

Deliberations on
The Life Divine

(Chapterwise Summary Talks)

Volume Four

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine*

(Chapterwise Summary Talks)

**Volume Four
Book One: Chapters XIX-XXIII**

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**Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research
Puducherry, India**



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Dedicated to my wife

Deepshikha

*An unflinching collaborator in my work
for the Mother & Sri Aurobindo*

An Advice from the Mother

Sweet Mother, how should one read your books and the books of Sri Aurobindo so that they might enter into our consciousness instead of being understood only by the mind?

To read my books is not difficult because they are written in the simplest language, almost the spoken language. To draw profit from them, it is enough to read with attention and concentration and an attitude of inner goodwill with the desire to receive and to live what is taught.

To read what Sri Aurobindo writes is more difficult because the expression is highly intellectual and the language is much more literary and philosophic. The brain needs a preparation to be able truly to understand and generally a preparation takes time, unless one is specially gifted with an innate intuitive faculty.

In any case, I advise always to read a little at a time, keeping the mind as tranquil as one can, without making an effort to understand, but keeping the head as silent as possible, and letting the force contained in what one reads enter deep within. This force received in the calm and the silence will do its work of light and, if needed, will create in the brain the necessary cells for the understanding. Thus, when one re-reads the same thing some months later, one perceives that the thought expressed has become much more clear and close, and even sometimes altogether familiar.

It is preferable to read regularly, a little every day, and at a fixed hour if possible; this facilitates the brain-receptivity.

Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 12, p. 205

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Acknowledgments

I am happy to bring out my deliberations of the Chapters XIX to XXIII, of Sri Aurobindo's *magnus opus*, *The Life Divine* (Book One).

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Perhaps the work that demands most patience is the DTP work done by Divyanathan Kathiravan in a masterly manner. My immense thanks to him for his untiring support.

Just as the previous volumes of *Deliberations on The Life Divine*, this volume too tries to capture a glimpse of the vast, oceanic vision of Sri Aurobindo.

I offer this volume of *Deliberations on The Life Divine* at the Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and pray for Their acceptance.

CHAPTER XIX

Life

This chapter comes after a series of chapters on Mind leading to Supermind. Here, in the first four paragraphs, Sri Aurobindo gives again an introduction to Mind and Supermind. He starts by taking up the connection of the human being's triple status,— Mind, Life and Matter—to that of Sat, Chit and Ananda's "trinity". He traces Mind as being the active final strand of Supermind and intimate to the truth of Life as it evolves in the manifestation. In the process of involution, Supermind itself descends to the level of Mind: "...therefore wherever Mind is, there Supermind must be."¹ This means, that, actually, Mind is a Supermind's delegate which has been introduced to achieve a specific purpose in this involution. There is a total harmony at the level of Supermind, but when it descends to the level of Mind, the final processes of division begin. In fact, their origin starts at the Overmental level, but as the actualisation proceeds, the seal of division is seen at the level of Mind. Thus begin the workings of the divisive consciousness which takes the form of an absolute division on the level of Life and Matter. One can note here a subtle difference: Consciousness begins its play of separation at the level of Mind but, when it descends further down, to the levels of Life and Matter, the division is complete. Therefore, the role of Mind is to make possible an absolute multiplicity. In Sri Aurobindo's emphasis: "It enables the Purusha to hold apart the relations of the different forms and forces of himself to each other;..."²

Here, on the level of Mind, also begins the real play of the Purusha where he, the One within each of us, can identify himself with individual forms. After all, the whole purpose of this Lila is to create multiplicity and see multiplicity in complete division without the least trace of oneness. So, this apparent division has

been created on purpose so as to be the sole aim of creation itself.

