existence, the fullness of consciousness, the fullness of bliss. These three are inalienably one.

Let us take our common day to day experience for an example. The Mother has told us many times that if you want to enjoy the work you're doing, be in it fully; unless one is fully in the work, one can never enjoy it. She said that it is not a question of whether one likes the work or not. In the Ashram, she would give each person whatever work she thought fit. Of course, she knew why she was giving it, but externally people would regretfully think, “I was a professor of physics, but now I am given to wash the vessels in the Dining Room.” Such things did happen. She said that it is not a question of what you are doing in sadhana but it is how you are doing it. We can enjoy the work if we put our whole consciousness into it and not bring in the prejudices of the mind. If I were a Dean in a college or a judge in a High Court and I think I am important and should be given an important work, I bring my past into the present and suffer. Physically I may be washing the dishes, but mentally I may be in Delhi thinking of my past life. But if I accept whatever work the Divine gives me and put my full consciousness into it, I will enjoy it because being in the present brings in the totality of our existence, the wholeness of our being. Then we can experience the delight as was the case with some one who saw Sri Aurobindo's face as he was wiping dishes in the Dining Room! Then we can contact the delight and the consciousness of Truth. That is what is called living in

the present. Each second of time lived fully is an absolute plenitude, as complete as a million seconds put end to end.

The supramental consciousness lives exclusively in the present. It is perhaps because of this that towards the end of her life, when she was asked what is going to happen to her, when she will be transformed, the Mother would say, "I do not know." How is it that she didn't know? If she is the harbinger of the supramental consciousness, how is it that she didn't know what was going to happen? That used to be the common question. All the time the Mother would say, "I don't know, only the Lord knows." It was because she was living in the present, from moment to moment, and experiencing the beauty and delight of the world.

The world at each moment is in perfect harmony, it is difficult to understand, or to accept perhaps. But harmony means not only good things. If we go into a perfectly beautiful garden and look carefully we may see weeds, some thorns, some dry leaves, but all that makes up the harmony. Sri Aurobindo says, the supramental consciousness sees the totality as "succession of developing harmonies." This harmony is developing. There is never a perfect perfection. From one harmony the world is moving to another harmony, a higher or greater harmony that includes the past harmony. The new harmony does not reject the past, it includes it in its greater harmony. In the past systems of spirituality, materialism was never developed. It was shunned by the spiritualist who said "Concentrate on Nirvana, get your salvation, get rid of this world." Today Matter is more developed, it is revealing itself and becoming more and more conscious. This creates a greater harmony than in the past. It is an enlarging consciousness, an enlarging harmony.

The developing harmony comes at every moment. The Buddhists come close to this when they say, "the world is based on Kshanikavada," which means a momentary existence. It is a great truth that the world moves from moment to moment and therefore we should live the truth of the moment. We see this vis-à-vis the Supermind also. It is related to the supramental vision of things, but of course Buddha said this in a different context, that the world was an imperfect one, not a developing harmony. The Buddha gave us one side of the truth, but the supramental vision of a developing harmony brings us the other side of the truth.

Next, Sri Aurobindo tells us,

Different potentialities are embodied, placed, related in this field of Time and Space, each with its powers and possibilities fronting other powers and possibilities, and as a result the successions of Time become in their appearance to the mind a working out of things by shock and struggle and not a spontaneous succession. In reality, there is a spontaneous working out of things from within and the external shock and struggle are only the superficial aspect of this elaboration. For the inner and inherent law of the one and whole, which is necessarily a harmony, governs the outer and progressive laws of the parts or forms which appear to be in collision; and to the supramental vision this greater and profounder truth of harmony is always present. That which is an apparent discord to the mind because it considers each thing separately in itself, is an element of the general ever-present and ever-developing harmony to the Supermind because it views all things in a multiple unity. Besides, the mind sees only a given time and space and views many possibilities pell-mell as all more or less realisable in that time and space, the Divine Supermind sees the whole extension of Time and Space and can embrace all the mind's possibilities and very many more not visible to the mind, but without any error, groping or confusion; for it perceives each potentiality in its proper force, essential necessity, right relation to the others and the time, place and circumstance both of its gradual and its ultimate realisations. To see things steadily and see them whole is not possible to the mind; but it is the very nature of the transcendent Supermind.<sup>15</sup>

The mind in its piecemeal knowledge of time and space sees the many possibilities and this presents itself as a clash of ideas in the mind. In contrast, the Supermind has one stretch of knowledge of space and time, the totality of knowledge. In the Supermind there is no confusion and groping because there is this totality of knowledge. It sees all things in multitudinous unity, hence there is a general and ever developing harmony. Supermind sees the whole extension of time and space and embraces all the mind's possibilities in a single look.

When we talk about the Supermind's perception of space and time, we can think of what Einstein said about space and time in his theory of Relativity. I am not an expert in science, but the basics we can understand. His theory of Relativity came as an intuition to him. He says that when one travels at the speed of light, 186,000 miles per second, space shrinks and time. He also says that slows down one cannot travel at the speed of light, but if one did, time and space would shrink to a zero point. Perhaps this is related to what happened at the big bang, when the universe exploded into being from a single point, gases started coming out and matter and time and space started being formed. With the extension of light, time began because the moment the light spread out, went forth, there was this extension of time and space. Einstein also tells us  $e=mc^2$ , and there again you see that when things approach the speed of light, their mass becomes infinite, though again he says it is not possible for any object to move at the speed of light, because no single object can have an infinite mass. But in the Big Bang theory, they say that the whole mass of the universe was there at a single point and that time was arrested at that point. And then once it exploded, time and space began, the infinite mass expanded and started breaking into portions of masses.

Now, the Supermind itself is light, and being light, it travels at that speed, going beyond time and space. At the speed of light, space becomes zero and mass becomes infinite. When we talked about the Supermind being timeless and in time, it can very well be related to Einstein's theory. We speak of Sachchidananda from whom began this creation. Where was all this mass? In the last chapter, 'The Supermind as Creator' we said that the Supreme has the entire potential of the manifestation but not in the way as we see it in the manifestation. Just as time and space shrink and become zero at the speed of light, mass merges into a single point. Brahman has also been called the Bindu, the dot or spot. He is the Bindu who contains the whole universe. The Bindu is the concentrated entirety, light, time, everything in that single dot. So what we get in science, especially in Einstein, has a relation with the supramental consciousness. If we have to explain the Supermind to those who have a scientific mentality, this issue of time and space could be a meeting point. One can expand a lot on these ideas but at the same time there is a difference. Let us not come to the conclusion

that Einstein put the entire supramental formula into a mathematical formula. Einstein caught a truth, and he says it was an intuitive truth. What he missed perhaps was that this light is the light of consciousness. In fact, Einstein spoke of a mystic element in his formula. When he spoke about his theory of relativity, he did confess that there is some mystic element which he himself had not grasped.

One sidelight on the supramental consciousness I would like to mention here is that the Mother said that with the descent of the Supermind the first and the foremost thing that came was the supramental power. The consciousness and light are there more as a supporting element, but the supramental power came first because it has to protect the new supramental being from the clutches of ignorance which try to pull it down again into the clutches of the inconscience. Because there was not the supramental power, the previous Avatars who brought a higher consciousness—be it Krishna, Christ, or any other Avatar—that got absorbed into this soil with little effect on the human consciousness. This time the Mother brought down the supramental power first which can preserve or hold the supramental consciousness in a protective ring so it can work evolving and developing individuals in the new consciousness. So there was a kind of logical sequence in the order of the descent brought down by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

The next thing that Sri Aurobindo speaks about is,

This Supermind in its conscious vision not only contains all the forms of itself which its conscious force creates, but it pervades them as a indwelling Presence and a self-revealing Light. It is present, even though concealed, in every form and force of the universe; it is that which determines sovereignly and spontaneously form, force and functioning: it limits the variations it compels; it gathers, disperses, modifies the energy which it uses; and all this is done in accord with the first laws that its self-knowledge has fixed in the very birth of the form, at the very starting-point of the force. It is seated within everything as the Lord in the heart of all existences,—he who turns them as on an engine by the power of his Maya; it is within them and embraces them as the divine Seer who variously disposed and ordained objects, each rightly according to the thing that it is, from years sempiternal.<sup>16</sup>

The important point is that it contains all the forms of itself and it pervades them as an indwelling presence. We already have seen how the supramental consciousness becomes these forms. But the question now is how the Supermind is in all. We say all is in Brahman and Brahman is in all; here we are concerned with the second aspect. The first is philosophical, the second is psychological. A very important truth for human existence is that Brahman is in all, that the Supermind is an indwelling presence in all. The Gita says, “In the heart of all existences the Lord abides turning all existences as if mounted on a machine by Maya.”<sup>17</sup> The Lord is seated in all human beings, and Sri Aurobindo is saying that this is none other than the Supermind. How is it so? Why is it so? Religiously and devotionally it is nice to accept the Gita’s word, but I am afraid we take it for granted. It is easy to say that I am an Atman and the Lord lives within me. Sri Aurobindo is teaching us not to do that, because it is a blind understanding. We need to ask, How is the Lord an indwelling presence? How is the Supermind an indwelling presence? The answer is there in this very paragraph: “It is that which determines sovereignly and spontaneously form, force and functioning: it limits the variations it compels; it gathers, disperses, modifies the energy which it uses; and all this done in accord with the first laws that its self-knowledge has fixed in the very birth of the form.” That is the answer—the Supermind has come in the very birth of the form, in the very substance of the form. It is in the very substance of the human body, in the bones and the flesh, not simply as the soul and psyche. It is the soul and spirit in the atom itself, it is the indwelling spirit at the atomic level. It is the central light of consciousness in the atom, without it no transformation could have been possible.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother saw the possibility of the transformation of the physical because they saw that the Supermind is in the very cells of the body! If it was not pre-existent at the time of formation of the cell, how could it be put in? Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not put the Supermind in the cells, they have only removed, as it were, the veils of false matter from the cells. When the Mother said she was working out the transformation in her body, this “working out” is exactly the removal of the veil of false matter. She ripped open as it were, this dense veil from the cell. They were unveiling the Supermind in the cell. This is how there is the possibility of transformation.

This is the implication of the phrase, “its self-knowledge has fixed in the very birth of the form, at the very starting point of the force.” What is the starting point of the Force? It is when the Chit-Tapas gets into movement. Chit is consciousness and Tapas is Force. Hence, the very starting point of the Force is when consciousness becomes mobile, releases the force, the Tapas. It is this Tapas which becomes the Prakriti, the dynamic nature, the self-manifestation. The Supermind gets into the form given by the consciousness, and gives the form “the first laws that its self-knowledge has fixed.” This is how the Supermind is at the very base of this universe, and by base I mean the Inconscient also. From that base, the Supermind is reawakening, is returning, as it were.

Somebody asked the question, “How do we relate the idea that the Brahman has become this world with the idea that the Supermind has become this world? Who is at the base of the world, Brahman or Supermind?” We have had many definitions of the Supermind, but one of the definitions is as the title of the earlier chapter says, “The Supermind as Creator.” It is simply that there is no contradiction or conflict, saying that the Supermind is at the base, because Brahman as creator is the Supermind, Sachchidananda as creator is the Supermind. A person can be an executive in an office in the morning and when he comes home he is a father and a husband. Similarly, Sachchidananda is the Supermind when he is in the role of the creator. When he is not manifesting himself, he is known as Tat or That. That is how we can say that Supermind is at the base of the creation.

Why did Sri Aurobindo use this term Supermind, was it just for the sake of bringing in a new terminology? No. These concepts of Brahman and Sachchidananda give the connotation of the Divine as separate from the world. But for the new creation, for the manifestation of the supramental consciousness, which is imminent, it is necessary that we understand that the Supermind is at the base of Matter, and what was already there is coming out. It gives us a logical understanding of the new creation, otherwise it becomes something miraculous, something imposing. Sri Aurobindo tells us that although it is far from us, it is not alien. It is there within our reach because it is there within us. The whole ancient philosophy has been reviewed and re-analysed, and a new terminology pertinent to the new consciousness, the next coming, is given by Sri Aurobindo.

Having said that, let's go to the next paragraph, where we see the effect of the indwelling Supermind in things:

Each thing in Nature, therefore, whether animate or inanimate, mentally self-conscious or not self-conscious, is governed in its being and in its operations by an indwelling Vision and Power, to us subconscious or inconscient because we are not conscious of it, but not inconscient to itself... Therefore each thing seems to do the works of the intelligence, even without possessing intelligence, because it obeys, whether subconsciously as in the plant and animal, or half-consciously as in man, the real-idea of the divine Supermind within it.<sup>18</sup>

This explains a lot of things, because when we look at nature we often wonder at its exactitude. For example, some birds transmigrate thousands of kilometers, spending weeks on flights, and reach the exact pond they had come the previous year. I have even seen on the National Geographic TV channel how the birds sometimes go to the exact trees where they had rested midway in their previous trip. They don't have a route map, they don't have the compass to find out the north pole direction, but they have a precision better than any compass or computer. So where does the bird get this supreme intelligence? We can see this wonder throughout Nature. When we look at the sunflower and see the pattern of seeds, miraculously perfect, we are bound to admit that there is some supreme intelligence at work somewhere. It's not just a question of spirit, it is intelligence. This intelligence is the Supermind which expresses itself subconsciously in the plant and the animal.

Sri Aurobindo continues, "But it is not a mental Intelligence that informs and governs all things; it is a self-aware Truth of being in which self-knowledge is inseparable from self-existence . . ."<sup>19</sup> This knowledge or intelligence is not the mental intelligence, it is the intelligence of Chit-Tapas which is linked with Sat, Existence. In all things that exist, right from the inconscient to mankind, the very fact of our existence means that this intelligence is working in us because existence and consciousness work together. It is something like an inborn knowledge, what we normally call instinct. But Sri Aurobindo goes deeper and says that each thing that exists, by the very fact of its existence, has

this knowledge. This chair has supramental knowledge, the ant has supramental knowledge, the bird has supramental knowledge. All have the supramental knowledge, but the difference is in “the instrumentation of self-expression.” This is where things differ. Nature has given human beings a better instrumentation called the mind which expresses the same Supermind which is there in the ant and the bird but in a more complex and self-conscious manner. As the Supermind or Nature brings forth better instrumentation, the supramental consciousness expresses itself in a better way. But the Supermind is there in all that exists, and all have the perfect knowledge because Sat and Chit are inseparable. And where there is consciousness, there is Tapas, all three are inseparable.

This is what is beautiful here: self-knowledge inseparable from self-existence is always there. Whatever knowledge we need for living is already there. If we want to have a higher life, if we aspire for something greater and live on a higher level of consciousness, then consciousness will bring us the needed knowledge. It is so peculiar. If we want to live an ordinary manner of life, satisfied with the knowledge of the senses, consciousness too gives us that much knowledge. But if there is an inner aspiration—“No, I want to live a spiritual life!”—somehow the knowledge comes. When people say it is a miracle—“I found this book Savitri in a bookshop and it changed my life,”—it is not by chance; it is this consciousness which brings the knowledge needed for the kind of existence you want, there is an inalienable link. Further down, he says “it is this Truth-Consciousness which has not to think out things but works them out with knowledge according to the impeccable self-vision and the inevitable force of a sole and self-fulfilling Existence.”<sup>20</sup> The ant and the bird don’t think, don’t rationalise or analyse. They spontaneously work out their self-vision through the inevitable force of their self-existence. They have the knowledge suited to their existence.

Why are Sri Aurobindo and the Mother talking about physical transformation; the transformation of the outer nature? Because we want to improve the instrumentation of the external nature so that a greater potential of the Supermind can express itself in this world, in this day-to-day existence. If we remain what we are, our outer nature being what it is, then there would be a tremendous delay, or even a self-annihilation of the human instrument. That is why there is an urgency for people to do integral sadhana, to change the nature. If we don’t

offer to the Supermind a better instrumentation on our mental, vital and physical levels, then mankind may have to be rejected and a new species brought in that has a better instrumentation. So it is a tremendous responsibility on us to change our nature. We must not get hooked to the idea that we will live in peace or Ananda; other yogis have done that. What we have to do is change our nature. Changing our nature connotes getting a better instrumentation.

Further down, he says, “Mental intelligence thinks out because it is merely a reflecting force of consciousness which does not know, but seeks to know.”<sup>21</sup> The mental intelligence gropes for knowledge whereas the Supermind is in the basic existence itself. Of course, with the coming of the mind there is a greater instrumentation than what is available in the bird.

Mind has a particular role; it is a kind of junction in the involution. You might sometimes wonder what has happened to humanity in that it has a higher mental instrument and yet seems to be worse than the animal. In the involution, at the level of the mind, there is a junction which makes a tremendous difference. It is the complete breaking point, in other words, the point in which there is a complete division and individualisation. Till here there was a receding sense of unity, but in mind that sense of unity recedes for good and the consciousness of individualisation gets crystallised. And as the involution goes down further, it becomes harder and harder and smaller and smaller until it becomes the atom. In a way the first point of breaking began with the mind.

Then in evolution when the mind came again into the picture, there was this consciousness of individualisation that emerges, which is represented by the ego. That is why we have this problem of disunity, conflict and suffering. At the animal stage there is not this sense so much of being an individual. As in the involution the mind is the breaking point, so in the evolution the mind creates this division and disunity. This division and individualisation is not so focused or sharp on the vital level in the animals and plants or on the physical level of Matter. Only in the mind do we become aware of our ego. The animal is also an individual, and the tiger will not allow another tiger to come into its territory, but this acute awareness of the ego comes only at the level of man. Therefore we have this strange phenomenon—we seem

to be more evolved than other creatures in Nature but apparently we are in greater trouble because of this junction. Once we cross this junction of mind, then we start enjoying the unity for the harmony begins to dawn beyond the mental consciousness. This is why Sri Aurobindo constantly emphasises that we must go beyond mind. As long as we live in the mind there is no salvation. Salvation lies beyond mind.

Next, he says that,

the knower, knowledge and the known are not different entities, but fundamentally one. Our mentality makes a distinction between these three because without distinctions it cannot proceed; losing its proper means and fundamental law of action it becomes motionless and inactive. Therefore, even when I regard myself mentally, I have still to make this distinction.<sup>22</sup>

It is divided because the mind basically has been given the role of division in the involutory process. Division was necessary in involution, because the purpose of the involution was making the One become many. In the Supermind there is a movement which still holds the oneness of the Supreme, but at the level of the mind, it is like a sieve which makes everything an individual formation. So the mind has a necessary function, otherwise we would not have the multiplicity. Its separative consciousness divides everything, whereas up above at the supramental level all the three are one, but there is always a gradation. Sri Aurobindo says, “But the Supermind possesses and acts always, fundamentally, on this truth of unity which to the mind is only a secondary or acquired possession and not the very grain of its seeing.”<sup>23</sup> In between there is the Overmind, Intuitive mind, Illumined mind, and Higher mind—there the knower, knowledge and the known are already distinguishable, but it is only after the mind that they become distinctly separate.

So the mind has to be surpassed by silencing it. Silencing the mind is not a negative thing; silencing the mind means it will be able to receive from the higher levels of mind. When we were students we heard that the Mother had told the students that now it is time that people started using intuition instead of intelligence. In fact, that is

what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo envisaged—that the next growth of human consciousness would be more and more intuitive. Hence, silencing the mind is not negating the mind, it is to make the mind more capable of receiving intuition and the higher levels of thought beyond the mind. You can receive intuition by quietening the mind, it is only when it is quietened that the higher truths come to you.

Although with the mind we may have a sense of unity, still we may not act with a sense of unity. Sri Aurobindo gives a beautiful analogy, saying that mentally we all know that the sun is static and it is the earth which is rotating, but when we get up in the morning we still say the sun is rising and we perceive it that way. There is a dubious character of mind, we may know that there is unity but we act in division, because it is its innate nature, we cannot do otherwise.