Mind is this superb instrument of Supermind which fulfils wonderfully the work it wants to achieve on the involutory level. It is the very power of Supermind which completes the work through Mind. However, seeing from the evolutionary level, many schools of thought claim Mind to be the sole creator, the real parent of this creation. But Sri Aurobindo would like us to remember that, behind this entire projection of Mind, there is the hand of Supermind. He says:

Even when Mind is in its own darkened consciousness separated from its source, yet is that larger movement always there in the workings of Mind; forcing them to preserve their right relation, evolving from them the inevitable results they bear in themselves, producing the right tree from the right seed, it compels even the operations of so brute, inert and darkened a thing as material Force to result in a world of Law, of order, of right relation and not, as it would otherwise be, of hurtling chance and chaos.³

Therefore, it feels very reassuring to see that even in this ignorant mental consciousness, there is always the overpowering presence and guidance of Supermind. Left to Mind, it would lead to a complete chaos all the time as it is always a force of division. All this wonderful display of law and order and rhythm and harmony in this world through the flowers, seasons, birds and animals, is due only to the Supermind's influence which is defined as *Satyam, Ritam, Brihat*. *Ritam* is the law which is one of the basic characteristics of Supermind. Maintenance of this world in a rhythmic manner is the work of the Supramental consciousness' influence on Mind. What a wonderful example Sri Aurobindo gives here of the tamarind tree growing up from the tamarind seed! Apparently, there is no logic in this. Science explains it in terms of "genes", but Sri Aurobindo explains the "how" of a process and not its "why". He says that the only reason the tamarind tree grows out of a tiny tamarind seed is because of the Supermind. Supermind embedded in Matter

is the Real-Idea, it is “Truth-Consciousness”. Therefore, it is the same Consciousness, with two different terminologies. You will see that this Real-Idea is more relevant than any other concept. Scientists have normally sought to search in Matter something called “Intelligence”. On TV, many channels, such as the *National Geographic*, *Animal Planet*, show how Nature works, but when we look at it closely, we realise that there is a Cosmic Intelligence at work behind this universe. The way birds migrate, bees behave, ants carry food many times their size and weight, proves the existence of some super-intelligence in Nature, and this is something that the common man to the greatest scientist have acknowledged—that there is indeed an Intelligence behind this universe.

However, Sri Aurobindo clarifies:

But intelligence only perceives, reflects and uses within the measure of its capacity the work of a Truth of being superior to itself; the power behind that works must therefore be another and superior form of Consciousness proper to that Truth. We have, accordingly, to mend our conception and affirm that not a subconscious Mind or Intelligence, but an involved Supermind, which puts Mind in front of it as the immediately active special form of its knowledge-will subconscious in Force and uses material Force or Will subconscious in substance of being as its executive Nature or Prakriti, has created this material universe.⁴

At first, there is Mind, behind it is the involved Supermind. Therefore, Supermind is hidden in Matter and expresses itself as Intelligence, but, this “intelligence” is not just a mental concept, or a mental consciousness: it is basically the knowledge-will of Supermind. The word “will” denotes a person, a consciousness, who willed it. When I say “I want it to be”, “I will it to be”, there is “I”, the person, the personality and the consciousness behind a desire, an action. To this Consciousness or Will Sri Aurobindo gives the name of “Supramental Consciousness”. So, if we link it all up in this way, you can then observe that man sees the supreme intelligence

in Nature and this intelligence is the Will, and behind the Will is a Consciousness. So, deep down in Matter, behind the making of a beehive or a mountain, there is the Supermind expressing itself in a limited way but, nevertheless, it is this Consciousness. So, what we understand is that behind any manifestation in the universe,—from anthills to solar systems,—there is the guidance, the will of Supermind.

One must remember that it is not a haphazard or chaotic creation; there is a conscious will behind all creation. When there is a conscious will, the end is achieved because the Supreme has already willed it, which is obvious in our will and actions. For instance: you come out of your house in the morning to go to SACAR because you want to attend a class. You have an idea and an aim. You see, these are very small things but critical to understand the happenings in the world because if there is a will, there is an end to be achieved and that end the Supreme also has in mind. It is comforting to believe so, even though it may not be so easy to accept that everything happening around us is the Will of the Divine seen from a universal consciousness!

In fact, someone even asked me: “Do violence and disasters take place because the Divine has willed them?” There are two answers: “yes” and “no”. Yes, it is all part of the general Will. Try to imagine this beautiful garden in SACAR. It was a piece of barren land when we first bought it. We used crowbars and axes to clear the piece of land. Just put yourself in this process when you are removing weeds, digging the earth and then sowing seeds. You are hurting the weeds and the earth but you are also cleaning the land of all the debris to make it a beautiful garden. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo tells us that all the violence is taking place at the physical, vital and mental levels because it is necessary to help cleanse the human consciousness so that, in the future, it can become a beautiful garden of the Supramental consciousness. Therefore, we have to accept this Will. This is the importance Sri Aurobindo gives to the word “Will”.^a

Now, the main question is: what does the Mind do? If the Supermind has descended to the level of Mind, then how does the

Mind proceed? It proceeds to the level of Life. We have already described Mind as a kind of a sieve. The Supramental consciousness is “squeezed” through the sieve of the Mind that breaks out in divided life-forms. Life is the descent of Mind in individual forms, which results in individual forms of consciousness. This “individualisation” of consciousness manifests in the multiplicity of forms and existence. And this multiplicity is a proof of a divisive consciousness at play. We have seen previously that Mind is divided in its medium of ideas, likewise Life also is divided in its medium of myriad forms. But, what is the predominant consciousness in these myriad forms? Obviously, what it has received from above! What is the form of consciousness it received from above? It is our present confused and divided mental consciousness. So, we are born with a dividing consciousness which descends further down into Life and Matter. Therefore, this basic divided consciousness is responsible for all the apparent chaos in the world also. People, religions, philosophies, ethics and moralities have always decried Life. They say that Life is something evil, an illusion, madness. So, now you can see why we have hated this divisive consciousness. It is responsible for all our suffering and pain. But unless we suffer, we do not change; but when we suffer from repeated pain, it intensifies and we conclude saying “Life is evil”. Philosophers say that life is Maya. Moralists say that Life is a delirium. So, Sri Aurobindo tells us that, unfortunately, people have always considered Life as something evil because of this pain and suffering. He also asks us a question: “Are we right in thinking so?” But then he does not spell out the answer, he leads us to it. He lets us find out the answer: this is Sri Aurobindo’s best gift to us.

However, coming back to the concept of Life as something evil, Sri Aurobindo writes:

Or is it rather some divine principle that thus expresses itself, some power of the Delight of eternal being that had to express and has thrown itself into Time and Space in this constant outburst of the million and million forms of life which people the countless worlds of the universe?⁵

Mark the use of the word “worlds” in the plural: it is not only our world which exists, of twelve planets and part of the Milky Way, but also other worlds! These worlds are peopled with life: “million forms of life which people the countless worlds...”. “People” does not mean “you” and “me”. There are other kinds of forms, with a different substance. The Mother once told us about the reality of the UFO. She said she had once seen one in the Bay of Bengal.^b

In this chapter, Sri Aurobindo takes up Life as an expression of the Divine Delight and not as it is at present. In the following chapters, he studies it as a problem. What do we understand by “Life as cosmic energy”? Here again there is a “catch” where he says that Life manifests upon earth with Matter as its basis, not with Life as its basis. So, he talks about Life as cosmic energy on the material level. We see plants, insects, birds and animals and human beings taking birth and then dying. It is a continuous rhythm of destruction and renewal. When one is in a philosophical mood, one widens one’s mind, trying to imagine millions of forms on earth and beyond, millions of stars in the sky. What is that one thing that comes to one’s mind? It is an interesting question. “Can you guess the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of this universe?” (*To a participant’s reply*) Yes, you are right! There is something, some sort of invisible Intelligence, which is more sensorial than visible making us aware of Life’s oneness. But can you also see, at the same time, splendour, beauty, truth and luminosity all around you? Can you see luminosity when there are people around you? All you said is correct—that you see a change taking place, a constant flux, some kind of dynamism in the twinkling of stars, in the rotation of the earth, in the rising and setting of the sun, in the animal kingdom and in the human consciousness. Is there more? Is there some kind of Intelligence guiding this universe? Every second, things are changing. What do we mean by this change? What are its characteristics? Can anyone answer?

When we say there is a change, a force, what we understand is that there is movement. There is a constant change of forms, not only one form changing from one to another but the birth of an entirely new species. Sri Aurobindo explains it as the disintegration

and renewal of substance. This leads us to the question of life and death and their necessity. Death is disintegration; it is Life's law, it is the necessity of change and variation of experience in different forms.