Whereas with Supermind, its very essence is that of unity. Sri Aurobindo says, “Supermind sees the universe and its contents in a single indivisible act of knowledge, an act which is its life, which is the very movement of its self-existence.”<sup>24</sup> How does this sense of unity affect its action in the world? This is a very peculiar thing. Very interestingly, Sri Aurobindo would say, “Therefore this comprehensive divine consciousness in its aspect of Will does not so much guide or govern the development of cosmic life as consummate it in itself by an act of power which is inseparable from the act of knowledge and from the movement of self-existence . . .”<sup>25</sup> The key idea here is it does not so much guide or govern, it consummates. It is a wonderful explanation.

It is the mind which keeps guiding and governing. It has its norms: do this, don't do that. It has its morality, ethics, philosophy, theology. The mind is very good at all that. But the Supermind does not work that way; it acts with a power which is inseparable from the movement of existence. It consummates, it fulfils, it transforms. How? By working from within. It doesn't tell you, “Don't do that, it is wrong.” On the contrary, it is a unified consciousness, one with our consciousness. A consciousness which is one with all others will not say, “Don't do that.” It will see that you get that change, that transformation. It will effect what is needed for your aspiration, your growth. This is exactly, what the Mother did so marvelously, she always gave us a chance and corrected us from within, it was a kind of inner growth. She guided through dreams but did not guide in the mental way. She used

to say that when we are asleep we are more open to her. She could then influence and guides us. She hears our prayers, our aspirations, and focuses on our difficulties on different levels. It is similar to the working of the supramental force I guess; it works quietly within you, not from outside as an imposing factor. When the Mother sometimes said, “Do this” or “Don’t do that,” people would often react, because the mind is tremendously reactionary. Even with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, people revolted. So typically she did not compel us to do a thing, rather she would say something like this in essence that “I visit my children in the night, get into their inner being, solve their problems, and gave the necessary power and strength needed for their inner growth.”

This is one of the characteristics of the world today: the supramental consciousness and force is working itself out, pulverizing the world. All that is hidden and suppressed, all that has been pushed under the carpet by religion and morality, the Supermind is now bringing out in the open to be cleansed. Therefore, the world seems to be in big trouble and going through the darkest period, and yet it is a cleansing period. Supermind will not allow all the inconscient to lie dormant, it will cleanse the individual as well as the collectivity. It is consummating. It has the true knowledge by identity. It knows you and me thoroughly by identity and it does what is needed in you and me. Therefore, there cannot be one rule or law for all of us. That is what religion gave us; but Supermind knows each one’s need and requirement. In the age of spirituality, each one has to grow in the way he needs to grow. That will be done by the supramental consciousness. That is why I can be bold enough to say that even if people do not know Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, it doesn’t matter. Supermind is there upon the earth to work out that vision; it is the consummating force acting on the world.

We now get into a new issue about the nature of the mind and its contrast with Supermind. Sri Aurobindo takes a simple example, that of the tree and the seed:

This indivisibility of the comprehensive Supermind which contains all multiplicity without derogating from its own unity, is a truth upon which we have always to insist, if we are to understand the cosmos and get rid of the initial error of our analytic mentality. A

tree evolves out of the seed in which it is already contained, the seed out of the tree; a fixed law, an invariable process reigns in the permanence of the form of manifestation which we call a tree. The mind regards this phenomenon, this birth, life and reproduction of a tree, as a thing in itself and on that basis studies, classes and explains it. It explains the tree by the seed, the seed by the tree; it declares a law of Nature. But it has explained nothing; it has only analysed and recorded the process of a mystery.<sup>26</sup>

The mind analyses. It gets into the analysis of the seed itself, and then says this is going to grow into a particular tree, and then the tree will give again the seed. But the question is, why? Science gives only the analysis of how it happened. But Sri Aurobindo says that the mind doesn't tell us much. It only gives the analytical knowledge of things, but the why of this is not given. The mind always divides spirit and form. He says here in the next sentence:

Supposing even that it comes to perceive a secret conscious force as the soul, the real being of this form and the rest as merely a settled operation and manifestation of that force, still it tends to regard the form as a separate existence with its separate of law of nature and process of development.<sup>27</sup>

Even if the mind comes to recognise a deeper consciousness and soul in man, it separates the soul from the body, from the form, just as it separates the seed from the tree. The crux of the argument that Sri Aurobindo is presenting here is that we cannot separate the tree and the seed and fix one as the cause of the other, because both are part of and the result of something which the mind cannot grasp.

What does the supramental consciousness say about it? According to Sri Aurobindo, it would say, "The tree does not explain the seed, nor the seed the tree, the cosmos explains both and God explains the cosmos."<sup>28</sup> He elaborates on this. He says, "The tree and its process would not be what they are, could not indeed exist, if it were a separate existence; forms are what they are by the force of the cosmic existence, they develop as they do as a result of their relation to it and to all its other manifestations."<sup>29</sup>

## THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

This is the secret. The answer is that we have to see this as the process of manifestation. The transcendent consciousness first becomes the universal consciousness, and only then does it come to the level of the individual. For example, if we visualize the invisible ether becoming visible as a cloud, and in this cloud we can see that all the individualities are present, and then these individuals come down as drops of rain. These drops are what we call individuals. Before individuals are born they are there at the cosmic or universal level and from there they become individuals. This is what Sri Aurobindo tells us, “the seed and the tree are both explained by the cosmos.” Explained means we find their source in the cosmos. It is not the seed that produces the tree, it is the whole cosmos which produces both the seed and the tree: they are what they are because of the various relations between all things in the cosmos that are fixed in the supramental consciousness.

He elaborates,

The separate law of their nature is only an application of the universal law and truth of all Nature; their particular development is determined by their place in the general development . . . The Supermind, pervading and inhabiting at once the seed and the tree and all objects, lives in this greater knowledge which is indivisible and one though with a modified and not an absolute indivisibility and unity. In this comprehensive knowledge there is no independent centre of existence, no individual separated ego such as we see in ourselves; the whole of existence is to its self-awareness an equable extension, one in oneness, one in multiplicity, one in all conditions and everywhere.<sup>30</sup>

The unified vision of the Supermind is comprehensive and pervasive of all individual things separately and collectively. It is from the supramental vision that the manifestation which is measured and manipulated by mind proceeds. Each thing proceeds from the supramental idea within it—that is why he calls it a Real-idea.

He expounds upon the same point in the next paragraph. He says,

For this extension of the Being in Time and Space and this pervasion and indwelling is in intimate relation with the absolute Unity from

which it has proceeded . . . That high concentration of unity in the unextended Brahman must necessarily translate itself into extension by this equal pervasive concentration, this indivisible comprehension of all things, this universal undistributed immanence . . . “Brahman is in all things, all things are in Brahman, all things are Brahman.”<sup>31</sup>

I will not take up again how all things are in Brahman and how Brahman is in all things, but I would like you to take note of this sentence starting with “That high concentration of unity in the unextended Brahman.” We talked about this high concentration of unity when we talked about the Big Bang theory. It may also be seen as the unity of existence, consciousness, power and bliss of Sachchidananda. So when this explodes, when it starts spreading out, it “must necessarily translate itself into the extension by this equal pervasive concentration.” We call this universality when the high concentration of that single consciousness called Sachchidananda spreads out equally everywhere—that is the universal status.

Sri Aurobindo tells us in an earlier chapter that once this universalisation took place, it was as if Sachchidananda said to himself, “How will it come back to me?” To keep the same analogy that we took up previously, can the cloud go back to ether directly? No. There is the necessity of the individualisation. When the cloud bursts the rain drops come down, that water eventually evaporates and goes back to the cloud. That is the process of the universal becoming the individual, the individual returning to the universal. But the individual can go beyond the universal and into the transcendental, and this is man’s destiny. In an earlier chapter Sri Aurobindo asks, “What is the purpose of man’s existence upon this earth?” Each individual has to realise his universal and transcendent Self. Our life’s journey is to go back to God, but ‘going back’ not in the sense of withdrawal. When the rain drops come upon the earth, they feed the grass, feed the people, and then every drop is collected into a pond, a river or an ocean. That is the purpose of manifestation of each individual drop. Each individual has to aspire for God realisation because that is the purpose for which he was created. It is not just to live upon the earth and enrich it materially or do whatever we want to do. We must work towards the return journey, towards the Godhead.

In the next paragraph he writes about the return journey. He says,

But what then is the origin of mentality and the organisation of this lower consciousness in the triple terms of Mind, Life and Matter which is our view of the universe? For since all things that exist must proceed from the action of the all-efficient Supermind, from its operation in the three original terms of Existence, Conscious-Force and Bliss, there must be some faculty of the creative Truth-Consciousness which so operates as to cast them into these new terms, into this inferior trio of mentality, vitality and physical substance. This faculty we find in a secondary power of the creative knowledge, its power of a projecting, confronting and apprehending consciousness in which knowledge centralises itself and stands back from its works to observe them.<sup>32</sup>

We have been speaking about the all comprehensive and all pervading unitary consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo says “comes down into the individual.” That is the apprehending consciousness, which we will deal with at length in the next chapter, ‘The Triple Status of Supermind’. Here he is just giving an introduction to tell us that this consciousness, which conceives in the universal way, projects itself to bring forth those things that are embedded in it, just as the cloud has to bring forth its rain. This bringing forth of individual forms is the second function of the supramental consciousness. The first one was the comprehending consciousness which envisages the whole thing. The second function is “the projecting, confronting and apprehending consciousness in which knowledge centralises itself and stands back from its works to observe them.”

An important term here is “knowledge centralises.” If we understand this, we can understand the apprehending consciousness. We saw that in the first level, the comprehending consciousness, the knower, the known and the knowledge are one and indivisible. In the second level or the apprehending consciousness, there is a concentration and the knower sees the known as an object, as something ‘outside of himself’.

For example, I can look at the whole hall here without perceiving you all individually. I can have a whole vision of all of you, some

people sitting here, some people sitting at the back—my mind is not focused anywhere, it has one unitary vision. But then if I want to look at somebody, I focus upon that person. What is happening in my mind? This diffused vision now concentrates so that I can look at one particular person. This is the second aspect—the diffused, total consciousness crystallises into these circles; this is a psychological phenomenon and all of us do it.

As another example, you might see a garden and say it is beautiful, but if I ask which part of it is beautiful, you would say “I don’t know, let me look at it again,” because you have had a general view only. You look again and say the red flower is especially beautiful. What is the psychological analysis? You focused on one object, the red flower, and while looking at the red flower, the other things vanish in a way. There is a centralising and focusing of the consciousness, and then you see the object outside of you in this focus of attention. This is the second level where the knower, the known and the knowledge become separated. This is the second level and there is a lot more to say about it, but we will discuss this more in the next chapter. Here the important point is that the oneness now becomes the multiplicity. When the rain clouds give raindrops, the multiplicity has come in. Multiplicity means the subject and the object become separate—the first level is oneness, the second level is differentiation.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

Secondly this conscious Soul concentrated in knowledge, this Purusha observing and governing the Force that has gone forth from him, his Shakti or Prakriti, repeats himself in every form of himself. He accompanies, as if it were, his Force of consciousness into works and reproduces there the act of the self-division from which this apprehending consciousness is born.<sup>33</sup>

Here we are at the second level: where the centralised concentration and the knower and the known are separated. What is the very first division? On the highest level, this knower and the known, or what we call Purusha and Prakriti, or Ishwara and Ishwari are one. When the supreme Sachchidananda comes down, it is at the second level of Supermind where we have the division into two different aspects, the

subject and the object, Purusha and Prakriti, and then this division comes down further into this universe. That consciousness which has this division of the Purusha and Prakriti descends into the universe to the extent that each one of us has this division of Purusha and Prakriti. This division that took place at second level of Supermind continues into the manifestation of the individual human being.

In the next sentence, he says “In each form this soul dwells with his nature and observes himself in other forms from that artificial and practical centre of consciousness.”<sup>34</sup> So each one of us has the soul, the Purusha, observing the Nature. You may ask, why all these Purushas? And why does this Purusha want to observe other Purushas, other individual beings? That is a fundamental question we should ask ourselves: “What is the gain of the Supermind in bringing the Purusha onto the level of the human mind while keeping the division?” Here Sri Aurobindo gives the answer in a single sentence:

...the multiplication of centers is only a practical act of consciousness intended to institute a play of difference of mutuality, mutual knowledge, mutual shock of force, mutual enjoyment, a difference based upon essential unity, a unity realised on a practical basis of difference.<sup>35</sup>

This division has been created purposely for the Lila, what is known as the divine play. In the divine play there has to be differentiation. When we play a game, we have the opponents and our team. A game cannot be played if there is no division. So there is purposely made an apparent division between one Purusha and the other Purusha. When we say division, it is not an absolute division, it is only a division for the sake of the play. And once this play is over all, our efforts are only to realise that this is only a practical way of experiencing ourselves from different standpoints. This Purusha and this Prakriti are actually one consciousness, and all these Purushas are not really divided. It is like if there is a full moon, and you have ten bowls of water on the ground, you can see in the bowls ten different full moons. But do we say the moon is divided? Not at all. And yet there is a joy in looking at ten moons in the ten bowls. So the purpose is delight, the delight of the play in difference, and yet it is the same being that is reflected

in all these individuals. It is the same single Self that is reflected in all human beings. I think I am separate, I think my soul is different from yours, but the day I realise that all this is only a reflection of one single Self, that is the point of realisation. Realisation is nothing mysterious, it is only to come to the proper understanding and the proper realisation of that understanding. *The Life Divine* gives us that understanding, but realising it is our business—we have to practice it in ourselves and in our life. Sri Aurobindo tells us that the whole purpose of all this is delight; I find there is no other explanation possible for this creation.

Somebody once asked the Mother, “You say all this is for delight, but is there delight in this world? What we experience is suffering.” She said (I am paraphrasing here): “I am sorry. If you want to know these things, contact the source, the source consciousness, then you will have the answers... And perhaps when you contact the source consciousness, these questions won’t even arise because you will have the whole vision.” As I told you in a previous talk, take the example of a beautiful garden, where there are some thorns along with the colourful flowers and statues. When you say it is a wonderful garden, it is the totality of the garden which is wonderful. So did the ancients say, “Delight is the main purpose, and in fact, this world is nothing but the Divine playing with himself.” This is what we call the play of difference based upon an essential unity.

Lastly, Sri Aurobindo concludes by saying that “We can speak of this new status of the all pervading Supermind as a further departure from the unitarian truth of things . . . We can see that pursued a little farther it may become truly Avidya, the great Ignorance . . .”<sup>36</sup> This descent of the Purusha and the Prakriti goes down to the level of the mind, and then further down until we get to the level of the Inconscient, the birth of the Ignorance, Avidya and all that follows.

Here he gives one crucial sentence which all of you should note. He says, “...the great ignorance which starts from multiplicity as the fundamental reality and in order to travel back to the real unity has to commence from the false unity of the ego.”<sup>37</sup> This is a wonderful explanation of the necessity of the ego. From this multiplicity, this Avidya or ignorance that has gripped us, how do we go back to the transcendent unity? When a child is learning to walk, he needs support.

He takes help of the leg of a chair or the hand of a person so he is able to stand up. Once standing, he takes one or two steps with the help of that. In the same way, initially in this amorphous Avidya or ignorance of matter, there has got to be some awakening. That first awakening of self-consciousness is ego. So ego has to be there in the beginning. It has a role which is to give us an individuality in the amorphousness of the Inconscient. So, awakened ignorance becomes ego. It is full of ignorance, no doubt, but at least it has begun to say, "Hey, I am in ignorance, I am full of these problems." At least this is the beginning of self-awakening. So ego is a helper, but when you come to do sadhana, ego becomes a hindrance. Until you take to sadhana, ego is a good helper. It will bring you all the things you want, and finally it will bring you all the things you don't want. It will give you all the pleasures of life, and inevitably all the sorrows of life too. In that way the ego has a function of awakening the Inconscient to Avidya, from Avidya to knowledge, and then we have to go beyond ego. So there is a need for the ego. But this ego, Sri Aurobindo says, "is a practical distinction in consciousness, but there is no essential difference of consciousness or true division in its vision of itself."<sup>38</sup>

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\* I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers  
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life  
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;  
Forerunners of a divine multitude

## THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

Out of the paths of the morning star they came  
Into the little room of mortal life.  
I saw them cross the twilight of an age,  
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,  
The great creators with wide brows of calm,  
The massive barrier-breakers of the world  
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,  
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,  
The messengers of the Incommunicable,  
The architects of immortality.  
Into the fallen human sphere they came,  
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,  
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,  
Bodies made beautiful by the Spirit's light,  
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,  
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,  
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,  
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,  
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.  
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,  
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways  
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods  
And dancers within rapture's golden doors,  
Their tread one day shall change the suffering earth  
And justify the light on Nature's face.  
Although Fate lingers in the high Beyond  
And the work seems vain on which our heart's force was spent,  
All shall be done for which our pain was borne.

### Lecture Notes

#### I. Supermind as the *Ritam-Chit*:

- a) It is the nature of the Divine Being, the Para Prakriti.
- b) It is an ordering self-knowledge by which the One manifests the harmonies of its infinite potential multiplicity.
- c) It is the source and keeper of Law in the world. The whole development is pre-determined in its self-knowledge.

II. Space – Time, Supermind and Mind

a) Supermind:

Not situated at a particular moment of Time. Time offers itself as an eternal Present. Similarly space is indivisible extension.

Mind:

Measures Time by Event and Space by Matter.

– Time is mobile extension.

– Space is stable extension.

b) Supermind:

Constant succession of a developing harmony.

– A harmony worked out by Time in terms of forms and forces that stand related in an all-containing extension.

Mind:

– Necessity of successions of Time.

– No perception of progression & change.

– Necessity of divisible Space.

– No mutable relations of forms.

c) Supermind:

An inner and inherent law of the One and whole governs the outer.

Mind:

Different potentialities embodied in Space/Time which in their working out appear as shock and struggle.

d) Supermind:

Sees all things in multiple unity, hence sees a general ever-present & ever-developing harmony.

Mind:

It considers each event and thing separately, hence sees discord.

e) Supermind:

Sees the whole extension of Time & Space and thus embraces all the mind's possibilities any groping or error for it perceives each potentiality it does not have in its proper perspective.

Mind:

Sees a given Time & Space and sees many possibilities in a pell-mell manner.

III. Supermind contains and pervades all:

## THE SUPREME TRUTH-CONSCIOUSNESS

- a) It is present in every form and force of the universe as the Lord in the heart of all existences.
- b) Therefore each thing, animate or inanimate obeys the Real-Idea of the Supermind within it.
- c) Not a mere mental Intelligence but a self-aware Truth of being in which self-knowledge is inseparable from self-existence.

### IV. Supermind's first principle: Comprehending vision

- a) All comprehending, all pervading and all inhabiting.
- b) In this consciousness, the known, knowledge and the known are fundamentally one. But to the mental consciousness, they are all separate for it makes the external the basis of all its operations. (Ex.: the sunrise: mental acceptance and physical persistence)
- c) Supermind always acts on the truth of unity. So, in its acts of Will, it does not govern the development of cosmic life but there is a consummation in itself by an act of power which is inseparable from the act of knowledge.

### V. The Process and the Oneness of Existence:

- a) To Mind, form and spirit are separate. It only analyses and records the process, the how of things. But it has explained nothing. Because of this basic approach of the mind, it leads to the birth of all error of the ego.
- b) Supermind does not see the process of how separated from the why. Both the tree and the seed are explained by cosmos and the cosmos by God.
- c) Brahman is in all things, all things are in Brahman, and all things are Brahman—The triple formula of Supermind.

### VI. Supermind's second principle: Apprehending consciousness

- a) Supermind casts the original terms of Existence, Conscious-Force and Bliss into the lower terms of Matter, Life and Mind by its faculty of Apprehending consciousness.
- b) Here knowledge centralises itself and stands back from its works to observe them. This is the beginning of self-division. A practical distinction is created between the knower, the knowledge and the known.