Now this essential characteristic of change, which is disintegration and renewal,—it may be better perhaps to use these words than “death” and “life”—gives us a kind of philosophic understanding. For instance, take the image of waves upon the ocean: have you ever sat by the seashore and watched the waves rise and fall? It seems Napoleon used to do so; he even counted how many waves he saw in one day. I suggest you go to the beach, sit there and watch the waves rise and fall. It is a wonderful exercise. What would you observe? The whole process of the continuous rise and fall of the waves can be seen as renewal and disintegration. Likewise everything in the universe goes through this process of constant disintegration and renewal. Then what happens to these forms? They disintegrate into other forms, they change into material for other forms; but all forms are made of the same energy. For example, the ocean and our life are the same thing: they both represent Life, which is Energy. Each wave's shape is different from another. Similarly, in Nature all forms are precisely wonderful forms of that single energy. To put it in Sri Aurobindo's words:

Disintegration of substance and renewal of substance, maintenance of form and change of form are the constant process of life; death is merely a rapid disintegration subservient to life's necessity of change and variation of formal experience. Even in the death of the body there is no cessation of Life, only the material of one form of life is broken up to serve as material for other forms of life.⁶

I am using the word “decentralisation” as an alternate to the word “death” as I wish to take away the innate fear of the word “death”. I agree the word “death” possesses a dark vibration. The Mother has used the word “centralisation” for Life. In life there is a

centralisation of energy, which means that there is a centre around which energy centralises itself. Can you tell me what that centre is? It is obviously the Atman or the soul; it is around this centre of Sachchidananda, the Purusha, that this energy forms itself. It is this centre which holds together the forms as a magnet does. That is why when we say that the soul has left the body, we mean that there is a decentralisation and the body begins to disintegrate. So, you see it is very simple. When the centre is removed, the body collapses and disintegrates because that which held it together has shifted, has decentralised. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo concludes this paragraph beautifully, saying, "All renews itself, nothing perishes."⁷

This concept of life and death, singularly gains a new meaning when we look at Life as a cosmic energy enjoying constant waves of forms, and Sri Aurobindo writes: "Death has no reality except as a process of life."⁸ Now let me ask you: which came first, life or death? (*Asking the question to the participants*) Life? But why do you say so? Because without life, death is not possible?^c Sri Aurobindo wrote a small poem "Life and Death", in which he explains:

Life, death,— death, life; the words have led for ages
 Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
 Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
 Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
 Life only is, or death is life disguised, —
 Life a short death until by life we are surprised.⁹

Well, let us try to understand this question in the light of the process of involution. We see that Mind descended first as the Life principle: so there is first the Life principle itself, and then came disintegration.^d So we can say that "Death has no reality except as a process of life." Sri Aurobindo goes further, "...the natural opposition we make between death and life is an error of our mentality, one of those false oppositions—false to inner truth though valid in surface practical experience—which, deceived by appearances, it is constantly bringing into the universal unity."¹⁰ It is a wonderful definition of death. This is the essence of *Savitri*,

death is proven to be false, it is after all the mask of Immortality. Here, I quote Sri Aurobindo who says: "All existence here is a universal Life that takes form of Matter. It might for that purpose hide life-process in physical process before it emerges as submental sensitivity and mentalised vitality, but still it would be throughout the same creative Life-principle."¹¹

This is the first point, we have seen Life as cosmic energy. All existence here is universal life, taking the form of Matter which hides the physical process until it emerges. To see Life as cosmic energy is very important because it helps us to understand the meaning of life and death, and then, how to look at death itself. I hope you have followed the argument. Perhaps Sri Aurobindo can hear you (*Addressing the participants*) murmuring in the audience, saying: "No, no, Sri Aurobindo, we are not interested in cosmic energy and in cosmic Life. When we said Life, we meant something else." So, Sri Aurobindo says, "All right, what did you mean by Life?" And the common intellect replies that life is... Is the blackboard alive? The table? (*Asking the participants*) No, they are not alive (*Participant's reply*) All right, but why do you say they are not alive? Because they are fixed forms? You look at the garden and say, "There, there is life", but when you look at the fans, hanging from the ceiling, you say that there is no life and consciousness in those fans. When we said that there is life here, in this room, some of you agreed that it is so because there are human beings who breathe, grow, progress. All right. Let us see what the characteristics of Life are. When we say "Life", we definitely mean breathing and growing. Look at a flower, it is constantly changing. But then there is something more. What is it? What is the difference between a stone and an animal? "Movement?" (*Reply from a participant*) Yes, you are right. Basically, the animal dies; it is the opposite of living. You see I am a simple, pragmatic person who doesn't understand philosophy. All I know is that something goes away when something dies. Well, let us now see what Sri Aurobindo has to say, how he defines Life. He writes: "Ordinarily, when we speak of life, we have meant animal life, that which moves, breathes, eats, feels, desires, and, if we speak of the life of plants, it has been almost as a metaphor rather than a reality,

for plant life was regarded as a purely material process rather than a biological phenomenon.” He also says “But it is evident that spontaneous motion or locomotion, breathing, eating are only processes of life and not life itself...”¹²

When we say something is not living, we usually mean that it does not breathe, does not eat and move. Therefore, I say that as this microphone in which I am speaking does not eat, breathe, or move, it is dead. But a plant and an animal are living. But then Sri Aurobindo asks, “Are you sure that even breathing, locomotion, eating are really signs of living or life?” In the chapter on Matter, which we will take up next, we shall see that all that we think as representing Matter—its *tamas*, heaviness, weight are only the characteristics of Matter, not Matter itself. Similarly, when we say that something is alive, what we describe is the particular attribute of Life and not Life itself. There is the Life principle which is quite different from the characteristics it expresses.

How to explain what J. C. Bose said about plants? If we consider only the characteristic features of life, it is difficult to justify Dr. Bose, but if we take the fundamental Life principle, then we can prove that the plant is something living, like you and me. One of the things Dr. Bose did was to give a stimulus to a plant; a stimulus could be a soft touch or playing music to it, in order to observe its response. Of course, in recent times scientists have gone very far to prove that not only do plants respond to a physical stimulus, they even react to an emotional stimulus, a vibrational stimulus. I think I have told you before, in one of my classes about some of these experiments. A plant was kept in a room; nothing was there except that one plant. A murderer was asked to go into the room. The plant immediately reacted and folded its leaves. The moment the murderer left the room, another person, a good person, went in and the leaves unfolded. It seems that police officers have used plants as lie-detectors, as they can understand and react to consciousness itself. What Dr. Bose did was a physical experiment; now we have gone as far as to show that plants can react to the vibrations of a particular consciousness and it is at this point that Sri Aurobindo takes up this argument. J.C. Bose takes a higher step by saying

that even the metal has this stimulus and this response but Sri Aurobindo goes even further:

If we can pursue our inquiries farther, not obliged to stop short where our immediate means of investigation fail us, we may be sure from our unvarying experience of Nature that investigation thus pursued will in the end prove to us that there is no break, no rigid line of demarcation between the earth and the metal formed in it or between the metal and the plant and, pursuing the synthesis farther, that there is none either between the elements and atoms that constitute the earth or metal and the metal or earth that they constitute. Each step of this graded existence prepares the next, holds in itself what appears in that which follows it.¹³

Therefore, Sri Aurobindo concludes by saying that right from the atomic level to the Supramental level, there is a continuity, a constant life-energy, a life-force flowing without a break. Just because we cannot see the characteristics of life that you and me have described, it does not mean that Matter does not have life, that Matter does not have the Life-force or that Matter does not have Consciousness. What Sri Aurobindo wishes us to understand is that there is one string of consciousness, right from the Sachchidananda level down to the level of the atom; only its expression and instrumentation are different. Now if this is the truth, then let us see it visibly and convince ourselves that Sri Aurobindo is, after all, absolutely right.