DELIBERATIONS ON *THE LIFE DIVINE*

- c) This action of self-division repeats itself down to the level of Purusha and Prakriti in order to institute a play of difference—a difference based upon essential unity. This difference based upon essential unity is needed for the play of mutuality, mutual knowledge and mutual shock of force and mutual enjoyment.
- d) All this, however ultimately ends in Avidya which is the seat of the ego which again is the helper in the return from the Avidya.
- e) There is a practical distinction but not an essential difference of consciousness or true division in its vision of itself.

## CHAPTER XVI

# The Triple Status of Supermind

One of the most interesting chapters on Supermind is ‘The Triple Status of Supermind’. This is where Sri Aurobindo describes with great clarity what the Supermind is and the way it acts. In the earlier chapters, first he said what Supermind is vis-à-vis the Supreme—it is the Divine Maya. Then he explains where its position is in the hierarchy of creation—it is Supermind as Creator. Then he tells us what is its nature—it is the Truth-consciousness. Once we know its innate nature, then he asks, how does it act? After this, in the next chapter, he will tell us about the Divine Soul. Till now we have been given a description on the impersonal level, but in the next chapter he goes into the personal aspect of the Divine Soul. Following that he gives a chapter comparing Supermind to Mind, making explicit the transition to our mentality. So this is the logic and rhythm of these chapters on Supermind.

In this chapter what we are going to see is the *modus operandi* of Supermind. But before we can see exactly the *modus operandi*, Sri Aurobindo leads us to it in a gradual manner. He doesn’t tell us straightaway because we will not understand. There is too much of a gap between ourselves and the Supermind. We cannot relate. So Sri Aurobindo takes us via another route which will automatically lead us to say, “Yes, this ought to be the Supermind!”

He starts with the idea that all this world in its essence is Sachchidananda; all of creation is essentially Sat, Chit and Ananda. Now, when speaking about the universe and the creation, there is an internal relation between the Sat and Chit. What exists, exists with form, or we can say, existence means form. So this Chit is the consciousness which gives existence a form, or it is the supreme existence which contains form.

Chit-Tapas has brought forth this universe of forms, but what is the role of Ananda? Ananda is the delight within existence and consciousness.

It is as if Sat and Chit are afloat in Ananda. It is not an additional dimension. It is the very delight of existence, in which to exist is to have delight.

That is the supreme status, but for us it may not be so. For us it may be that to exist is to be full of sorrow. That is what the Buddha has told us: to take birth is to be in sorrow. But this is quite the opposite of the divine status in which to be is to be in delight, to take form is to take form in Ananda. This is the internal link which conveys the message that Ananda upholds Sat and Chit. Had there not been Ananda, even Sat and Chit would not have come forth into this form.

Sri Aurobindo tells us here in the beginning that it is the “Eternal and inalienable Bliss of Existence, Bliss of Consciousness, Bliss of Force or Will” which has gone forth into this world.<sup>1</sup> He says that, “Concentrated in itself, it possesses or rather is the essential, eternal, inalienable Bliss; active and creative, it possesses or rather becomes the delight of the play of existence, the play of consciousness, the play of force and will.”<sup>2</sup>

This is the supreme status, but what about our existence? Can we see the same thing? Obviously not. Then how we do know about this supreme status? Is it just because Sri Aurobindo is telling us all these things and we believe, or is there something in us which innately feels the delight of existence? The words ‘delight of existence’ mean that the very fact I am living is a great joy. They suggest that in spite of all our problems, we still have this innate sense of delight. How is it that people from ancient times have said that there is Ananda, peace and joy within? Obviously it is because there is something within us in which this delight gets reflected. In fact, Sri Aurobindo would go to the extent of saying that the very fact that you think of God is because of the Atman. If God were not within you, you would not have conceived or thought of God. It is not in the capacity of mind to conceive. The philosophers may give all kinds of descriptions but they only formalise or mentalise the innate soul feeling. Often times it is the soul’s concrete or solid feeling that there is a great joy. The yogis and the saints have identified themselves with this soul experience. So Sri Aurobindo affirms that because this delight of being and of consciousness is reflected in our soul that we can dream of human perfection, immortality, freedom and God.

Ordinarily people do not have such dreams. Those who have dreamt of these things are great souls who have awakened themselves to the touch of the soul. If you go on the street and ask someone “do you dream of freedom, immortality and God?” he will say, “I am dreaming of my next meal!” Why is it so? Because unfortunately the soul is shrouded by the ignorance of ego. We are covered and entrapped by the ego. It is as if the psychic being or the soul is covered by layers and layers of cover of which the ego is the most external one. Because of this the delight cannot be felt outwardly. The more we take off this cover layer after layer, the closer we come to the delight within. If we can get beyond the ego we could feel the same delight.

This is what Sri Aurobindo tells us, but there have been other great philosophers and thinkers who have given us a different viewpoint. Others before him have said that this reality of Sachchidananda is so far removed from our world that they are completely irreconcilable, they cannot be bridged. When Sri Aurobindo would speak of the transformation of the body, people would not only disbelieve him, but perhaps they may even tell themselves. “All that is a chimera!” They say that because of this irreconcilability, there are only two solutions. One is escape. If I want to go somewhere but there is a wall between, and I keep banging my head on it, common sense would say, “try another way.” And if I see another door open, then I will go through that door which is opened. Who would break his head on the wall and say “I will break this wall?” Anybody would say, “It is foolish what you are doing, why do you want to break your head? It is common sense to escape from this world. If this is the problem, then leave it. It is easy to cut the knot, so cut it.” People found this escapism as the quickest, best method to go beyond this ego into the supreme consciousness. They said, “cut this knot and get out of it.” It was a quick way out, so India went on the wrong track of escapism.

Now, another solution to the irreconcilable difference between Spirit and this difficult material world was to say that materialism is the be all and end all. Forget about the existence of Sachchidananda. Both the solutions are such clean-cut ways: if you want God, forget the world; if you want the world, forget God. For thousands of years people have taken these two attitudes. In India, the attitude we have taken is to forget matter and take to God. In the West they said, “God is dead,

take to matter.” Each has been very successful and there is no confusion about this.

The one who seems to bring confusion is Sri Aurobindo himself, when he says, “No, I want both together!” He wants to eat the cake and have it too, as it is said. He says there is a problem, and then he asks how can this problem be solved? He says, “Why must we accept this either/or policy?” Sri Aurobindo tells us it need not be either/or if we can find a bridge connecting Matter and Spirit.

So the next question is whether there is such a bridge or not? In the Vedic age they said there is a great Path to the Superconscient but they did not mention this bridge. They said there is a path to the supreme, but the path they described gave such distanced markings on the road that people could not follow. If from here you want to go to Delhi and you have only one landmark in Chennai and another one at Bhopal, you do not know how to go about it. What Sri Aurobindo did was to give close landmarks so you don’t lose your path and you feel encouraged. He discovered this path with all the milestones in between. And the best descriptions we get of those intermediary regions is in *Savitri*, because what you can do through the medium of poetry, you cannot do in prose. He says if you can follow this path then our problem can be solved.

He has not yet described Supermind in this chapter, but there is a logical sequence in Sri Aurobindo’s presentation. If you follow him step by step, you will arrive at a clear understanding. Before we can build a bridge, the engineer will say we must have this much steel, this much concrete to span the distance and build the supports etc. Sri Aurobindo asks, “What is the nature of this bridge? What are its innate constituents?” If we can know this, then we can see if we have that kind of steel, that kind of cement in the market etc.

So he says this bridge must have as its innate nature a fundamental truth and unity of things and also it must be something extended beyond time and space. It must determine the movements of the supreme Sachchidananda. Sachchidananda is beyond time and space, so the very first necessity or characteristic of the bridge is that it has to bridge something which is beyond time and space with something in time and space. We also must be able to go up and down the bridging ladder.

Secondly, it must be able to translate Chit-Tapas, consciousness-force, into knowledge and will. Why? Because in this world and in the consciousness of mind, how do we proceed—It is by knowledge. If I want to do anything, first I think of how to do it, or as we say, I must have the know-how. If I want to make a computer, first I must know how to go about it. It is only then that I can put myself to the task. This knowledge and will is basically Consciousness and Force.

Thirdly, it must bring down Ananda, translate Ananda into the terms of joy and happiness in this world.

Is there a consciousness, or can there be a consciousness, which can do all these things simultaneously? He puts the question back to us and asks whether the mind can do all these things or not. Can the human mind at its highest capacity, not the ordinary working mind, but mind at its highest intensity, can it do this? There are experiences of great yogis who have passed beyond space and time into the consciousness of Brahman in what we call samadhi. In those great heights of samadhi, they are cut off from time and space. But there is no simultaneity of the Timelessness and this time, so they are still in the either/or scenario. They were either in the supreme Brahman consciousness, or in this world consciousness. Mind can reach it by silencing itself in samadhi through meditation, but reaches it at the cost of losing this world.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, on the contrary, did not encourage the state of samadhi. It is a kind of superconscious forgetfulness and a very passive state. Sri Aurobindo is against passivity. He is very uncompromising when it comes to disregarding or rejecting the world. Therefore samadhi is not the solution.

The mind can have tremendous knowledge. Take science, poetry, or philosophy—in these it can reach great heights of self knowledge and knowledge of the world. But most often, if it has the knowledge, it has not the will. There is hardly a person in whom knowledge and will are equally matched. Even in our own life it is either/or. That is why it has been said that philosophers build castles in the air. Philosophers are supposed to have knowledge, but often they are not on the ground. They usually don't have the will to make something manifest. Their thought floats in the thought-world, it doesn't come down to the world of matter. That is the problem with the mind, knowledge and will seldom match with each other. Moreover, this

mental knowledge and will do not reach the heights of the consciousness of Chit and Tapas, nor can it have this Ananda. It can give us happiness or joy, but they are momentary and dependent on external things. Never is the joy there without the support of some instigation or external support or external cause. Whereas Ananda is causeless, it is sheer delight. It is self-existent; it does not depend on any object, event, movement, space or time. Whereas what mind gives us is always dependent on space, time, event and cause. So we see that the consciousness that is necessary, and logically required, cannot be the mind.

This brings us back to the question as to what is it that fulfills this role? This role is needed if the world is to move towards perfection. Sri Aurobindo had dreamt of human perfection, but it is impossible to have it without a Truth-consciousness. So we see there is a logical necessity of a consciousness which could fulfill each of these conditions. Sri Aurobindo discovered it through his yoga and tapasya and gave it the name Supermind. He said that he had found this consciousness which can stand up to these conditions. This brings a complete revolution in human thinking, a new angle of looking at things, a new force. It is no more the horizontal thinking of one philosophy or another. He has raised the whole level of consciousness, and because of this, we can now hope for a new creation. The supramental consciousness is something completely different than mind, it is not simply a higher grade of mind. In this way, Sri Aurobindo here establishes in the very first section of this chapter the inevitable link between the supreme Sachchidananda and this world. It is Supermind which alone is that link.

Now coming to the next argument he says:

Knowledge and Will must therefore be the form which that Power takes in creating a world of relations in the extension of Time and Space. This Knowledge and Will must be one, infinite, all-embracing, all-possessing, all-forming, holding eternally in itself that which it casts into movement and form. The Supermind then is Being moving out into a determinative self-knowledge which perceives certain truths of itself and wills to realise them in a temporal and spatial extension of its own timeless and spaceless existence.<sup>3</sup>

If you want a short, beautiful, almost poetic definition, he says the Supermind is the Being in motion. He also refers to Supermind as Sachchidananda proceeding out of its primal poise.<sup>4</sup> Sachchidananda in its primal poise is at rest, but the same Sachchidananda when it is in motion or movement becomes a force. He says that Sachchidananda in motion is the Supermind.

But what kind of motion is it? It is a movement into “a determinative self-knowledge which perceives certain truths of itself and wills to realise them in a temporal and spatial extension...” It is a movement which while going into time and space is fulfilling some of its innate ideas. It is not just randomly moving or wandering about. All its movement is self-determined, self-willed and full of this self-knowledge. These are there behind every step it takes. There is self-knowledge, there is self-will or Tapas, and there is Ananda because it is Sachchidananda that is translating itself in time and space. It is Sachchidananda itself in motion and movement.

All those who have done their M.A. or Ph.D. in philosophy have heard many a time of Being and Becoming. Being is static, but Becoming is movement and motion. Now we get a new concept, ‘Being and the Supermind’. You can simply say Being and Supermind and you have said everything. We now have a simple formula or definition of Supermind which is that it is Sachchidananda in motion, and this motion is self-willed, self-conscious and full of delight.

Next Sri Aurobindo describes it a little differently but keeps the same essential meaning. He says that the Supermind is “omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent.” Let’s consider first its omnipresence, which must be true because all forms are its own. In the concluding part of the last chapter, Sri Aurobindo told us how the Supermind “not only contains all the forms of itself which its conscious force creates, but it pervades them as an indwelling Presence...”<sup>5</sup> This pervading and indwelling of every form, right to the subatomic level, is what we call omnipresence. All forms are pervaded by the Supermind.

Then we have omniscience, which is its self-knowledge. There is nothing in this world or in this universe that is not in the knowledge of the Supermind, because everything is a formation of its consciousness. The supramental consciousness or a supramental man would know the atoms and the solar systems as well as the occult secrets. It is like

asking the mud, “Do you know this pot which is made of mud?” “Yes,” the mud would say, “I myself have become the pot. Every atom of it is myself. Me and my knowledge are not separate.” With the human mind it is different. Me and my knowledge are different because knowledge comes to me from outside.

And then the Supermind is omnipotent. At the human level, there is myself and my power. I could have physical power, I could have mental power, or I could have the power of my position. The moment the position is gone, I would lose that power of my position, because it is something external, of course. Physical or mental power is part of myself, but is limited. In the case of Supermind we say its power is omnipotent, because the universe is made of its consciousness-force, its Chit-Tapas. The consciousness and force are not separated. Wherever there is consciousness, there is Tapas, its force or power. Whatever is omniscient is also omnipotent. In a human being, knowledge and will, consciousness and force are not always compatible. A man who is the prime minister may have a great intellect and knowledge but may not have the capacity to run the country. On the human level there is always some discrepancy between knowledge and will. It is in this context that Sri Aurobindo explains that the Supermind is omniscient and omnipotent.

There is one more aspect of its power which he describes here. He says:

Whatever be the poise or form its action takes, this will always be the nature of the divine Consciousness. But, its existence being absolute in itself, its power of existence is also absolute in its extension, and it is not therefore limited to one poise or one form of action.<sup>6</sup>

Now we can understand why Sri Aurobindo brings us back to the idea of omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. He is trying to take us to the next step. He tells us here that because it is omnipresent, the Supermind can take all levels of existence simultaneously. What does it mean? Human beings in our mental consciousness are limited to a single space, a single time, a limited consciousness. When I am here, I am not there in the garden. I can have only one position at a time.

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And at any given moment of time I can have only one position in my consciousness. My consciousness is focused upon one thing at a time. Whereas the Supermind, being omnipresent, can not only be in different places at the same time, but can be in different levels of consciousness too. That is the meaning when Sri Aurobindo says that the Supermind is omnipresent not only in terms of time and space, but also in terms of consciousness—it can be on all levels simultaneously; it can be transcendent, universal and individual.

Omniscience also has different levels. What are its different levels? Those are what the title of the chapter gives us, the triple status of Supermind. On the level of consciousness, these are the comprehending, apprehending and involved levels of the Supermind, which also correspond to the transcendental, universal and individual statuses of Being. Being omniscient, it can have the comprehending, apprehending and involved poises of consciousness simultaneously.

Being omnipotent it is unified Knowledge-Will. This Knowledge-Will, permeating the transcendental, universal and individual levels, is self-expressive. The supramental Knowledge-Will is there at the individual level, but in the ignorance, it is not fully self-expressive, but rather it is there as hidden potential. The individual has limitations, but to the extent it has been given the instrumentation for self-expression it is there. The ant and the beehive also have the supramental intelligence, but as we evolve, the supramental consciousness has a greater capacity for self-expression.

Sri Aurobindo is going to concentrate now on the omniscient aspect which is the triple status of the Supermind, and which is involved in a one to one correspondence with the three states of the Being: the transcendental is the comprehending status, the apprehending is the universal and individual is the involved status. But before we take up these inner fields, there is one more clarification we need to make.

In the Upanishadic terminology, we have four terms that are very close to the Supermind's triple status: *Vijnana*, *Prajnana*, *Sanjnana* and *Ajnana*. While commenting on the Kena Upanishad, Sri Aurobindo gives us the definitions and explanations of these terms, and you will see the remarkable closeness they have vis-à-vis the triple status of Supermind. The Upanishads date back to 5000 years or so and yet give us the essence of psychology, of how the Supermind works and its

various processes. This is truly a brilliant chapter in the Kena Upanishads. Here is the paragraph:

Vijnana is the original comprehensive consciousness which holds an image of things at once in its essence, its totality and its parts and properties; it is the original, spontaneous, true and complete view of it which belongs properly to the Supermind and of which mind has only a shadow in the highest operations of the comprehensive intellect. Prajnana is the consciousness which holds an image of things before it as an object with which it has to enter into relations and to possess by apprehension and a combined analytic and synthetic cognition. Sanjnana is the contact of consciousness with an image of things by which there is a sensible possession of it in its substance; if Prajnana can be described as the outgoing of apprehensive consciousness to possess its object in conscious energy, to know it, Sanjnana can be described as the inbringing movement of apprehensive consciousness which draws the object placed before it back to itself so as to possess it in conscious substance, to feel it. Ajnana is the operation by which consciousness dwells on an image of things so as to hold, govern and possess it in power. These four, therefore, are the basis of all conscious action.<sup>7</sup>

These four, therefore, are the processes of all conscious action. These are the same as in Sri Aurobindo's triple status of Supermind, except that in his analysis the third and fourth stages are combined together. What is so very interesting about it is that Mind does exactly what the Supermind does, though in a much smaller capacity and capability.

For example, I have an idea, I want to create a building for SACAR, so at first I have the idea in its essence. Afterwards as I think about it, slowly it takes shape in my mind and the concepts come. It then becomes an object in my mind, it will accommodate x amount of people, it will have offices and lecture halls, it will have rooms for people to stay, etc. Next it starts objectifying itself or finding its place in objective reality. We had to check out dozens of places and ultimately, we found this site. Through this process the object comes forth, and once the object comes forth, it comes into contact with the senses, it starts becoming the object we call a building. It becomes a sensorial

experience which is no more on the ideal level. And it becomes such a sensorial experience that day and night I think about it and nothing else. I am completely lost in it. This is the process of simple, human, intellectual or mental activity.

Now why did I take up this point from the Kena Upanishad? To elaborate on the same point that Sri Aurobindo emphasises, which is that mind is only a reflection of the Supermind. Constantly he seems to be telling us, "Do not alienate Supermind from Nature." So Supermind, though it is not in the neighbourhood of Mind, is definitely the source of the characteristics which are recognisable on the mental level. You should not think that this comprehending or apprehending consciousness is something non-understandable. It is there in you and me. So the conclusion is that mind can be transformed. That is, it can be taken back to its source, because it already has the living connections. The living contact is already there in what we call the comprehending, apprehending and the involved processes. It is only that these interlinking arteries in Mind have become narrow. But Sri Aurobindo opens these channels once again so that the consciousness can flow actively from Supermind to Mind and from Mind to the Supermind.

You can see the objective of Sri Aurobindo in all this analysis. I must say that he is very compassionate and patient, because time and again he tells us the same things, but in different ways. He has described so many different dimensions of the same Truth. He gives us all this introduction only to tell us that the Supermind is already in action, mind is already receiving it. Our transformation is not a chimera, not a poetic fancy but it is a reality already in the making.