Yesterday, we were given a visible proof of consciousness in the stone when Mrs. Margaret Smith showed us how there is life in inanimate things also, and I am sure you have liked that, as it was really very informative and educative. It was wonderful to see the colour and light patterns in the centre of the stone. Well, this is really the work of the future, in the sense that there is a great deal to be done to really elucidate Sri Aurobindo, not only by means of paintings and photography but also at the research level. Well, as you can see, there are so many things in Sri Aurobindo which we take for granted. But yesterday when we saw the slides, we

really benefitted from them, as we became more aware, because we understood not only what Sri Aurobindo is telling us, but also because it was good to have a deeper explanation of his vision. And if it is based on something scientific, it becomes easier. So, if we can scan every chapter, and look into it and make an in-depth study we may come up with profound insights.

Now to continue, there is a line here, which is a synopsis as it were of what we have read until now. Sri Aurobindo writes: "We must remember that the physical response to stimulus is only an outward sign of life, even as are breathing and locomotion in ourselves."¹⁴ and he concludes:

There is a vibrant reception and reply, as well as a will to grow and be, indicative of a submental, a vital-physical organisation of consciousness-force hidden in the form of being. The fact would seem to be, then, that as there is a constant dynamic energy in movement in the universe which takes various material forms more or less subtle or gross, so in each physical body or object, plant or animal or metal, there is stored and active the same constant dynamic force; a certain interchange of these two gives us the phenomenon which we associate with the idea of life.¹⁵

You must note here that this is a very crucial conclusion we come to, where he says that there is "the constant dynamic force," which is "stored and active". These are the two words he uses. So, all along, all through, there is the same energy; you can call it "life" "energy" or "consciousness". But at present, let us call it "life-energy", which differs only in its poise. "Poise" means that it is either stored and static or dynamic and active. These are the only two poises; otherwise, right from the stone to man and beyond man, it is the one and the same consciousness. When we say that there is an evolution of consciousness, strictly speaking there is no evolution as such, no growth of consciousness, because when we ask about the difference between the stone, the plant and man, we use the word "evolve" to explain man's superiority in evolution.

But if we look at it deeply, are we really more evolved than a stone? Well, we are, in a very specific manner. If so, in which way? By “evolution” what we understand and interpret is that there is a “self-revelation”. Consciousness reveals itself and it is in this process of self-revelation that it uses a greater instrumentation. Well, I hope you have caught the idea here. It is the same eternal consciousness; there is no growth in the eternal consciousness. It is infinite and all the knowledge is already there. Sachchidananda cannot grow or evolve; it is Absolute, Perfect. Then what is it that grows? (*Asking the question to the class*) Nothing? Then what is the difference? The difference between man, the plant and the stone is that the same consciousness reveals a little more of itself at each evolutionary stage. So, evolution is actually a process of self-revelation. It is the same single consciousness that unveils itself, each time removing one more “curtain” and taking up a new form. So, self-revelation happens through a new layer of form; a new form means, basically, a new instrumentation of self-expression.

This is the basic thing; so if the animal evolves from the stone, it does not mean that the consciousness has evolved. It simply means that the consciousness has taken up a higher instrumentation or a greater self-expression. If we say that an individual has changed, has progressed, evolved, or if we say that an artist has evolved in the last ten years, what do we understand? We see his/her array of paintings and then we realise that the artist has utilised greater means to reveal himself/herself. So, in this basic sense, in the very fundamental sense, evolution is only a self-revelation. Therefore, from this angle we can see that energy, which was stored or was non-active in the stone, wants to now self-reveal or self-express in a greater way by revealing itself in the form of the plant. So, it takes upon itself a new expression where Life can breathe, feel or enjoy nervous energy. What we understand is that there is a constant growth in the self-expression of the Consciousness. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that in the future, a new species called “superman” will live on earth. Can you tell me what will be the difference between man of today and the superman of tomorrow? (*Asks the question to the class*) It is the same eternal

consciousness that will take up a new way to express itself, with a more evolved mind, a greater life and a more supple body. That is how the instrumentation evolves while the eternal consciousness remains the same. So, you note here that it is in this sense that dynamic energies are stored. So, Sri Aurobindo concludes:

It is this action that we recognise as the action of Life-Energy and that which so energises itself is the Life-Force. Mind-Energy, Life-Energy, material Energy are different dynamisms of one World-Force.¹⁶

Now, Sri Aurobindo looks into the concept of Life-Force in the form. What he says is very interesting, especially for medical students. He writes that “Even when a form appears to us to be dead, this force still exists in it in potentiality although its familiar operations of vitality are suspended and about to be permanently ended.”¹⁷ Now when a doctor says that a person is dead, does it mean that there is an immediate cessation of life-energy, of life-force? Well, instead of giving us a conclusive answer, Sri Aurobindo takes up two cases, the case of catalepsy and the case of trance. We will study these two examples and then come to a conclusion. What happens in catalepsy? Sri Aurobindo explains: “In certain cases, such as catalepsy, we see that the outward physical signs and operations of life are suspended, but the mentality is there self-possessed and conscious although unable to compel the usual physical responses.”¹⁸ So, when there is catalepsy, neither the body nor the mind dies; it does not mean that the energies have been withdrawn. When a body is in this kind of swoon, the person is not dead of course, even if there is a lack of usual physical responses, such as responding to a voice, a touch or anything. And similarly, in the case of trance too, Sri Aurobindo says, all along:

What has really happened is that the surface mind-force has been withdrawn into subconscious mind and the surface life-force into sub-active life and either the whole man has elapsed into the subconscious existence or else he has withdrawn his

outer life into the subconscious while his inner being has been lifted into the superconscious.¹⁹

This is what happens in a trance; our consciousness reaches great heights, what we call the Superconscious heights, but the body, on the contrary, as Sri Aurobindo says, sinks into the subconscious, which is a kind of *tamas*. It is neither active nor alive. This is the difference between the Superconscious and the Subconscious. Here, he adds:

But the main point for us at present is that the Force, whatever it be, that maintains dynamic energy of life in the body, has indeed suspended its outer operations, but still informs the organised substance.²⁰

Well, that is a different thing, but as long as there is this life-energy nothing is dead. It can be a point of trance or a point of coma, but even after somebody is dead, the life-energy does not withdraw. This is what Sri Aurobindo explains to us here. Therefore, even in the so-called dissolution of the body, when the soul has left it—yesterday we used the word “decentralisation”—even after the soul leaves the body, the life-energy is not withdrawn. So, you see there is a subtle difference here, the doctor may say that the patient is dead as the body stops responding to the usual stimuli, but we cannot say that the life-energy or the life-force has been withdrawn. Why? It is because the same life-force is now trying to dismantle the body. At some point [in time] the life-force was using, or used, to keep the body together, and this same energy is now working to dismantle the body. In life or after death, the life-energy continues to be active in the build-up and maintenance of the body, or in the dismantling of the body. Thus, even in the extreme case of death, the life-energy continues because it uses the same matter, dissolves it into particles and out of these particles, it moulds again a new form. This is again another way of saying that the life-energy never ceases to exist; a form dissolves but it does not disappear:

A point comes, however, at which it is no longer possible to restore the suspended activities; and this occurs when either such a lesion has been inflicted on the body as makes it useless or incapable of the habitual functionings or, in the absence of such lesion, when the process of disintegration has begun...²¹

Therefore, when there is no response, when there is a lesion or an injury or when the body is diseased and can no longer receive any stimulus, it starts to disintegrate. Well, that was a point he makes only to highlight another point, which he takes up in the next paragraph. He writes:

Life then is the dynamic play of a universal Force, a Force in which mental consciousness and nervous vitality are in some form or at least in their principle always inherent and therefore they appear and organise themselves in our world in the forms of Matter.²²

Now, this is the sentence we should note:

The life-play of this Force manifests itself as an interchange of stimulation and response to stimulation between the different forms it has built up and in which it keeps up its constant dynamic pulsation; each form is constantly taking into itself and giving out again the breath and energy of the common Force; each form feeds upon that and nourishes itself with it by various means, whether indirectly by taking in other forms in which the energy is stored or directly by absorbing the dynamic discharges it receives from outside.²³

This is a little of what we saw yesterday in the slides. This, Sri Aurobindo explains further in the next chapter, but here he just introduces this idea of how there is an interchange of energies between life forms. And by this interchange, he means that the life-energy of the plant gets transferred to the animal as it sustains

itself on life-energy. And from the animal it passes on to man. This is what we mean by an interchange, a cycle of energies.