We now take up the second part of the chapter. We have seen how Sri Aurobindo gradually takes us towards the triple status of Supermind. We have seen on the way the logical necessity of the Supermind, Sachchidananda in motion. And being Sachchidananda himself in becoming, Supermind is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. These are the three characteristics that we have given to our concept of God and we have seen how these three concepts are inseparable. We have shown that the omnipresent has the three characteristics of transcendent, universal and individual, and that the omniscient becomes the comprehending consciousness, the

apprehending consciousness and the involved consciousness. We are now going to discuss these concepts of the omniscient in more detail.

We shall take them up one by one, and the first characteristic is the comprehending consciousness. I have given you a different terminology from the Upanishads, and the term there for this level is Vijnana. What exactly is this Vijnana, or what we call comprehending consciousness? Sri Aurobindo would say,

We have seen what is the nature of this first and primary poise of the Supermind which founds the inalienable unity of things. It is not the pure unitarian consciousness; for that is a timeless and spaceless concentration of Sachchidananda in itself... This, on the contrary, is an equal self-extension of Sachchidananda all-comprehending, all-possessing, all-constituting.<sup>8</sup>

There is a phrase here in which he says that Sachchidananda is a “pure unitarian consciousness.” When we speak of Sachchidananda, we should remember this reference to the pure unitarian consciousness. But we have seen that Supermind in its Vijnana status is also unitarian. Then how is Sri Aurobindo distinguishing between this pure unitarian aspect of Sachchidananda and the unity consciousness of the comprehending consciousness of Supermind? Obviously there is a difference, and that difference lies mainly in the factor of time and space. Sachchidananda is beyond time and space. (Draws on the black board) I could represent it by drawing an empty circle. Its contents are not known, because it is not yet manifest. For Supermind, I could represent it by a circle which is filled as showing it has content. A content is there because it has come into time and space, and yet its content is indistinguishable. It has the consciousness of oneness and absolute unity, but it is also all-comprehending and all-possessing. It possesses everything that is there. It has the vision, comprehension of the whole thing and is all-constituting.

It has everything within itself that is going to come forth in the future, but as potentials. All the possibilities of the future are there but nothing is distinguishable as yet. This is the idea in its essence. Everything, the future and all its possibilities are there in their essence. We should remember we are speaking of infinite possibilities, not just

one possibility. That is very important to understand; that an infinity of possibilities are already there. Try to imagine this aspect of the Supermind: nothing is as yet decided what is to come forth or what line of creation would be manifested. This is Sachchidananda's first step into time and space. He has just revealed and unveiled himself. Therefore, the possibilities of manifestation are infinite.

If I can give you an analogy, think of a sculptor, the mighty Michelangelo for example. If you have read his life story—I read the marvelous book *The Agony and the Ecstasy*—you see a sculptor who gets possessed by an intuition, an idea. He does not know what to do and there is a kind of agony in him. There is great pressure building up within him but he doesn't know why, though he knows that something is to be born or take shape. He has this comprehensive consciousness, but no details, so he feels the agony of the birth to come. This has been described by many poets and artists. They have this inner pressure to bring something out, and once this pressure reaches a certain pitch there comes a kind of clarity within, or a beginning of clarity. He knows something is to be born and within that something he sees several choices. Suppose he has four or five choices in front of him and each image presses him with an inspiration. Out of these multiple possibilities of creation, he chooses one them.

Then comes the second status in which the artist decides upon one image. For example, Michelangelo decides upon an image in which Mary is holding Jesus on her lap. Having chosen that beautiful image, out of the varied possibilities, he selects one. Once he selects one possibility—you can imagine the mental process—he looks at it in his own mind, not yet on the sensorial level. In his own mind he distances himself as he puts forth that image before the eye of the mind, as it is said. He can see the details and he knows the dimensions, tentatively the posture, what is the length, how Mary is sitting etc. There could be a hundred different ways of how Mary sits and holds Jesus, and out of all these choices he is bringing out one. So this is the second stage and there is a distancing of the knower with the object. What happens on the level of Supermind is a similar process. In fact we could say that what an artist does is a repetition of the original process of creation. This process is there in all creativity on the human level. Although infinitely far from the original creation, the essential steps or processes

are the same. So on the first level there is a unity with an infinity of possibilities within it. On the second level, the Supermind selects one possibility which is to manifest the many.

Describing this second stage, Sri Aurobindo says,

In the second poise of the Supermind, the Divine Consciousness stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains, realising it by a sort of apprehending consciousness, following it, occupying and inhabiting its works, seeming to distribute itself in its forms.<sup>9</sup>

Notice these words, “the Divine Consciousness stands back from the idea in the movement which it contains...” There is a kind of a separation which comes in, a distancing takes place but it is not a division. He says,

In each name and form it would realise itself as the stable Conscious-Self, the same in all; but also it would realise itself as a concentration of Conscious-Self following and supporting the individual play of movement, and upholding its differentiation from other play of movement.<sup>10</sup>

I will give you another analogy. You have all seen a pomegranate fruit? Before it is broken open it is a beautiful, pinkish, reddish fruit, but when you break it open you see little seeds inside all in clusters and separated by a very soft transparent membrane. All these grains are stuck together; each is an individual grain but not yet separated. There is only a differentiation. We can see each grain; you can almost count the grains on the inside of the pomegranate.

So in the second aspect there is differentiation, or as Sri Aurobindo would say, “soul-forms.”<sup>11</sup> Remember this term, because soul forms are quite different from nature-forms; he would use this latter term only for the body or for forms in the manifestation. The differentiation of soul-forms takes place here at this second level. It is here that there is the birth of the individual divine. This is of great importance. The supreme Sachchidananda is manifest on this level called the apprehending level as the individual divine.

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For the present, let us speak of this individual divine using the traditional terminology of Jivatman. The birthplace of the Jivatman is at the level of this apprehending consciousness. The comprehending consciousness has no distinction, no differentiation, no Jivatman; it is a fullness, it is indivisible, there are no individual soul-forms. But as I said using the analogy of the pomegranate, the soul-forms are not divided from each other. There is a distinction, just as one seed is distinct from another in the pomegranate fruit. One Jivatman is distinct from another Jivatman, but all the Jivatmans are embedded in the full consciousness and the oneness of Sachchidananda. Hence the reference to “the One in the many”—and we should really grasp this. The One is there, but also the essential qualities and characteristics of the Jivatmans are there. Sri Aurobindo tells us at the end of this sentence that it is “the same everywhere in soul-essence, but varying in soul-form.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, there is a consciousness of unity and oneness supporting an infinite number of individual Jivatmans.

We have said that these Jivatmans are transcendental in their essential consciousness and it is these Jivatmans which send their delegates into time and begin evolution as a soul and evolve into the psychic being. So the soul is the representative of the Jivatman in the evolution. Primarily the difference between Jivatman and the soul is this: one is beyond evolution and the other is in evolution. The direct parent of Atman is Jivatman; it is beyond Jivatman that we find Sachchidananda. The nature of the soul is akin to Jivatman and thereby that of Sachchidananda. That is why we often say that the soul is like his parent the Jivatman.

The Advaitins and others in the past have described that there is no difference in nature between the soul and Sachchidananda, or between the Atman and the Brahman. But there is a difference in potential; the nature is the same. It is like the sun’s ray and the sun. The ray of the sun and the sun have the same nature, but a single ray does not have the same potential or the same power as the full sun itself. To give another analogy: it is like the woman with the child in the womb. When the child is developing in the womb of the mother, it is not separate; the consciousness is one and the same, it is in complete unison with the mother. The individual form is developing in the mother’s womb while keeping in absolute unison with the mother’s body and consciousness.

Yet there is a kind of differentiation, the child is getting an individual formation and this is what happens at the apprehending level.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

There would be no essential difference, but only a practical differentiation for the play which would not abrogate the real unity. The universal divine would know all soul-forms as itself and yet establish a different relationship with each separately and in each with all the others. The individual Divine would envisage its existence as a soul-form and soul-movement of the One and, while by the comprehending action of consciousness it would enjoy its unity with the One and with all soul forms, it would also by a forward and frontal apprehending action support and enjoy its individual movement and its relations of a free difference in unity both with the One and with all its forms.<sup>13</sup>

This Jivatman which has the oneness of the Sachchidananda consciousness has the advantage of being in time too, because it is sending its delegate-child the soul into time. So Jivatman has this peculiar and unique position of being on one side in touch with Sachchidananda consciousness, because it is a direct formation of Sachchidananda, and on the other side, of having sent its delegate-child into time, it can play, it can influence, it can have effects on time and in space. Jivatman as a being is no more an impersonal consciousness; as an individual Divine being it is the one that is between time and timelessness, between the One and the Many.

When we talk of the realisation of the psychic being or the soul, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said that after this evolutionary process, a soul can return to its own Jivatman. In fact, when we talk about birth and rebirth, the soul, once it leaves the physical body, is said to go to its own world for rest. Rest is not in the physical sense like when we go to sleep. It is more a kind of absorption of all that it experienced in its immediate birth. It is that period when it is digesting or it is ruminating and enlarging itself based on the experience it had in the body it just left.

The soul after it leaves the body travels through several states or planes until the psychic being has shed its temporary sheaths,

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then it reaches the psychic world where it rests in a kind of sleep till it is ready for reincarnation. What it keeps with it of the human experience in the end is only the essence of all that it has gone through, what it can use for its development. This is the general rule, but it does not apply to exceptional cases or to very developed beings who have achieved a greater consciousness than the ordinary human level.<sup>14</sup>

And then it takes birth again, but how does it take the next birth? What are the factors, how does it decide? Where to go, which experience to have? The soul has to come back for another experience, but what kind of experience? It has been said in the Gita that in the last moments before dying you can choose the circumstances of your next birth. But as is explained in *Essays on the Gita*, that is not so easy unless the whole consciousness has been riveted onto that particular wish. In general what happens is that when the soul rests sufficiently, when it has recuperated itself, if I can say, then it decides where to go.

The condition of the souls that retire into the psychic world is entirely static; each withdraws into himself and is not interacting with the others. When they come out of their trance, they are ready to go down into a new life, but meanwhile they do not act upon the earth life. There are other beings, guardians of the psychic world, but they are concerned only with the psychic world itself and the return of the souls to reincarnation, not with the earth.<sup>15</sup>

The psychic being's choice at the time of death does not work out the next formation of personality, it *fixes* it. When it enters the psychic world, it begins to assimilate the essence of its experience and by that assimilation is formed the future psychic personality in accordance with the fixation already made. When this assimilation is over, it is ready for a new birth; but the less developed beings do not work out the whole thing for themselves, there are beings and forces of the higher world who have that work.<sup>16</sup>

In one word, the soul's role in the world is to transform this world. With each birth the soul, apart from drawing its experiences of this

world, brings the light from the Self and passes it on to Matter. The soul has a beautiful role: it is the bridge between the Self and Matter. It is the messenger or the communicator. It doesn't come just to take from the earth, on the contrary, it comes to give the earth its divinity. Soul after soul comes to bring divinity to Matter.

In fact, one could say that each form born upon this earth, each blade of grass, the ant, the bee, each form itself is meant for the delight. Each form is there for the delight of the Supreme. We can see one single moon in a million cups of water where the moon is reflected. That is what the Divine wants to see in all these millions and trillions of infinite formations. This is the reason for the need of form and the birth of new form. Don't imagine that just the human forms are alone needed because the blade of grass is also reflects and gives Sachchidananda the scope for delight. You can see how everything in this manifestation becomes important and valuable because it is there to reflect the Supreme. Well, that is the apprehending consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo says, "It is when the reflection of this Supermind falls upon our stilled and purified self that we lose all sense of individuality; for there is no concentration of consciousness there to support an individual development."<sup>17</sup> You might have heard that sometimes in trance one loses the sense of oneself; this basically may be some temporary experience of the comprehending consciousness. When Shankara speaks of the Atman becoming one with the Brahman in which there is this unitary consciousness, he says there is no existence of this world. When the comprehending consciousness touches you, you say it is only the Brahman. Whereas with the apprehending consciousness, Sri Aurobindo says,

If our purified mind were to reflect this secondary poise of the Supermind, our soul could support and occupy its individual existence and yet even there realise itself as the One that has become all, inhabits all, contains all, enjoying even in its particular modification its unity with God and its fellows. In no other circumstance of the supramental existence would there be any characteristic change; the only change would be this play of the One that has manifested its multiplicity and of the Many that are still one, with all that is necessary to maintain and conduct the play.<sup>18</sup>

So what would be the experience of the apprehending level touching the human consciousness? It is the experience of the realisation of the soul. In ancient India such a person was termed 'a realised soul'. According to my understanding, this realisation of the soul is only a kind of reawakening to its own truth. There is no reaching somewhere else, it is to realise deeply in the totality of one's being, not only mentally, that this world is verily myself, that all that extends is verily myself. It is just like when on a mirror there is a layer of dust and you cannot see your figure, so you wipe the dust and suddenly you see your clear reflection. Realisation is removing the dust of Avidya from the soul. This on the human level is what we call realisation. The soul has come from the Jivatman and now it knows its parentage, it knows its Brahman identity.

We shall now take up the third level and see what happens there. If you have followed this process here, the first level of the comprehending consciousness was one of unity. The second level was the apprehending consciousness in which there is the One in many. To explain what happens on the third level, let's go back to the analogy that I have stated earlier—that of the sculptor, Michelangelo. Once he finalised the image or the figure that was to be brought forth, he would go to the mountains where they get the white marble and personally choose the marble-block for his sculpture. He would see that there were no cracks and personally supervise the harvesting of the marble and get it transported to the studio. This selecting the material corresponds to the stage we described earlier as *Sanjnana* in which the object comes to the sensorial level. First was the *Vijnana*, second was the *Prajnana* and third was *Sanjnana* and *Ajnana* which Sri Aurobindo has combined together. On the level of the *Sanjnana* the object is not only differentiated but it is felt on the sensorial level.

And what does Michelangelo do when he brings the marble block to the studio? Whatever he had visualised in the stone, he tries to bring it forth. He first chips off all that is extra and slowly brings out the form. It is said that as the form started emerging, sometimes he wouldn't eat or sleep for days and nights, such was the intensity of his concentration. He just kept the candles burning day and night as he kept working on the statue. This intensity of concentration, *tapasya*, force of consciousness is the third stage which we can call the involved level.

The involved consciousness is where we find the experience of the Many predominates and the consciousness of unity recedes into the background but nevertheless remains. As Sri Aurobindo writes here,

A third poise of the Supermind would be attained if the supporting concentration were no longer to stand at the back, as it were, of the movement, inhabiting it with a certain superiority to it and so following and enjoying, but were to project itself into the movement and to be in a way involved in it. Here, the character of the play would be altered, but only in so far as the individual Divine would so predominately make the play of relations with the universal and with its other forms the practical field of its conscious experience that the realisation of utter unity with them would be only a supreme accompaniment and constant culmination of all experience; but in the higher poise unity would be the dominant and fundamental experience and variation would be only a play of the unity. This tertiary poise would be therefore that of a sort of fundamental blissful dualism in unity... between the individual Divine and its universal source, with all the consequences that would accrue from maintenance and operation of such a dualism.<sup>19</sup>

Here he uses the word 'dualism'. As with the sculptor, the Supermind also becomes absorbed in its activity. The many here is not only the Jivatmans, but there is a further distinction of the movement. We may say that when the knower is separated from the known, it is the birth of the Purusha and Prakriti, but at the same time, the sense of oneness is still there. The differentiation is visible and distinct. What we call the Purusha or the individual soul comes down into the world of objects and this soul becomes involved in the world. It begins to take full delight in the relations of difference, of the Many.

In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo gives a vivid description of the supramental world in which Supermind has this play of relations with the many. He says,

A marvellous sun looked down from ecstasy's skies  
On worlds of deathless bliss, perfection's home,  
Magical unfoldings of the Eternal's smile

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Capturing his secret heart-beats of delight.  
God's everlasting day surrounded her,  
Domains appeared of sempiternal light  
Invading all Nature with the Absolute's joy.  
Her body quivered with eternity's touch,  
Her soul stood close to the founts of the infinite.  
Infinity's finite fronts she lived in, new  
For ever to an everliving sight.  
Eternity multiplied its vast self-look  
Translating its endless mightiness and joy  
Into delight souls playing with Time could share  
In grandeurs ever new-born from the unknown depths,  
In powers that leaped immortal from unknown heights,  
In passionate heart-beats of an undying love,  
In scenes of a sweetness that can never fade.<sup>20</sup>

Whereas in this third level of the Supermind, the sense of oneness behind the diversity is now lost, the complete self-forgetfulness of the oneness which is Avidya, the ignorance, is the natural result. The Supermind comes down to the level of mind where it concentrates on the many and loses the sense of oneness. From there it goes into the many-ness so intensely that it goes to the level of the atom in matter. That is, multiplicity reaches the level of the atomic many. The atomic many is a sign of the Supermind completely losing itself in concentration. You can imagine the absolute and tremendous focus of this concentration and involvement!

I can give an analogy with the mind. When I go into the library, I first go to the philosophy section, then I go to the Indian philosophy side, then I go to the shelves with Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, and then I pick up *The Life Divine* and open it up. I then go to chapter 16 and find the page where I left off yesterday and start reading. My focus becomes narrower and narrower. Similarly, the Supermind comes down and narrows its focus, losing its sense of unity in the mind and lapsing into ignorance, and from there further descending to the level of the atom and subatomic particles where the narrowness is to the extreme limit possible. This descent is what we call involution and this involution reaches the level of the inconscient where there is no consciousness. It

is at the level of the mind that there is the birth of Avidya, the loss of the conscious sense of unity. This beginning of ignorance later goes to the extreme level of the inconscient.

Even in this extremely involved level where there is only the atomic form, the Supermind is there, but it is conscious and acting behind a veil that keeps it hidden from the surface. The atom is not aware of this Supermind within it, but it still acts instinctively, though unconsciously, with the Knowledge and Will of the Supermind behind it. The consciousness of the Supermind within it is focused so tensely and intensely on the form and movement of the atom that it has 'forgotten' both its apprehending and the comprehending levels of consciousness.

The whole process resembles that of a chess player who concentrates on the chessboard so intently that the world does not exist for him. Except for the little pawn who is in danger he does not know what is happening, he is unaware of everything else around him. When the game is over and when he pulls back from the exclusivity of that intense consciousness, he says, "Wow, I didn't realise you were here, how are you?" He becomes aware of the others and of the other dimensions of his existence. This withdrawal from the exclusivity of his concentration is similar to the realisation of the soul.

Similarly, our soul is involved so exclusively in this single birth, in this Prakriti that the ego thinks that it is the master, that it is separate and different from others. Why does it take this attitude? Because when the soul descends from the apprehending to the involved level and then further into the mind there is the birth of Avidya. That veil of Avidya or what we call the undivine Maya, kind of wraps or covers the soul with its own veil. The soul becomes a victim of that veil of ignorance. It is only when it goes back that it realises that it was wrapped up in this false consciousness. But with sadhana, while still in body and form, it could realise that it is not this divided consciousness but it is Jivatman. That is realisation. After death the soul is said to return to its own parent consciousness crossing the barrier of the Avidya, But this is also possible by tapasya, by sadhana, while living in the body and in this world.

We can concentrate on the idea, "I am That, I am the Brahman, I am the Jivatman" —the names don't matter. This is what Sankhya philosophy

told us, 'Withdraw from Prakriti into the Purusha consciousness.' Distinguish between Purusha and Prakriti, because if all the time I think I am the body, I am the vital etc. my consciousness gets focused on this external being. What is the purpose of these meditations? They are processes for stepping back from the external Prakriti into the Purusha, into the Divine Self.

It is as if the soul looks at its reflection in a pond and thinks that it is the reality. The reflection is Prakriti. You can imagine how great an ignorance it is in! Suddenly somebody throws a stone in the pond and shatters the beautiful image you were looking at. That is what the soul is doing. It is looking at Prakriti and is mesmerized. The problems or difficulties of life are stones thrown into that pond disturbing the image created by Prakriti. At that moment of disturbance, you realise that you are someone else and not that being which is reflected in the Prakriti. One of the benefits of difficulties and problems is that you withdraw and realise you are not the Prakriti, you are someone else. That is one of the purposes of sorrow and suffering. When you are so lost in that image and you think you are the reflection in the pond, be ready for a big stone to demolish that image!

There is again the consciousness of oneness on the level of the inconscient, but it not conscious of itself. The superconscient oneness is conscious of itself. All our efforts are towards awakening the inconscient to its own oneness. Each event in this multiplicity is there to bring a shaft of light and to compel the inconscient to wake up. It is for this purpose that souls are sent to earth—to bring down the shaft of the supreme Light. Time and again the supreme consciousness comes down. It touches and then withdraws; it touches again and brings a trembling light or a little awakening in the inconscient and the ignorance. There is a kind of 'teasing' that takes place with each soul that comes on the earth. Even when a soul once rises above the Avidya, there is still the necessity for the births of such souls. Sometimes during crucial points of transition, when millions of souls have done their work but the awakening needs to expand further, the Avataric soul comes down and brings the superconscient light, the comprehensive light and vision and raises evolution to a higher level. These are necessary for the important stages of our evolution. What is the end of this evolution? It is simply that this inconscient oneness is reawakened in Matter and Man.

Oneness was achieved by many individuals in the old yogas; many yogins have achieved it. They regained the sense of oneness, they realised they are one with Brahman. But for Sri Aurobindo this is not sufficient. One has to realise the oneness with the Brahman and the oneness with the many. This is the most important and difficult realisation of all. In a single body the One and the many must meet, and that single body is the supramental body.

That is the reason for the great tapasya of Sri Aurobindo, the immense value of his tapasya. What he has done, what he wants to do, is beyond mind and we cannot put it in books. The supreme oneness and the absolute many-ness must be brought together on the level of the mind, on the level of the vital, on the level of the body. Nothing short of the combination of the many-ness and oneness in the single body is the object of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga. All other things are a preparation or mere learning of the alphabets.

We come now to the last section where Sri Aurobindo tells us that the truth of each level has been perceived in our Indian philosophy but each separately. Sri Aurobindo has for the first time given us the triple status in a single vision or a single consciousness. The first level is represented by Kevala Advaita, Monism, which says that the One alone is true, and this was perceived by Shankaracharya. The great Shankaracharya may not have realized the comprehensive consciousness of Supermind, but he got the essence of that consciousness which is one without division. That is how he could say that Brahman alone is the reality and the world is illusion. It was true; his experience was absolutely true because there cannot be an admission of anything else here on this level. He says there is the Reality and there is the appearance; he calls this world an appearance imposed upon Brahman by Maya. But now we can understand the idea that if one has the realization of the consciousness which Shankaracharya had, there cannot be the world as we perceive it. Shankaracharya was absolutely right in his declaration that Brahman alone is real, because that was the truth of his experience; at that level of experience the world as we know it does not exist.

Then when it comes to Ramanuja's experience what do we see? Basically it was the experience of the Purusha and Prakriti, the oneness in the Many. Ramanuja said that the world is true, but Brahman is

the Reality. This is known in Indian philosophy as Vishishtadvaita, or Qualified Monism. And what he said of his experience is absolutely true. There is a double reality in the sense of Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha and Prakriti correspond to the Brahman and the world. Sri Aurobindo confirms this truth when he says that this is the teaching of the Vedanta as we have it in the oldest form in the Upanishads.

The third viewpoint is that of Dvaita Dualism. Dvaita is also true. Although from one point of view the One and the many are eternally and essentially the same, from another point of view the manifestation is eternally different from the intelligence which it manifests. Dvaita tells us that there is a separate reality of the many. Madhwarcharya said that there is an eternal reality to the individual souls, to the many. In the involved level of consciousness the duality comes to the front while the unitarian consciousness recedes into the background. As the consciousness focuses more and more narrowly and descends into mind, the veil of Avidya comes in and the unity is hidden behind the veil. Then the duality becomes the sole experience, the oneness is no longer there, it is completely hidden.

So Sri Aurobindo tells us that Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Dvaita are merely various ways of looking at the relations of the many and the One. None of them has the right to monopolise the name of Vedanta. Advaita is true because the many are only manifestations of the One. Vishishtadvaita is true because the many are eternal in the One. Dvaita is true because the individualities, the individual souls, the Jivatmans, are also eternal.

In Sri Aurobindo's consciousness these three great masters of philosophy—Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa—are united and perhaps fulfilled! What Sri Aurobindo has opened up is a new chapter in human evolution and in his vision he has taken up not only the spiritual philosophies, but also the metaphysical philosophies and synthesised them.

Sri Aurobindo has gathered within his own experience of the supramental consciousness a tremendous synthetic vision of philosophy, yoga and world unity. All the different strands of human thought have converged in him. That is the greatness of the master; he is not simply a philosopher, he is not simply a psychologist, it is as if the whole stream of human consciousness has converged into the single body

of Sri Aurobindo. It is in the body, I am emphasising, not just his consciousness. Sri Aurobindo seems to have launched himself into the future carrying the whole of human consciousness with him. That is the Life Divine, I suppose.

So if you want to understand, if you want to fulfill your life, I would say you should not leave the world without first reading *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. It is not just a reading; the whole human consciousness with its apex consciousness has been represented to us. It has been gifted to us. That is why I believe we are here to do his work, and SACAR would like to take up intensely the dissemination of this unitarian vision of Sri Aurobindo.

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### Lecture Notes

#### I. All existence is a Divine Lila

- a) The Divine Being becomes in his manifestation the delight of the play of existence, of consciousness, of force and will. This delight is shared by our own essential self too. By going beyond our false self, we can also enjoy that delight of our being.
- b) The higher Oneness and the lower Multiplicity pose the problem of Reality. They seem to be irreconcilable and one of them has to be abolished if the other has to be true. But with a link between the two which can explain them to each other, this problem can be overcome.

#### II. Supermind as the link between Sachchidananda and the World

- a) Because of the apparent disparity between the higher and lower hemispheres, there is a logical necessity for a link and that is Supermind. It is also the Divine Law which develops all things according to the previously fixed determinations.
- b) Supermind is Sachchidananda proceeding out of its primal poise. In its action Knowledge and Will are one.

#### III. Supermind as God

- a) The concept of God as Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent is based on Supermind's all comprehending poise.
- b) Based on this we can speak of three general poises:
  - i) The Comprehending
  - ii) the Apprehending
  - iii) the Involved./Projecting

#### IV. The Three Poises of Supermind

- a) In the first poise, it finds the inalienable Unity of things. All is developed in Unity and as one; all is held by this Divine Consciousness as forms of its existence, not as in any degree separate existence. Here there is no question of Matter and

Spirit or any kind of individualisation.

- b) In its second poise, Supermind distributes itself in forms in soul-forms. There is here the birth of the individual Divine or Jivatman as distinguished from the Universal Divine. The Universal Self would know all forms as itself and yet establish a different relation with each separately and in each with all the others. The individual divine would envisage its existence as a soul-movement of the One.
- c) In its third poise, Supermind loses the Unitarian consciousness behind the multiplicity and involves itself totally in the individual though not separately itself. It is a fundamental blissful dualism in unity between the individual Divine and its Universal source.

V. The Views of Different Schools of Philosophy

- a) These three poises are different ways of dealing with the same Truth. Here there is no stigma of falsehood or illusion.
- b) It is an over-emphasis of one view over the other that creates a problem. This was done by Shankaracharya (Advaita), Ramanujacharya (Visistadvaita), and Madhwacharya (Dvaita) in their respective philosophies of Monism, Qualified Monism, and Dualism.

## CHAPTER XVI

# The Divine Soul

This chapter title ‘The Divine Soul’ is interesting because normally whenever we think of soul we think it is divine. We do not think of it as a human soul, because the soul is essentially divine in its nature. Yet why does Sri Aurobindo give us this title? We can perhaps find the link if we can recollect the three levels of Supermind and their different characteristics. In the third level we have seen that there is an emphasis on the multiplicity, the many, and on the play of relations between different soul forms of the Divine. Keeping this in mind, Sri Aurobindo tells us now in the opening paragraph,

We begin to grasp intellectually what is the Divine, the eternal Reality, and to understand how out of it the world has come. We begin also to perceive how inevitably that which has come out of the Divine must return to the Divine. We may now ask with profit and a chance of clearer reply how we must change and what we must become in order to arrive there in our nature and our life and our relations with others ...<sup>1</sup>

Here he says that we have seen how the world has come to be created by the Supermind in its triple aspect, but this would be incomplete if we do not see what happens in the ascending process. Without this we would not be able to understand fully the relation of the Supermind with this manifestation. He says,

Certainly, there is still a defect in our premises; for we have so far been striving to define for ourselves what the Divine is in its descent towards limited Nature, whereas what we ourselves actually are is the Divine in the individual ascending back out of limited Nature

to its own proper divinity. This difference of movement must involve a difference between the life of the gods who have never known the fall and the life of man redeemed, conqueror of the lost godhead and bearing within him the experience and it may be the new riches gathered by him from his acceptance of the utter descent.<sup>2</sup>

When the soul comes down to the level of the inconscient there is also the climb back upward. We have to see what happens to the individual souls in their evolutionary march to toward the Superconscient.

When we speak of the superman is there a different kind of a soul? Or is it the human soul itself evolving into the supramental soul? We have to think of the soul's evolution because the difference between the supramental soul and the human soul gives us a different perspective of the Supermind. That is what we will now look into. We have seen the nature of Supermind, but now Sri Aurobindo is telling us about the person who moulds himself in this supramental nature. It may not be tomorrow, it may be a thousand years hence, but eventually he will have this supramental nature which will be all-comprehending and apprehending beyond Avidya, etc. But what about its soul? When we talk of a human being, we talk of the human soul as its centre. So when we speak of the centre of the superman, what would its soul be like? Sri Aurobindo takes up that question in this chapter. He calls the soul in superman the divine soul as distinct from the human soul. What is the nature of these divine souls, what is its consciousness and how are its instruments? These are the questions we are going to discuss in this chapter. Wherever there is a little clarification required, I will try to give it, but otherwise I will simply highlight those lines and paragraphs where he explains the different aspects of the soul.

First he asks,

What then would be the existence of a divine soul, not descended into the ignorance by the fall of Spirit into Matter and the eclipse of soul by material Nature? What would be its consciousness, living in the original Truth of things, in the inalienable unity, in the world of its own infinite being, like the Divine Existence itself, but able by the play of the Divine Maya and by the distinction of the

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comprehending and apprehending Truth-Consciousness to enjoy also difference from God at the same time as unity with Him and to embrace difference and yet oneness with other divine souls in the infinite play of the self-multiplied Identical?<sup>3</sup>

Here he clarifies that this divine soul is not a victim of Avidya, it is a soul that has gone beyond it or even it may be a soul that has not even descended into it. He is asking us to project ourselves into that time period where there is the race of supramental beings, or else into that time before the soul descends into ignorance and into matter. He says,

Obviously, the existence of such a soul would be always self-contained in the conscious play of Sachchidananda. It would be pure and infinite self-existence in its being; in its becoming it would be a free play of immortal life uninvaded by death and birth and change of body because unclouded by ignorance and not involved in the darkness of our material being.<sup>4</sup>

He uses the words “uninvaded by death,” because obviously its body would be completely different, it is not the body that undergoes death and is clouded by ignorance and involved in darkness. It would be pure and unlimited consciousness. When you read these paragraphs, try to get its logic. In this very paragraph Sri Aurobindo tells us that it would be pure and infinite self-existence of being. In the next sentence he says, “It would be a pure and unlimited consciousness in its energy...”<sup>5</sup> So first he is speaking about its infinite self-existence, the Sat aspect, and next he is saying it is unlimited consciousness in its energy. This is the Chit-Tapas aspect. If you can see these little clues in the readings, your understanding will be clearer. He has expressed that on the level of existence, it is uninvaded by death. On the level of consciousness and energy, he says it would be

... poised in an eternal and luminous tranquillity as its foundation, yet able to play freely with forms of knowledge and forms of conscious power, tranquil, unaffected by the stumblings of mental error and the misprisions of our striving will because it never departs from truth and oneness ...<sup>6</sup>

So on the level of consciousness, it is tranquil and unaffected by the stumbling of our mind's errors and our divided and weak will. These will not affect it because it never departs from truth and oneness. You can see the difference. Because we are living in division, there are these problems, whereas innately the divine soul will live in oneness, so there will be no more stumbling. Lastly,

It would be, finally, a pure and inalienable delight in its eternal self-experience and in Time a free variation of bliss unaffected by our perversions of dislike, hatred, discontent and suffering because undivided in being, un baffled by erring self-will, unperverted by the ignorant stimulus of desire.<sup>7</sup>

Why is there this experience of eternal delight? As he says, because it is undivided being, un baffled by erring self-will, unperverted by desire. You can understand why our souls suffer—it is because of the perversion of the ego, and when the ego is not there, the misrepresenting and perverting factor is not there, then we get the divine Delight. And then he would say:

It would in its self-experience live eternally in the presence of the Absolute.<sup>8</sup>

Now that we know the nature of the Supermind, it should not be very difficult for us to imagine this. It would be eternally in the presence of the absolute Sachchidananda. So it would be in the presence of the Absolute:

To us the Absolute is only an intellectual conception of indefinable existence. The intellect tells us simply that there is a Brahman higher than the highest, an Unknowable that knows itself in other fashion than that of our knowledge; but the intellect cannot bring us into its presence.<sup>9</sup>

It is very clear that we may have read the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita, and we may keep reading and reading, yet our mind cannot bring us closer to the presence of the Absolute:

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The divine soul living in the Truth of things would, on the contrary, always have the conscious sense of itself as a manifestation of the Absolute.<sup>10</sup>

Whereas this soul which has reached this level of consciousness would be aware that it is the manifestation of the Absolute. Whereas for us it may be an idea or an ideal of oneness, that we are children of God and one with him, but it is not a reality of our existence. For the divine soul it is different:

Its immutable existence it would be aware of as the original “self-form” of that Transcendent ...<sup>11</sup>

This is a wonderful word—in a footnote he has translated this term ‘self-form’ as *svarupa*. It is the *svarupa* of the transcendent. Why is the superman of the divine soul considered as the original self-form of the transcendent Sachchidananda? That is because the Jivatman is of this level, the apprehending level. And this form is the essential form of man. It is there at the origin of the creation itself. The form of man is not something that nature has evolved by a freak or accident; it is there on the apprehending level itself. The blueprint of man is there, though not necessarily in all its full physical details. A divine soul would be conscious that it is a form of the transcendent, it would always feel its absolute oneness with the transcendent. Next he says:

... its play of conscious being it would be aware of as manifestation of That in forms of Sachchidananda. In its every state or act of knowledge it would be aware of the Unknowable cognising itself by a form of variable self-knowledge; in its every state or act of power, will or force aware of the Transcendence possessing itself by a form of conscious power of being and knowledge; in its every state or act of delight, joy or love aware of the Transcendence embracing itself by a form of conscious self-enjoyment.<sup>12</sup>

In all its knowledge, all its consciousness and power, and all its delight, it is all the time aware that these are forms of the Transcendent. And he says further:

Moreover, such a divine soul would live simultaneously in the two terms of the eternal existence of Sachchidananda, the two inseparable poles of the self-unfolding of the Absolute which we call the One and the Many.<sup>13</sup>

This is where I wanted to clarify that the Jivanmuktas of our ancient scriptures who enjoy the status of liberation are not of the same status as this supramental existence in which the outward form is divinised. He continues:

All being does really so live; but to our divided self-awareness there is an incompatibility, a gulf between the two driving us towards a choice, to dwell either in the multiplicity exiled from the direct and entire consciousness of the One or in the unity repellent of the consciousness of the Many. But the divine soul would not be enslaved to this divorce and duality.<sup>14</sup>

The truth of this manifestation is oneness, that is the inner truth. But the individual human soul forgets that it too is part of this great divine oneness, whereas the divine soul does not forget. It does not come into this division and duality although it plays here. You see the superman is on this earth, he is not there up in the heaven or in the ethereal worlds. Superman will descend and walk upon this very earth and yet will not be enslaved by duality and division.

And then he says:

It would be aware in itself at once of the infinite self-concentration and the infinite self-extension and diffusion. It would be aware simultaneously of the One in its unitarian consciousness holding the innumerable multiplicity in itself as if potential, unexpressed and therefore to our mental experience of that state non-existent and of the One in its extended consciousness holding the multiplicity thrown out and active as the play of its own conscious being, will and delight.<sup>15</sup>

Let us try to analyse this sentence a little more. Why is this divine soul able to live simultaneously in the multiplicity and the One?

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Think back to the earlier chapter when we described the supramental consciousness as one of Brihat, of vastness, Truth in its vastness. When he says that the Supermind is the truth consciousness, that is one way of saying it. The Vedic way of saying it is that the Supermind is Truth in its vastness. Mind may perhaps be thought of as Truth in its self-limitation. But when we say truth in its vastness, we mean the Truth that is unravelling itself. The moment the Truth is expanding in its vastness, it means it is self-manifesting. So Truth in vastness means truth in manifestation and Truth in manifestation means Supermind. This divine soul having essentially the consciousness of that vastness can naturally embrace the One and the many simultaneously. It is not trying to make an effort like the human soul.

But remember that even the realisation of the psychic being does not give us this vastness in the true sense; it gives us more or less a limited extension of ourselves. India has developed lot of spirituality, there is no doubt about it, but it has a lack of precision which creates confusion. We may have one experience of the psychic being and enlarge that out of proportion to include every kind of experience. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that we must have clarity in our experiences. There is a vast difference between the realisation of the psychic being, between spiritualisation and between supramentalisation. Let us not think that because we have realised the psychic being we are all powerful, all vast in our consciousness, one with the One and the many. We are far from that. We may have to redefine Indian spirituality in the light of Sri Aurobindo's analysis.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

It would equally be aware of the Many ever drawing down to themselves the One that is the eternal source and reality of their existence and of the Many ever mounting up attracted to the One that is the eternal culmination and blissful justification of all their play of difference.

The divine soul will be aware of all variation of being, consciousness, will and delight as the outflowing, the extension, the diffusion of that self-concentrated Unity developing itself, not into difference and division, but into another, an extended form of infinite oneness.<sup>16</sup>

This again is a beautiful statement. We tend to think that there is no difference between supramental beings. We think that the moment we unite with the Divine consciousness everything will be the same, that there will be no variation. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother explained that the superman would also have its individuality, each supramental being would be different. There will be differentiation between individual and individual—‘many’ means variation and difference—and superman or the divine soul would see this differentiation but not its division. The difference is that when we look at each other we see different and divided beings, whereas the supramental consciousness sees the differences but recognises that the other person is just another form of the infinite oneness. Another way of saying it is that the superman or the divine soul sees all as extensions of itself. It is difficult to imagine, of course, but try to see that each supramental being is aware that all are extensions of the same consciousness. The most concrete example could be the Mother and Sri Aurobindo themselves—a single consciousness and yet two forms. Would you say there is no difference between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in their forms? Yes, there is a difference. The consciousness is the same and inseparable, yet in their functioning and in their manifestations in this world they are two different forms. Similarly, the supramental forms would be different, but would recognise their inseparable oneness as well as their individualisation needed for manifestation.

Sri Aurobindo next clarifies another feature of the consciousness of the divine soul:

In the extension the divine soul will be aware of the three grades of the supramental existence, not as we are mentally compelled to regard them, not as grades, but as a triune fact of the self-manifestation of Sachchidananda. It will be able to embrace them in one and the same comprehensive self-realisation,—for a vast comprehensiveness is the foundation of the truth-conscious Supermind.<sup>17</sup>

The divine soul will be aware of the three grades of the supramental existence, which we have seen are the comprehending, apprehending and the involved. Although the divine soul is an individual formation,

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we should not think it is unaware of its other grades. Why we need to make this clear is because in a way we too have descended from supreme Sachchidananda. From the Jivatman, we have come down into the human level. We have become individual souls but we have forgotten our higher levels; we are not aware of them. Whereas, with the Supermind, it is the opposite: it can incarnate and yet at the same time be aware of its other levels of existence. All that we are speaking about regarding the divine soul we can find in the examples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. We could perhaps say that she tempered down her power and light so that human eyes could look at her. Otherwise in her full transcendent light and luminosity we could not even have looked at her. This individual formation of the Mother was aware of the triple status—the individual, the universal and the transcendental. In the same way the divine soul would be aware of its three levels.

It will be able divinely to conceive, perceive and sense all things as the Self, its own self, one self of all, one Self-being and Self-becoming, but not divided in its becomings which have no existence apart from its own self-consciousness. It will be able divinely to conceive, perceive and sense all existences as soul-forms of the One ...<sup>18</sup>

He says it would be able to conceive, perceive and sense existences divinely in their individuality. But what are the three aspects of the one existence? There is the famous dictum that all is in Brahman, Brahman is in all, and all is the Brahman. The divine soul is fully aware of this triple status. Why and how? In the first level, the comprehending level, it is itself all, conceiving everything as itself. So by the fact of its comprehending knowledge, Brahman is all. By the apprehending level of consciousness all is in Brahman, it contains all individualities within its oneness. At the involved level there is the many, but at the same time the Brahman is in each one and is the basis of their individuality. These three levels of the Supermind are again an explanation of that eternal Vedantic formula, all is in Brahman, Brahman is in all, and all is Brahman. Sri Aurobindo's concept of the supramental has clarified and given a new lease of life to this ancient truth along with a greater understanding.

If you remember, this is what the Upanishadic Rishis also had done. After centuries of the Vedic truths, when they were waning away in spirit, when the external formulation was becoming more and more prominent, the Upanishadic Rishis came and renewed and revived the Vedic truths. That was the function of the Upanishadic Rishis. After that revival, again centuries later externalism, formalism, materialism took grip of the human consciousness. This time a single Rishi called Sri Aurobindo has once again imbibed all the Vedas and Vedanta in his consciousness, relived them, re-experienced them, recharged them and once again has given them a new lease for a new future. From the Vedas till now, there has been one cycle of manifestation. From now on, there will be a new cycle of manifestation, as we say, a new spiral upward. In Sri Aurobindo, we see all the ancient formulas coming alive again in his experience.

Coming back to the reading, he says next that,

If we suppose this soul to take its poise, its centre in the consciousness of the individual Divine living and acting in distinct relation with the “others”, still it will have in the foundation of its consciousness the entire unity from which all emerges and it will have in the background of that consciousness the extended and the modified unity and to any of these it will be capable of returning and of contemplating from them its individuality...

All the relations of the divine soul with God or its supreme Self and with its other selves in other forms will be determined by this comprehensive self-knowledge. These relations will be relations of being, of consciousness and knowledge, of will and force, of love and delight...

And the same rule will apply to the relations of its being, knowledge, will with the being, knowledge and will of others.<sup>19</sup>

He goes on to analyze the relations of this divine soul with God, with supreme Sachchidananda. Then at the conclusion of the chapter, he raises a crucial question:

But what will be the conditions in which and by which this nature of the life of the divine soul will realise itself? All experience in relation

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proceeds through certain forces of being formulating themselves by an instrumentation to which we give the name of properties, qualities, activities, faculties. As, for instance, Mind throws itself into various forms of mind-power, such as judgment, observation, memory, sympathy, proper to its own being, so must the Truth-Consciousness or Supermind effect the relations of soul with soul by forces, faculties, functionings proper to supramental being ...<sup>20</sup>

He tells us that just as we have all these mental faculties of judgment, memory, sympathy, etc., the divine soul also must have faculties of functioning proper to supramental being. Judgment, memory, sympathy and compassion are the human soul's qualities, but what are the faculties of the supramental being? This is where *The Synthesis of Yoga* comes into the picture, as it examines these in greater depth. He continues,

What these functionings are, we shall see when we come to consider the psychological conditions of the divine Life; at present we are only considering its metaphysical foundations, its essential nature and principles. Suffice it at present to observe that the absence or abolition of separatist egoism and of effective division in consciousness is the one essential condition of the divine Life, and therefore their presence in us is that which constitutes our mortality and our fall from the Divine. This is our "original sin," or rather let us say in a more philosophical language, the deviation from the Truth and Right of the Spirit, from its oneness, integrality and harmony that was the necessary condition for the great plunge into Ignorance which is the soul's adventure in the world and from which was born our suffering and aspiring humanity.<sup>21</sup>

This is the end of the chapter. But now we can understand the whole logic: we have followed the Supermind as the creator, the Supermind as the truth-consciousness, the triple status of the Supermind's nature, and now the supramental or divine soul. But this is only the metaphysical understanding; the psychological understanding of the supramental being is covered more thoroughly in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, but will also be introduced in the very next chapter where he compares the faculties of the mind with those of the Supermind.

## References

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14. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
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## Lecture Notes

- I. Nature of the Divine Soul
  - a) Definition of Divine Soul: One that has not descended into the ignorance.
  - b) Always self-contained in the conscious play of Sachchidananda — a pure and unlimited consciousness in its energy—a pure and

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inalienable delight in its eternal self-experience.

- c) Always aware as a manifestation of Sachchidananda—it would be aware simultaneously of the Unity and Differentiation. It can hold the innumerable multiplicity in itself.
- d) This Unity of all these terms of opposition is the real Adwaita.
- e) It is the Absolute Divine in its self-unfolding.

### II. Aware of the Triune fact of Supermind

- a) It will perceive all things as the Self = Self is in All
- b) It will perceive all existences as soul-forms of the One = All in the Self.
- c) It will perceive all existences in their individuality—a wave that is all the sea = all are Self.

## CHAPTER XVIII

# Mind and Supermind

Chapter XVIII is called 'Mind and Supermind.' It is very difficult to give an accurate account of mind while one is limited to the mental consciousness, and perhaps because of this difficulty psychologists both in the East and the West are not able to come to grips with the nature of the mind. Perhaps the best they can do is what western psychology has noted through its various observations about the effect of mind's workings or its imprints upon our human nature. But what exactly it is is difficult to know from the level of mental consciousness. If one wants to know what it is, one has to rise beyond it. This is the advantage with Sri Aurobindo: he could speak of mind from a level beyond mind, not only from a level beyond mind, but from that level which is the very source of the mind. In this comprehensive vision of Sri Aurobindo, we get a full and deep insight into the nature, the working, and the characteristics of mind.

What we have seen up to this point is the Divine nature in its creative aspect, the Divine as the creator, which is the Supermind. But it is not enough to know about the nature of Supermind, it is also important to know the essentiality of this creation. If we cannot relate it to our own existence, this knowledge becomes more or less theoretical. Sri Aurobindo is not interested in theoretical knowledge for its own sake. All along his sole interest seems to be how to relate knowledge to this world, so that this world can manifest that highest knowledge. He takes such pains to explain the nature of Supermind only to see whether any link with this world can be established.

Some people have doubted the use of this knowledge, and some people think that *The Life Divine* is just a treatise on metaphysical philosophy. But Sri Aurobindo mentions that *The Life Divine* is the metaphysical foundation of yoga itself. It is not just pure metaphysics. In order to understand Integral Yoga, we have to understand *The Life Divine*. *The*

*Synthesis of Yoga* is the practical aspect of Integral Yoga, but we need to have a firm understanding of both. There are thousands of gurus at present in India and every Sunday on the TV we can see the same thing being spoken of. All that mesmerising language is there to capture the minds of the people, and it does capture them in thousands. But those of us familiar with Sri Aurobindo's thought must be able to discern what exactly they are saying. Otherwise people may say, "What is new about Sri Aurobindo?" In order to understand what is new about Sri Aurobindo, we need to understand this book *The Life Divine*. Otherwise, we are in danger of misunderstanding Integral Yoga. One need not start with *The Life Divine*, but along the way one has to pick it up. Only then can one get a global comprehension of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

All that we have seen about the divine soul in the previous chapter, and all that we have seen about the Supermind as the creator, Sri Aurobindo himself says, may be doubted by the human soul which is imprisoned in the human body. How can we human beings ever aspire for that divine soul which has those characteristics which we have described earlier? He says,

Therefore it might reasonably be doubted whether such a divine living would be possible with this limitation of bodily form and this limitation of form-imprisoned mind and form-trammelled force which is what we now know as existence.<sup>1</sup>

He sees that there is a defect if we were to stop at the description of the divine soul. We live in a completely different consciousness, where our normal existence is on the level of body, life and mind. With what we have seen till now about Sat, Chit and Ananda, and what we know of this body, life and mind in which we live, the difference seems impossible to be bridged. The difference is so vast that we may doubt if it is at all possible to ever bridge the gap. Because of this difficulty arises the possibility of doubting the divine life.

We cannot fathom this disparity, he says, because...

We have not scrutinised the other and apparently undivine Maya which is the root of all our strivings and suffering or seen how precisely it develops out of the divine reality or the divine Maya.<sup>2</sup>

We can see here two different terms. The creation begins with what we call divine Maya, and the other term he uses is undivine Maya. Of course, this divine Maya we know to be nothing else than the Supermind. So there is on one side the Supermind or divine Maya, which devolves towards this undivine Maya. What do we understand of the undivine Maya? Until we know its nature and its causes, we will not be able to bridge the gap. Until we see woven the missing cords connecting them, our world will remain unexplained to us, and the doubt of the possible unification of the higher existence with this lower life will ever remain.

If we cannot unite the higher and the lower hemispheres, he says, “In that case the perfection of humanity is elsewhere than in humanity itself...”<sup>3</sup> Because of this gap, people have always thought that this kind of divine existence can only exist somewhere beyond the body, life and mind. People have called it different names, and heaven is one of them. The concept of heaven has come about precisely because of this seeming impossibility of bridging the gap between the lower and the higher. Till now, religion, masters of yoga and saints have said that that kind of divine condition is impossible for this body, so let us seek some kind of salvation beyond this body. They said, “leave this body, go beyond, you will have all that is not possible here.”

Because of this urge towards a higher level of existence, this urge for immortality, perfection or God consciousness, these notions are there within humanity. In the very first paragraph of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo speaks about mankind’s immemorial quest for “God, Light, Freedom, Immortality.”<sup>4</sup> It is this quest which must fulfil itself some way or the other that is behind the notion of heaven, salvation and Mukti. That perfection of God, Light and Immortality appears impossible on this human level, but possible on a higher level. It was legitimate and helped the religions to capture human thought and life.

They have said that the passport to heaven lies with the popes, priests, and heads of religion, and we all wanted these passports because there is in us this urge to go beyond. It was a very useful instrument for religion because it has given the uneducated and ignorant a noble purpose of existence. The image of heaven was painted with beautiful colours so that everyone would aspire to go to that heaven. But this aspiration was inadequate because it provided no valid means for

the elevation of consciousness. Had it done so, man would have been spiritualised by now. Instead, it was used as a tool for religious heads to control man and society.

Now, Sri Aurobindo gives the true meaning of this natural urge, and he removes the falsehood from religion. What is there innate within you, he says, is a true aspiration, and this aspiration can be fulfilled by the elevation of consciousness within you. No external person needs to tell you that this is the path to salvation, or this is the path to heaven. Sri Aurobindo removes all the false claims and all the false visas given by religion, and focuses on the genuine human aspiration.

Why did he discuss heaven? Because this aspiration for heaven was a misnomer and has had its effect on the human psyche. What was that effect? The unfortunate effect is that everyone started dismissing the earth scene because it was felt that we must escape from it. As Sri Aurobindo says,

In that case the perfection of humanity is elsewhere than in humanity itself; the summit of its earthly evolution can only be a fine apex of dissolving mentality whence it takes the great leap either into formless being or worlds beyond the reach of embodied Mind.<sup>5</sup>

That was the conclusion of the ancient Rishis. And how does Sri Aurobindo reply? He has turned the table and says that is not necessary. He says,

It is possible, even probable that mind, body and life are to be found in their pure forms in the divine Truth itself, are there in fact as subordinate activities of its consciousness...<sup>6</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's answer is that we need not escape to heaven if we can find the source of the body, mind and life; if we can find the connection between the four great principles of the higher existence and our own existence. He says the body has its source in Sat, life has Chit-Tapas, and mind in the Supermind; this is how the lower and the higher are intrinsically connected. If they are connected, then there is a possibility of the elevation of mind, life and body into these higher principles and the descent of these higher principles into mind, life and body

leading to their transformation. The very secret of transformation which Sri Aurobindo has found is expressed in this single sentence. It is possible and even probable that mind, life and body are to be found in their pure forms in the divine Truth itself. This is the discovery that Sri Aurobindo shares with us and because of this possibility we can dream of transforming the mind, life and the earth itself.

He then tells us,

They work as they do because they are by some means separated in consciousness from the divine Truth from which they proceed. Were this separation once abrogated by the expanding energy of the Divine in humanity, their present functioning might well be converted, would indeed naturally be converted by a supreme evolution and progression into that purer working which they have in the Truth-Consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

This line is very important: “this separation once abrogated by the expanding energy of the Divine in humanity.” How is this separation to be abrogated? How do we remove the barriers to go to the higher levels? It has been done on the individual level by individual yogis who have by their tapasya reached this higher level, but that has not meant much for humanity. But he says there could be an expanding consciousness of the Divine in humanity. What is this element of the Divine in humanity and how does it expand? This divinity in humanity is essentially the Divine who is himself evolving. The divine spirit is here evolving from matter to life, from life to mind, and it is the same divine consciousness which will evolve to the next level. In fact, in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of evolution, the one who evolves basically is the Divine himself. We can speak of man’s evolution or man’s transformation, but essentially it is the Divine who is evolving. He says that the present level of functioning would be converted into a supreme level of functioning by the evolution and progression to the supramental level. This is possible once this Divine in humanity—not just the Divine in individuals, but the Divine in the whole manifestation—elevates itself from matter to life, and from life to mind. Now mind as a whole must elevate itself to Supermind. At that point in time we would see a full transformation and the separation would be abrogated.

So we have seen one major idea which is that human consciousness as it is today is far away from that higher consciousness of which we have been speaking, and the separation between the two seems impossible to bridge. But by the evolutionary process, which is covering the distance between different levels, there is a possibility that the Divine in humanity can lift itself into the Supermind.

Why does Sri Aurobindo speak about this in the introduction to mind and Supermind? Because he has our present situation in view and he wants to reveal the real source of each of these three elements of mind, life and body. We will find that from this chapter onwards there is a different rhythm. He is going to connect the body with Sat, life with Chit, and mind with Supermind. Ultimately we will see about Ananda; there is a fourth element in man which is directly connected with Ananda. We will see that later.

We are rational creatures, so Sri Aurobindo has given us in intellectual terms the metaphysics of *The Life Divine*. He is going to explain to us step by step what is the link between the higher and the lower consciousness, and then how to go about defining this link. The first section has been only an introduction to tell us that there is a link between the lower and the higher. The next argument takes up the fundamental aspects of the Supermind, so we know briefly the triple status of Supermind: the triple status has the comprehending level of consciousness, with its main characteristic of oneness. Then there is the apprehending consciousness with its aspect of the one in the many. Then there is the involved consciousness with the many in the one. I will not discuss these again, but what is important and relevant to our present argument is the third level, the involved consciousness. What happens in the third level that leads to the beginning of Avidya.

How does this Avidya come in? What is its starting point? The starting point of Avidya is the exclusive concentration of Supermind on the many. If Supermind concentrates on the oneness, there is no Avidya. When it concentrates exclusively on the many, the multiplicity, there is the beginning of Avidya. When you exclusively concentrate, it is not that you do not have knowledge, but it is put behind in the back of your consciousness. Normally we think of Avidya as having no knowledge, but in reality the knowledge is in the background. When I focus on one

single thing at a time, my knowledge of other things is suspended for a while. Although at present I am studying only this book and I am not aware of other things, it does not mean that I do not know about those things. I have the knowledge of the entire SACAR building, what is in each room etc, but when my attention is on this book, I have suspended all that knowledge. When I come out of my concentration on this book, I can again access the whole of my knowledge. Immediately my mind becomes wide and alert and my consciousness is able to spread out and encompass the whole. This is exactly the same function that is in the Supermind; it focuses itself in the atom and at that level it suspends its knowledge of the apprehending and comprehending consciousness. Sri Aurobindo makes this meaning of Avidya clear in the following statement:

That new factor is Avidya, the self-ignoring faculty which separates the action of mind from the action of the Supermind that originated and still governs it from behind the veil.<sup>8</sup>

We should remember that Avidya is the self-ignoring faculty of Supermind. As I have the faculty of concentrating, Supermind has the faculty of self-forgetfulness. This means it loses itself in a part, and this is done purposely. This self-ignoring faculty divides mind from Supermind and gives rise to Avidya. Therefore Avidya is basically the partial, limited knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo then gives a wonderful description of how this happens:

Whence then does the limiting Avidya, the fall of mind from Supermind and the consequent idea of real division originally proceed? exactly from what perversion of the supramental functioning? It proceeds from the individualised soul viewing everything from its own standpoint and excluding all others; it proceeds, that is to say, by an exclusive concentration of consciousness, an exclusive self-identification of the soul with particular temporal and spatial action which is only a part of its own play of being; it starts from the soul's ignoring the fact that all others are also itself...<sup>9</sup>

He tells us it proceeds from the individualised soul which identifies itself with the temporal and spatial and thinks itself to be different from others. It proceeds from the individualised soul viewing everything from its own standpoint and excluding all others. So when the soul takes birth, and it comes to the third level, that is, the involved consciousness, it begins to come into contact with Avidya through an exclusive concentration of Supermind. When the soul crosses this barrier it immediately forgets itself and thinks it is separate from others. Above the level of Avidya, it had the consciousness of oneness, but below it loses its oneness and begins to exclude all others. He says, there is “an exclusive self-identification of the soul with particular temporal and spatial action.” Particular temporal and spatial action in a particular body, that is important. To put it in one sentence, when the soul takes birth it enters into an exclusive concentration mode of the Supermind and undergoes a change, identifying completely with a temporal and spatial action in a particular body. The moment it says, “I am separate, I am different from others,” it is the beginning of separation. So the mind helps the soul keep its different identity. It enforces on the soul this different identity. So, in brief, there is the Supermind above with its triple status. Down below, there is the mind which supports what the soul is experiencing. So mind is a process involved in the maintenance of Avidya.

Now we will take up what exactly is the role of mind, what is its source and how it supports this Avidya. Here I will be covering the arguments but not necessarily in the order given in the text so as to simplify them. Sri Aurobindo says,

Mind, first, the chained and hampered sovereign of our human living. Mind in its essence 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. Even with what exists as obvious parts and fractions, Mind establishes this fiction of its ordinary commerce that they are things with which it can deal separately and not merely as aspects of a whole.<sup>10</sup>

Mind is that which measures. If you remember the word Maya, it also means to measure. ‘Ma’ means to measure. So we can see the link

here. Maya measures, and we have said that the divine Maya is the Supermind. In what sense? Supermind also measures and delimits. This undivine Maya, which also measures and delimits, is the mind. The divine Maya measures Sachchidananda, it is the measuring faculty of Sachchidananda, whereas the mind measures the third status of Supermind. Now what is the difference? The divine Maya delimits, demarcates, but does not divide; it keeps the sense of oneness. But mind while measuring divides; it cuts up the integer or the whole into parts. So you see the relationship between mind and the Supermind: both are therefore called Maya, but one is divine Maya and the other is undivine Maya. The mental Maya is undivine only in the sense that it brings in the sense of division. Actually if you want to know the meaning of the word 'undivine', it is purely this: that which takes you away from the consciousness of oneness is undivine. Anything, any force, any event, any emotion that takes you away from the consciousness of oneness with the Divine is undivine. There is nothing moral or ethical about it. Even the acceptable moral things still can take you away from the divine consciousness. Even the best moral rule can be undivine. Do not associate the concepts of divine and undivine with morality, it is a purely impartial thing. All that takes you away from the Divine or from the consciousness of oneness is undivine. In that sense, mind is Maya, but the undivine Maya.

There is also an intermediary stage. That intermediary stage is the Overmind. To give you a little example, imagine a single ray of Supermind or Sachchidananda. Overmind is like a prism which separates this ray into the different colours. So Overmind is that level of consciousness which brings in the first splitting of the ray, whereas the real separation begins at the mental level. Overmind also has the consciousness of oneness behind, but the many are out in front. When it comes down to the level of the mind, these are further divided and separated and are given the sense of exclusivity. Overmind, like the prism splits this consciousness into different groups of consciousness, and these groups are large areas of consciousness which have not yet lost the sense of unity. When mind comes into the picture, there is further division, in fact, into an infinity, each one with the sense of separateness. The consciousness of oneness gets lost during this division. This is what Sri Aurobindo means when he says that mind is

“the chained and hampered sovereign of our human living.” Mind is that which measures, cuts out forms from the indivisible whole. That is the innate nature of mind.

Then he says, further down the paragraph:

It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession. All its action and enjoyment deal thus with wholes that form part of a greater whole, and these subordinate wholes again are broken up into parts which are also treated as wholes for the particular purposes they serve. Mind may divide, multiply, add, subtract, but it cannot get beyond the limits of this mathematics. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself in a foreign element; it falls from its own firm ground into the ocean of the intangible, into the abysses of the infinite where it can neither perceive, conceive, sense nor deal with its subject for creation and enjoyment.<sup>11</sup>

This is the level where mind can divide, multiply, etc. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself. This division is its proper function, its *svabhava* and *svadharmā*. As Sri Aurobindo explains,

The essential faculty and the essential limitation that accompanies it are the truth of Mind and fix its real nature and action, *svabhava* and *svadharmā*; here is the mark of the divine fiat assigning it its office in the complete instrumentation of the supreme Maya...<sup>12</sup>

So you see the words, the mind has ‘divine fiat’, this is its ‘*svadharmā*’, and therefore need not and should not be blamed. It is there doing what it is supposed to be doing according to the fundamental law and ordered rhythm of the Supermind. This is its command from the Supreme, and if it tries to go beyond itself, as the Upanishads tell us, its head would roll down. Now we can understand why it is said that we should not let the mind go beyond itself, for it will get into the realm of the intangible. It is stated so beautifully and clear. It is like a child trying to jump five meters, so we say, “you are small, you have limitations, try to jump half a meter. Don’t try to jump higher than what is possible.” If the mind tries

the impossible it gets into the ocean of the intangible. The Upanishad tells us that there you may lose yourself. How may it lose itself? It may become mad! Now we understand why it is so. It is not the innate nature of the mind. In nature there is a fundamental rhythm and mind has its specific role. Limitation is its fundamental nature or *svadharma*.

Then he concludes:

Mind cannot possess the infinite, it can only suffer it or be possessed by it; it can only lie blissfully helpless under the luminous shadow of the Real cast down on it from planes of existence beyond its reach. The possession of the infinite cannot come except by an ascent to those supramental planes, nor the knowledge of it except by an inert submission of Mind to the descending messages of the Truth-Conscious Reality.<sup>13</sup>

We understand now that the mind cannot go beyond. All that it has is more or less a faint notion of the beyond. It has the right to a faint notion because after all it is the delegate of the supreme Supermind. As we have memories of our parent, mind too has memories of its parent and the memory is its ideal. When we speak of human unity, or divinity, or compassion, or love, or power, or truth, mind is able to speak of them because it has faint memories of the supramental level. It has inherited these qualities because of its instrumentation. It has a kind of Laksman Rekha, saying, “don’t go beyond, because if you go beyond your limits you will enter the land of the unknown.” So mind has to remain within its limits, and yet if it wants to receive the Supermind, it must submit itself to the descending messages. Mind being what it is can receive the higher forces by silencing and submitting itself. This silence is not a negative silence, but a positive one.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

The office determined by that which it is in its very birth from the eternal self-conception of the Self-existent. That office is to translate always infinity into the terms of the finite...<sup>14</sup>

The work of the mind is to translate the infinite into terms of the finite. It has a marvellous work, a very important work. Had it not done its

work, we would not be here. We are here because each one of us is a finite reflection of the Divine. If we can remember this inner truth, then we can enjoy the Supreme at every moment. So this is its work, to translate the infinite into term of the finite. In *Savitri* there are many passages in which Sri Aurobindo describes the same aspect as to how with the coming of the mind there is the birth of the many. Let me repeat the words, “its very birth from the eternal self-conception of the Self-existent.” You can see that the role of the mind is conceived right at the level of Sat itself, so let us not think that it is a mistake. We are saying this because there are many philosophies which conceive that the mind, this mental consciousness or Avidya, is nothing more than a mistake of the supreme Divine. They say it is something which is wrong in creation, but in fact there can be nothing wrong in this creation. The wrong is in our understanding of the world, not the world itself. Mind has the legitimacy to divide.

Sri Aurobindo says:

That office is to translate always infinity into the terms of the finite, to measure off, limit, depiece. Actually it does this in our consciousness to the exclusion of all true sense of the infinite; therefore Mind is the nodus of the great Ignorance, because it is that which originally divides and distributes, and it has even been mistaken for the cause of the universe and for the whole of the divine Maya.<sup>15</sup>

You can see now why some philosophies tell us that mind is the cause of the universe. There is in it a half truth. This divisive universe has begun with mind. Notice this phrase here, “Mind is the nodus of the great Ignorance.” Nodus denotes the beginning, the cause, the centre. What has happened, over the centuries, is that the Acharyas have developed this idea of Avidya and have given a negative meaning to it. Well, it is true that we should not be in ignorance or Avidya, but at the same time we should understand its true role. The sense of negativity creates a sense of rejection. Sri Aurobindo does not teach rejection of this world. We know the reality of the world is ignorance, but there should be no attitude of rejection towards it. The Acharyas have created the attitude that this world is ignorance, therefore we should get out

of it. Sri Aurobindo does not promote this concept. This world is ignorance and yet it is the manifestation of the divine consciousness. Because we understand the wholeness of the creative process, we say we need not quit the world. It is ignorance, but beyond this ignorance there are other levels. This is only one level, and it is very important to understand the whole of the creation. We can begin to see now the total perspective and the entire role of the mind.

To go further, comparing the higher and lower consciousness, he says,

In that consciousness there is no ignorance, because the infinite is known and the finite is not separated from it as an independent reality; but still there is a subordinate process of delimitation,—otherwise no world could exist,—a process by which the ever dividing and reuniting consciousness of Mind, the ever divergent and convergent action of Life and the infinitely divided and self-aggregating substance of Matter come, all by one principle and original act, into phenomenal being. This subordinate process of the eternal Seer and Thinker, perfectly luminous, perfectly aware of Himself and all, knowing well what He does, conscious of the infinite in the finite which He is creating, may be called the divine Mind. And it is obvious that it must be a subordinate and not really a separate working of the Real-Idea, of the Supermind, and must operate through what we have described as the apprehending movement of the Truth-Consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

Now why is Sri Aurobindo bringing in the subordinate action and this concept of the divine mind? There is the divine mind and the human mind. What is the difference between the two? Well, we have the finite and the infinite in the divine mind, whereas in mind we have separately the infinite and the finite. That is the difference. Of course on the mental level we do not have the full experience of the infinite, but we have only a vague notion of finite and the infinite. We cannot see, we cannot experience the finite in the infinite, or the infinite in the finite, because mind does not have the capacity to put them together. It is not a question of blaming it for that, it is its nature! Its nature is to say, “I am finite in this world, and by spiritual experience I can live in the infinite

and leave the finite.” With mind it is either/or, but with the apprehending divine mind it is both simultaneously. In the comprehending level there is no either/or or both because it is beyond all these distinctions.

Then he says, “Mind, being an action of the Infinite, depieces as well as aggregates ad infinitum.”<sup>17</sup> It seems to be a simple line, but it is incredibly beautiful. We have seen the nature of mind, its svabhava, and the divine fiat behind its functioning. We must say that mind is doing its job superbly. It depieces, it cuts up and pieces together marvellously. It does so ad infinitum. This is a wonderful thing, this translation of infinity into this finite and material world. This universe is infinite. Can you count the number of birds or the number of insects? At best you may give a vague figure. Just look at the vastness of nature! Nature itself in time is an infinite thing due to this infinite depiecing, as he puts it here, this depiecing ad infinitum. We can see it is ad infinitum, but why? Because it is itself a consciousness of the supreme infinite. Mind is infinite, life is infinite and matter is infinite because they are born from the supreme Infinite—Sat, Chit, Supermind and Ananda. Born of the infinite consciousness, they have the infinite characteristics. Therefore there is the plethora of the ideas in the mind, and there is no end to it—infinite thoughts, infinite life forms and infinite atomic particles.

Now you may be thinking, “How is mind infinite? I thought Supermind is infinite.” Well, mind is infinite in time and Supermind is infinite beyond time. Sri Aurobindo describes both the timeless infinite and the time infinite as two kinds of infinite. The time infinite includes mind, life and body. The supramental consciousness is the timeless infinite. So this is mind’s nature and because of this ad infinitum division, it will remain the way it is.

People are prone to the misunderstanding that once the Supermind comes this world may disappear. What will happen to this beautiful pulsating world? Some people would feel bad if this ignorant world were to go. The world will remain, mind will remain, life will remain, matter will remain. Even when there is the elite of humanity, even when there is the new race, and this new race is established on earth, even then the whole series of beings will remain, including man. Eventually, even Superman will be exceeded by a greater race. Beyond Supermind there are other ranges of evolution. So evolution is again

eternal. Evolution does not stop with Supermind, but only changes its characteristics and completely new things begin to come in. There will be no going from darkness to light, but there will be transition from light to greater light, from immortality to greater immortality, from Ananda to greater Ananda. Supermind from the evolutionary point of view is that stage where evolution proceeds on the upper hemisphere, that is, in the knowledge and experience of oneness.

To give you a figurative example, say I am facing the light. I can move away from the light while still facing it by going backward. That is what happens with the Supermind until the level of mind. It is facing the light, but moves from the comprehending level to the apprehending level and then to the involved level. As it moves further it turns around and it shows its back to the light. It turns around and concentrates on division and that turning around point is mind, is Avidya.

To recap, we have said that the essential nature of mind, or as Sri Aurobindo puts it, the *svabhava* and *svadharma* of mind, is to translate the infinity into the finite. That one single sentence tells us a lot. Translation means to put into another language while keeping the same spirit, the same rhythm and the same meaning. This suggests that the same spirit of infinity is carried over into finite. So this finite has the same spirit, the same consciousness and the same depth of infinity, only the terms are different.

Then Sri Aurobindo tells us, “And so we perceive that the Mind was really a subordinate action and instrumentation of the Truth-Consciousness.”<sup>18</sup> What I would like you to remember is precisely this one single thing, that there is a continuity of Sachchidananda until the level of the inconscient. All the levels of consciousness have been given a particular role by Sachchidananda. No matter how much we find the inconscient full of ignorance, one thing we have to realise is that it is all a subordinate action. To quote again:

And so we perceive that the Mind was really a subordinate action and instrumentation of the Truth-Consciousness. So long as it is not separated in self-experience from the enveloping Master-Consciousness and does not try to set up house for itself, so long as it serves passively as an instrumentation and does not attempt to possess for its own benefit, Mind fulfils luminously its function

which is in the Truth to hold forms apart from each other by a phenomenal, a purely formal delimitation of their activity behind which the governing universality of the being remains conscious and untouched.<sup>19</sup>

What a great compliment to the mind he gives when he says “mind fulfils luminously its function,” which is to translate the infinite into finite and “to hold forms apart from each other by a phenomenal, a purely formal delimitation of their activity.” So mind’s purpose is to keep the forms apart, although behind all these forms there is the one unitarian consciousness. Mind is purposely keeping you and me apart, using the instrumentation of ego. Each of these objects has been kept apart in form. Please remember they have not been kept apart in spirit, but this keeping apart in form is absolutely necessary for manifestation. The whole reason of creation is to have this multiplicity. There has got to be somebody to do the bad job, so to speak, and that is mind. Above the mental level, it is all one consciousness, one form, but somebody has to do the bad role and keep everybody separate. Although it is seemingly a bad role, it is a necessary role, because in each form the Divine wants to see himself. So mind’s work is one of the most difficult, yet necessary, and most unappreciated. It should not be rejected by saying that it is a bad thing—not at all. It is a limited thing, but it is a necessary thing.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

It has to receive the truth of things and distribute it according to the unerring perception of a supreme and universal Eye and Will. It has to uphold an individualisation of active consciousness, delight, force, substance which derives all its power, reality and joy from an inalienable universality behind.<sup>20</sup>

You see it is a hard task to divide the universe into individual units, but mind with the supramental strength behind it is able to fulfil this difficult task. Continuing, he says, “It has to turn the multiplicity of the One into an apparent division by which relations are defined and held off against each other so as to meet again and join.”<sup>21</sup> There is kind of a formation which takes place.

Try to visualise a ray of consciousness coming from above the mind's level. It splits into millions of forms of the multiplicity. After that, the multiplicity gets reunited at a different level of consciousness called the inconscient. The multiplicity by way of mind becomes infinite and then gets reunited with the consciousness of oneness in the inconscient. And in evolution, the same thing happens; from this inconscient the multiplicity comes as matter, as life, as mind. Then going beyond mind it again begins to converge with the Supreme where you see the oneness, the Absolute. So it moves from the one above to the One below and from the One below back to the One above. It is only in between where we have the multiplicity. All this multiplicity is there because the Divine wants to experience the delight of its self-expression.

Each one of us here would like to express his or her self in his or her own way. We don't follow exactly what other people are doing. Each one of us enjoys our unique self-expression. Each form is a reflection of the Divine. Until now, we may not have been conscious that we are reflecting the Divine, we thought we were reflecting our ego. Very few come to realise that they should reflect the Divine. We keep taking birth after birth, and at a certain point in time we become conscious and say, "Hey, I have reflected enough my own ego, now let me start reflecting the Divine." That is where the sadhana begins and that is when we turn towards the Divine.

Now let's take another quote. Sri Aurobindo says:

The mind is the final operation of the apprehending Truth-Consciousness which makes all this possible, and what we call the Ignorance does not create a new thing and absolute falsehood but only misrepresents the Truth.<sup>22</sup>

This again is a new insight. The mind does not create falsehood but only misrepresents the truth. We say there is falsehood, but Sri Aurobindo says that there is no absolute falsehood created by mind, it is only a misrepresentation. So from where is the falsehood coming in, and what is this falsehood? What is a misrepresentation? Well, the word itself means to 'represent' but to represent wrongly. How does the mind represent the Supermind in a wrong manner? It misrepresents

the supramental truth in the manner that it gives us an apparent vision which is divided; that is the only misrepresentation. Truth is one but mind represents it to our consciousness as divided. It does so because that is its role.

This layer of falsehood that we perceive may derive from something the Mother once talked about. In one of her conversations, the Mother said that there is nothing that is evil. She explain that what is good today may become unacceptable tomorrow, and what is bad today may become acceptable tomorrow. It depends on the evolutionary stage of the individual. When things are out of place we call it evil—but it is simply out of place and time. If things are properly fitted in their time and place, everything has a role. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says here that it is only a misrepresentation of truth.

We often hear the question, “How is it that God is all good but he has created this evil?” The Mother would say that it is only the mind’s way of seeing. From the viewpoint Divine everything finds its place and hence the Divine does not find anything evil. But if human consciousness holds onto something beyond its necessity, then that becomes a so-called evil. Evil comes when something gets out of place. It is not something religious or moral, it is purely something out of its proper time and place.

Now let us jump back to the passage, where Sri Aurobindo says,

That apprehending consciousness, the Prajnana, places, as we have seen, the working of the indivisible All, active and formative, as a process and object of creative knowledge before the consciousness of the same All, originative and cognisant as the possessor and witness of its own working,—somewhat as a poet views the creations of his own consciousness placed before him in it as if they were things other than the creator and his creative force, yet all the time they are really no more than the play of self-formation of his own being in itself and are indivisible there from their creator.<sup>23</sup>

We have been saying that the mind plays its role wonderfully, but it is so precisely at the third level of the Supermind’s triple status. He is telling us here what happens at the second level, the apprehending level. We

have seen already the seed of differences coming in the apprehending level, then it becomes solidified in the third level. We must recognise that this apprehending level is the consciousness of differentiation, not the consciousness of division. Let's remember the difference between the two. Division and differentiation are quite different. So the emphasis is on this second level of differentiation. Describing the second level, he says it is like the poet who brings forth his poem. In the last chapter we used the example of the sculptor who brings out in his mind the objective knowledge of what he will create. All human creativity first takes place on the mental level or other higher level and then it comes down to the physical or material level. Whatever may be our instrumentation, whatever may be the canvass, it occurs first at the mental level or other deeper levels. So he says:

Thus Prajnana makes the fundamental division which leads to all the rest, the division of the Purusha, the conscious soul who knows and sees and by his vision creates and ordains, and the Prakriti, the Force-Soul or Nature-Soul which is his knowledge and his vision, his creation and his all-ordaining power.<sup>24</sup>

On the apprehending level of Supermind there is the Purusha and Prakriti, but he uses some very interesting words to describe Prakriti at this level: he calls it Nature-Soul or Force-Soul. It is not yet divided into what we see of Prakriti in the outer consciousness. On the apprehending level there is differentiation between Purusha and Prakriti, but still both are called soul. That is what is very interesting. That means the oneness of the spirit is there. The external form has not yet come, that is why he calls it Force-Soul. It is good to note that what he calls Force-Soul is seen on our level of mind as Prakriti. Why does he make this distinction? Because both are still the soul, the force has not yet taken form. It is at the third level or the involved level that we get the form. On the second level, it is still the soul formation. But it is a very dynamic formation, so there is this distinction on the apprehending level. Nevertheless,

Both are one Being, one existence, and the forms seen and created are multiple forms of that Being which are placed by Him as Knowledge

before Himself as Knower, by Himself as Force before Himself as Creator. The last action of this apprehending consciousness takes place when the Purusha pervading the conscious extension of his being, present at every point of himself as well as in his totality, inhabiting every form, regards the whole as if separately, from each of the standpoints he has taken; he views and governs the relations of each soul-form of himself with other soul-forms from the standpoint of will and knowledge appropriate to each particular form.<sup>25</sup>

At the third level, the soul begins to think it is exclusively related to its form. That is the beginning of the whole problem, the very beginning of ignorance, when the soul identifies itself exclusively with its form and thinks this form alone belongs to it. That is what ignorance is. When it realises all the other forms are also part of the one single Force-Soul, then we say we have the realisation of the soul.

Now let's go a little more in detail on the Purusha and Prakriti aspects. We will start with this sentence:

Mind, being an action of the Infinite, depieces as well as aggregates ad infinitum. It cuts up being into wholes, into ever smaller wholes, into atoms and those atoms into primal atoms, until it would, if it could, dissolve the primal atom into nothingness.<sup>26</sup>

This is marvellous. This sentence should be an eye-opener for the scientist. Sri Aurobindo says that mind is dividing the oneness into such small pieces that ultimately it comes down to the atomic and subatomic levels. So imagine that this supramental oneness is completely divided by mind into the atomic and sub-atomic particles and if it could it would continue dividing it into nothingness. That is interesting because we have this concept of nothingness of the Sachchidananda level where the words 'nothingness' and 'void' have been used to describe it. Why is it that matter cannot vanish into nothingness? He tells us here,

...it cannot, because behind this dividing action is the saving knowledge of the supramental which knows every whole, every atom to be only a concentration of all-force, of all-consciousness,

of all-being into phenomenal forms of itself. The dissolution of the aggregate into an infinite nothingness at which Mind seems to arrive, is to the Supermind only the return of the self-concentrating conscious-being out of its phenomenon into its infinite existence.<sup>27</sup>

So we cannot have nothingness; we may go into the subatomic level, and if the scientist tries to go further, what will he see? He may see the supramental consciousness! That is the deepest or the final absolute of inner investigation. Beyond the sub-atomic level of existence is the supramental.

This is what has been done by the Mother, I presume She went deep down through all the levels into the cellular level, and reached the hidden supramental force and consciousness. What she has done spiritually on her own body, science could may be realise tomorrow. If the scientists are sincere in this manner, they will tell us what they see. At this level, there is the law of absolute indeterminacy. They will say, “we cannot determine what it is.” It is a very interesting borderline. Until the subatomic level, the scientist could come down clearly. They could analyse the neutron and proton, but now they are saying they don’t know what it is. It is as if you look into the pond, what do you see? You see yourself. That is the problem of science today, the scientist looks into the atom and he sees himself! So he is amazed to find that instead of looking at matter, he is now looking at his own consciousness. He will find the truth: in the last analysis of science, he will see the Self which is within him.

Sri Aurobindo continues with another marvellous passage:

Whichever way its consciousness proceeds, by the way of infinite division or by the way of infinite enlargement, it arrives only at itself, at its own infinite unity and eternal being. And when the action of the mind is consciously subordinate to this knowledge of the Supermind, the truth of the process is known to it also and not at all ignored; there is no real division but only an infinitely multiple concentration into forms of being and into arrangements of the relation of those forms of being to each other in which division is a subordinate appearance of the whole process necessary to their spatial and temporal play.<sup>28</sup>

Now these are important sentences to be understood by us as well as the scientist. He says which ever way the consciousness proceeds, by way of infinite division or by the way of infinite enlargement, it will ultimately find the Supreme. It is one whole structure. In the Puranas there is a story about Siva becoming a column of light and no one could see its top or bottom. Two Godheads went to look for Siva in the column of light, one was Brahma and the other was Vishnu. when they went to the infinite depths and the infinite heights they found the same Infinity. So Sri Aurobindo sheds some light on this Puranic story. Whether through infinite division or infinite enlargement you find the same infinite. So science and spirituality have to meet because they are the two ways of the process of self-finding. Either way we go we ultimately find the same Consciousness.

The reason why we are in this ignorance, suffering and pain is that we are mid-way still in the journey. The scientist has not gone into the infinite nor have the spiritual seekers gone to the heights where you find the Supermind. We are at a mid-way station called the mind. We can take solace that the scientific approach will find the Divine and the spiritual line will reach the supramental consciousness. Evolution is now coming to a very narrow strip of this mid-way consciousness, and perhaps very soon there will be a breakthrough. There is already a resemblance of it with the theory of indeterminacy. Scientists are boldly telling us everything is indeterminant, nothing can be determined exactly. But we have found out in the spiritual line that everything is predetermined, it is not indeterminant but predetermined. Science is bound to find that beautiful supramental consciousness which is the very fabric of creation itself.

We have seen that mind is a great helper in this process of self-concentration of the individualised soul on the form, the exclusive concentration which led to ignorance. Now another thing that happens is that we have an exclusive concentration on the body itself. The common person identifies with the body. When we say 'I', we usually mean this external body. This self-identification with the body has further deepened the ignorance. Sri Aurobindo says:

To us mind seems to be determined by the body, because it is preoccupied with that and devoted to the physical workings which it uses for its conscious superficial action in this gross material

world. Employing constantly that operation of the brain and nerves which it has developed in the course of its own development in the body, it is too absorbed in observing what this physical machinery gives to it to get back from it to its own pure workings...<sup>29</sup>

He explains here that the mind has helped the soul on one side, but on the other side it is stuck to its consciousness of the body. The words he uses here are very peculiar. He says, “absorbed in what the physical machinery gives to it.” All the time we are concerned with what the physical senses tell us, with the physical world, and with our own physical life and body.

He continues: “to get back from it to its own pure workings; those are to it mostly subconscious. Still we can conceive a life mind or life being which has got beyond the evolutionary necessity of this absorption...<sup>30</sup> He emphasises here the different levels: ordinary humanity is absorbed in the physical consciousness of eating, sleeping, physical comforts, etc. but then there is this next level, where the individual is not so much engrossed by the body consciousness. The body’s needs are satisfied, but they are not an obsession of the mind. He says,

a life mind or life being which has got beyond the evolutionary necessity of this absorption and is able to see and even experience itself assuming body after body and not created separately in each body and ending with it; for it is only the physical impress of mind on matter, only the corporeal mentality that is so created, not the whole mental being.<sup>31</sup>

Sri Aurobindo tells us that this absorption with the body is a lower level of the mind, but there is the possibility of going beyond this level to where we can see and accept that eventually this body will die and we will take up another body and we are not disturbed by this. That means we can be detached from the body consciousness and live more or less in the mental consciousness. For yogis and true thinkers, the body is only a tool or a support system; they live more in the mental or spiritual consciousness and the body has only a secondary importance. This corporeal mentality is only a superficial external impress of mind on matter. There are different levels of the mind: the corporeal mind, the

physical mind, the vital mind, the mental mind and the higher levels of spiritual mind. If we are attached and concentrated on the body consciousness, alone, then our mind is stuck on a superficial level of consciousness.

Try to imagine what the objects of concentration are for the various levels of mind. The corporeal mind's concentration is on the body, so it remains on a superficial level. If we concentrate on higher ideals or the Divine, then we live in the higher mind or spiritual consciousness. The objects of concentration are important for they elevate our mind accordingly. There is a one to one correspondence between them: the corporeal mind with the body, the vital mind with vital activities and desires, mental mind with thought, reasoning and logic, etc. When we dwell in the higher mind the object of concentration also becomes different.

We can see now how our mental consciousness can help us in our sadhana. If the nature of mind is to focus on one thing, then can we not focus on greater heights of the mind? Usually, what we focus on is what our consciousness reflects. By this exclusive focus of mind, if we focus on the body, our consciousness is centred in the corporeal mind. But if we focus our mind on higher thoughts or on the Divine, then the whole consciousness gets elevated to a greater height. So we can use the capacity of the mind to raise our consciousness.

This is the role of meditation, concentration or reading Sri Aurobindo. Just yesterday I read a wonderful line from the Mother about reading Sri Aurobindo. She said,

To understand his teaching better and try to put it into practice, is certainly the best way of showing our gratitude to him for all the light, knowledge and force which he has so generously brought to the earth.

May his teaching enlighten and guide us, and what we cannot do today, we shall do tomorrow.<sup>32</sup>

To tie this into what I was saying, what happens if we can focus our mind's lamp on his teaching? We may have a limited understanding, but this knowledge that Sri Aurobindo is giving automatically raises our level of consciousness. If we focus on our body we are on one level, but

if we focus on Sri Aurobindo's teaching we are on another level. Then mind becomes no more a negative instrument but turns into a positive instrument. You may have heard about these modern treatments where they say that the mind affects your body and all diseases begin there. Now you can understand how mind is connected to your day to day living.

We have seen how the mind represents the ignorance by its exclusive concentration on the body itself. We have also noted how using the focus and concentration of the mind we can rise to higher levels of consciousness. However, there is one way that can help us to go beyond the limitations of the mind. As Sri Aurobindo writes here,

But there is still another clearer reflective mentality behind the dynamic and vital which is capable of escaping from this absorption in life and views itself as assuming life and body in order to image out in active relations of energy that which it perceives in will and thought. It is the source of the pure thinker in us; it is that which knows mentality in itself and sees the world not in terms of life and body but of mind...<sup>33</sup>

This is an interesting way out. There is behind the external mind—the corporeal, vital and physical mind—the pure thinker. Behind these levels of the external mind there is the subliminal mind which also has three levels, still deeper within is the Manomaya Purusha. If we can connect with this Manomaya Purusha, then there is the possibility of going beyond the mind, but in a very strict and limited sense. If we can connect with this Manomaya Purusha, which is the pure thinker, we can transcend all mental levels and find the Master Purusha, the Chaitanyamaya Purusha. Why? Because the Manomaya Purusha belongs to the Purusha consciousness which has to a great extent oneness with others. Not absolutely, but far more than what the external mind can see. The Manomaya Purusha within us can expand itself to include others into its consciousness. The Chaitanyamaya Purusha has the full oneness with others; here it is a little less than that, but still much more than that of the outer mind. So Sri Aurobindo says that while living in the mental consciousness, we can withdraw into the Manomaya Purusha.

Actually, Sankhya also told us this. When we refer to the witness Purusha, we mean the Manomaya Purusha. The terminology they use is the witness self. This Manomaya Purusha gives sanction to the external mind; it is not controlled but sanctioned by the Manomaya Purusha. So if we can withdraw within, we get the sense of oneness. Of course, if one can withdraw into the Chaitanyamaya Purusha, it is a greater achievement. But the first step is to go into the inner mental being and watch. We have been told, 'do not leap out into action, do not react to anything, but respond to things'. Reaction is due to the dynamic mind or the vital leaping out. To respond we need to step back into those Purushas—the Manomaya, Pranamaya or Annamaya Purushas—and what comes out from the Purusha is a calm and correct response.

In yoga we are not supposed to speak in a reactionary manner; that is how disharmony and clash begins. Especially when there are arguments or when there is disharmony, if one can take a moment to step back, it is a stepping back into the Purusha. Stepping back into the soul is a very big step and with practice it comes within our reach. We have to be conscious and take time to respond and not just react out of anger or excitement. If one can step back, you will see the result. Especially when there is a group meeting and a few out of the group are conscious of this kind of action, an immense difference comes in, because of the influence of these Purushas. So to withdraw into the inner being is to open to the guidance of the Purushas.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

The fundamental error of the Mind is, then, this fall from self-knowledge by which the individual soul conceives of its individuality as a separate fact instead of as a form of Oneness and makes itself the centre of its own universe instead of knowing itself as one concentration of the universal. From that original error all its particular ignorances and limitations are contingent results. For, viewing the flux of things only as it flows upon and through itself, it makes a limitation of being from which proceeds a limitation of consciousness and therefore of knowledge, a limitation of conscious force and will and therefore of power, a limitation of self-enjoyment and therefore of delight.<sup>34</sup>

Once there is limitation of capacity then there is limitation of Sat, Chit-Tapas and Ananda. So being in mind one cannot have infinite existence. Being in mind one cannot have infinite consciousness. Being in mind one cannot have infinite delight. It is almost like a mathematical formula and there should be no doubt about it in our mind. It is like trying to push in ten kilos into a one kilo capacity container; it is not possible. What happens? The box bursts open. Each one has his limitation. Let us not try to thrust into the mind what it cannot hold, for there is the danger of it bursting open. Therefore he says:

Hence there is an element of error in all human knowledge. Similarly our will, ignorant of the rest of the all-will, must fall into error of working and a greater or less degree of incapacity and impotence; the soul's self-delight and delight of things, ignoring the all-bliss and by defect of will and knowledge unable to master its world, must fall into incapacity of possessive delight and therefore into suffering. Self-ignorance is therefore the root of all the perversity of our existence, and that perversity stands fortified in the self-limitation, the egoism which is the form taken by that self-ignorance.<sup>35</sup>

There is one last word here which is very crucial, and also summarises the entire concept. That word is 'self-ignorance'. Self-ignorance is ignorance of one's Self, and it is actually the cause of all these limitations. As long as there is this self-ignorance, we have limited consciousness, limited power and limited delight. The moment we become aware of the Self, these limitations disappear. That is the difference; we find unlimited consciousness, unlimited power and unlimited delight. The whole philosophy is wrapped in this single word 'self-ignorance'.

What is ignorance? For example, if I don't know what a computer is and I don't know how it works, we would say that I am ignorant about it. If I have a very limited knowledge of the computer, I could open the Google search and increase my knowledge from there. But even if I were a great mathematician or a scientist, and I could increase my knowledge of the world, yet, I would not be able to get this unlimited consciousness, unlimited power, or unlimited delight. It is only when

we increase the knowledge of the Self, that we move towards this vastness. That is why this word 'self-ignorance' is so important to understand.

This 'self-ignorance' has its nodus in the ego. We come back to the famous gentleman called the ego. So long as we have this gentleman, 'the ego', dominating our existence, the knowledge of the Self remains distant. That is why the absolute need to become egoless. You can now understand metaphysically how the whole thing begins with this 'I', or the ego.

But it is not so easy to get rid of the ego. It is not just something in the pocket that you can take out and throw away. It has its roots in the Supermind itself, in the third status of Supermind. From there the consciousness falls into the Avidya, and this Avidya is precisely focused on ego. So what do we do? We have this myth of the 'Augean stables'. The Greek hero Hercules was asked by King Augeas to clean in a day stables of 3000 oxen! You can imagine all the dung and the mess in the stables! The hero was perplexed as to how to clean those hundreds of stables in a day. It was not quite possible for a single man to do that. So what he did was to divert the nearby River Alpheus through them and cleaned them all at one sweep! This, I suppose, is also the secret of Yoga. We cannot clean our 'own stables' because they are too murky. The best way is to invoke the River of Divine Grace to cleanse us. It is only the infinite who can fight the finite.

But the grace will not come to us just by calling for it. Read the book *The Mother*. Grace also has conditions which must be fulfilled. We normally think grace is unconditional. No, it is love that is unconditional; grace has conditions. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would say that in order to get that grace, you have to fulfil certain conditions. What are the conditions? Chapter one of the book *The Mother* gives us the details. This is where the metaphysics of the Supermind converges with the Integral Yoga.

There was one question someone asked which I would like to share with you, because many others may be wondering about the same thing. We say that Sri Aurobindo has brought down the supramental force, but if Supermind was already at the bottom of the Inconscient, and if all this creation is based on Supermind, then how has Sri Aurobindo brought it down? It is a very valid question.

I understand it in the following way. Last night we could see the sun setting at 6.30 in the evening. Then in the morning we could see the sun rise. So what has happened? The sun travelled through the night. At 5:30 in the morning the first rays of the sun lit the sky but we could still not see the sun. The darkness receded, what we call the Brahma Muhurtham. There was a beginning of the light, but the face of the sun was hidden. At 6:00 there was greater light, but still the sunrise was not visible. At 6.30 the sky was lit with beautiful colours and patterns of the sunrise, and people started doing Surya Namaskar to welcome the sun. Gradually the sun showed its full face.

This is precisely what the Supermind is doing in this evolution. It has sunk into the inconscient and the light of 5:30 in the morning represent the first level of Matter. The first origins of light emerged and then this light grew and Life came and evolved. At 6:30 a.m. the whole sky was lit with the colours of mind, but not yet was seen the face of the sun. But if somebody was flying in an airplane, or standing at the peak of Himalayas, he could already see the full sun.

Sri Aurobindo is that consciousness standing on the spiritual heights who has seen the coming of the supramental sun. It is evolutionary, it is natural, it is going to come, but there is one announcer and harbinger of the supramental sun who first sees it coming on the horizon. He was the first to see the magnificent children of the Dawn coming down the staircase to earth. We, standing on earth may see this after a few centuries. Somebody on the spiritual peaks has seen it and has described it marvellously in *Savitri*. What do we say about such a person? It is not a philosopher trying to explain existence logically. Metaphysics is one thing, but vision is another. Sri Aurobindo wrote *The Life Divine* standing on the peaks from where he could see the supramental sunrise. So that is what it is.

Now we know mentally what Supermind is and we know what evolution really means. What is going to come next is the supramental sun. What Sri Aurobindo is asking us to do is to stand on the seashore of life, do a Surya Namaskar and welcome that Sun so that it may bring us health, wealth, prosperity, a new consciousness and an existence in Truth. Our tradition tells us to do Surya Namaskar to the sun each day; Sri Aurobindo has taught us to practice Integral Yoga to welcome the supramental Sun. And the first thing to do is to prepare and open

one's mind so the supramental light may penetrate into it. Perhaps the best way to prepare our self is to read Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine, Savitri, The Synthesis of Yoga*—These are his consciousness in print, the permanent imprint of his consciousness. These are his footprints which he has left upon the earth for centuries and millennia to come. We must read these and allow his consciousness to penetrate our minds and lives.

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### Lecture Notes

- I. The Divine Soul and the Human Soul
  - a) Can a divine living be possible in this bodily form?
  - b) How are the four Divine terms connected with the three terms of our existence? What is the root of this undivine Maya?
  - c) Because of this opposition between the terms, abandoning of earthly life seems to be the solution.
  - d) There is a possibility that the three terms find their source in the four terms— then the perfection and transformation of humanity is possible.
- II. The Three Poises of Supermind
  - a) Comprehending consciousness: Self-conceptive extension of the Divine Consciousness. Supermind sees the infinite potentialities contained in the Divine One (Supermind).
  - b) Apprehending Consciousness: Selects 'the Many' as the order of

the Truth that is to be manifested. The birth of the Individual Divine or the Jivatman—One in Many—Divine Maya (Divine Mind).

- c) Involved Consciousness: Focus on the Many—Loss of Oneness—Lapse into Self-forgetfulness or Avidya (Mind).

### III. Nature of Avidya

- a) Avidya is not negation of knowledge—It is limited knowledge—An exclusive concentration on division—Riveted concentration on the object/subject of concentration. It is a power of knowledge and not its negation.
- b) Supermind too by its exclusive concentration is completely absorbed in Matter and thus Supermind wears the masque of Avidya.
- c) This is the process of the undivine Maya—it is the self-ignoring faculty which separates the action of the mind from the action of the Supermind.

### IV. The Action and Nature of Mind

- a) Divided from the Supermind. Mind sees only the particular and not the universal. It sees the phenomenon as separate from the whole.
- b) It cuts up being into wholes, into ever smaller wholes, into atoms and into primal atoms—almost into nothingness.
- c) In its essence Mind is a consciousness that measures, limits and cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole. It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cutout from a background.
- d) Mind cannot go beyond itself and conceive a real whole; it cannot possess the Infinite—all that it can do is only a “seeming” sense or enjoyment of the Infinite and not the real Infinite.
- e) Its *swabhava* and *swadharmā* is to translate always Infinity into the terms of the infinite. It is therefore the nodus of Avidya.
- f) The root of this Mind’s nature and workings are in the subordinate process of delimitation of the Divine Mind which is essentially the Apprehending Movement of Supermind.

### V. The Origin of Division and Avidya

- a) The Prajnana makes the fundamental division—the division of the Purusha, the conscious soul, and the Prakriti, the Nature-Soul.
- b) The last action of Prajnana takes place when the Purusha regards the whole as if separately, from each of the forms he has taken. There is an exclusive self-identification of the soul with a particular temporal and spatial action. The soul concentrates on the moment, the field, the form, the movement so as to lose the rest.
- c) Ignorance is further deepened by man's identity with his body. He is not conscious of his other selves—the inner subliminal and the higher levels. He is not aware of even the different beings within himself—the Manomaya, Pranamaya and the Annamaya Purushas.

#### VI. Awakening to its Truth

- a) Mind can recover the Truth when its veil of Avidya is lifted from it.
- b) Mind then will see Unity as the underlying principle behind multiplicity.
- c) The mind is the final operation of the Apprehending Truth-consciousness which only misrepresents Truth and not creates any falsehood. It only reawakens to the Truth of itself. Self-ignorance is the root of all perversity of our existence, which is focused in the egoism, and a reawakening to its true knowledge will liberate man from this egoism. All error will be resolved back into the Truth, all suffering into Delight all death into Immortality.