Yesterday, during the slide show given by Mrs. Smith, we saw how much energy there is in air. And also its structure tells us how there is this flow of energy, how it revitalises us. So, we can now understand that when we breathe deeply, we take in the energy itself. It is not just the physical air but there is a kind of tremendous force and energy in this very air. When we breathe in, energy enters our body and that is how there is constantly one principle of energy getting into another principle of energy, like when sunlight energy enters the plant, the plant-energy goes into the animal and so forth. So, there is a constant interchange of the forms of energy, they do not remain as they are. The plant-energy does not remain just as a plant-energy when it enters in or becomes useful to other forms of existence.

The last important point in this chapter is this simple question: "what exactly is the difference between the plant and man?" As we said yesterday, J.C. Bose has proven that the plant also has consciousness. It responds to stimulus. But Sri Aurobindo takes a step further to explain the difference between the plant and man. He says:

We say that they differ, first, in our possession of the power of locomotion which has evidently nothing to do with the essence of vitality, and, secondly, in our possession of conscious sensation which is, so far as we know, not yet evolved in the plant.²⁴

It means that human beings can move around, whereas the plant cannot. This is the phrase we should take note of: "conscious sensation". We do have a conscious sensation which the plant does not have. But what is the meaning of this "conscious sensation"? Does it mean that the plant cannot feel? Not so because the scientists have proven that plants have feelings. Then what is this "conscious sensation"? Sri Aurobindo says:

Our nervous responses are largely, though by no means always or in their entirety, attended with the mental response of conscious sensation; they have a value to the mind as well as to the nerve-system and the body agitated by the nervous action.²⁵

So, it means that when you and I touch a plant, it definitely responds but it is not conscious, in the sense that it cannot recollect what it felt when we touched it. Therefore, the plant cannot bring back the sensation on demand for it has no memory. This is the basic difference: the plant has no mind, we do. So, when someone touches us, our mind or the sense remembers the touch whereas the plant cannot. It will not remember if and how we touched it a few seconds back. And because we have a mind, we can store in our memory the sensation of touching the fire, somebody pinching us or the touch of glass. Even while we close our eyes, we can remember and feel and understand that this is glass or that is wood or this is a piece of paper because their feel has been stored in my mind. This capacity to store sensations and to remember them is not there in the plant. All it has is pure instant reaction.

So, Sri Aurobindo would say:

In the plant it would seem that there are symptoms of nervous sensation, including those which would be in us rendered as pleasure and pain, waking and sleep, exhilaration, dullness and fatigue, and the body is inwardly agitated by the nervous action, but there is no sign of the actual presence of mentally conscious sensation.²⁶

This is now common knowledge about how plants are supposed to grow according to the music you play to them. For instance, if you play to two plants jazz and classical, they will grow accordingly, which means that there will be a difference in their growth and in their response, which shows us how music affects their nervous system. What Sri Aurobindo tells us is that at the levels of pleasure, pain, waking and sleep, exhilaration and dullness, they react like

us, but in them, there is no apparent sign of any present conscious mental sensation. But Sri Aurobindo concludes by saying “But sensation is sensation whether mentally conscious or vitally sensitive, and sensation is a form of consciousness.”²⁷ This sentence affirms that plants do have a consciousness. Dr. J.C. Bose had said that plants respond to external stimuli because they have a nervous system. But he stops with the nervous sensation, which is again the external pain and pleasure, but Sri Aurobindo goes way deeper to say that the very fact that something senses, means that something is conscious, that it has a consciousness.

In fact, in another chapter of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo tells us how in the beginning there is a vast stretch of consciousness—*Satyam, Ritam, Brihat*—and in the vastness of this consciousness, there begin ripples of consciousness. These ripples, when they come in contact with each other, create sensation. After all, it is one wave of consciousness touching another wave of consciousness and so, they are both conscious and they become conscious of each other. This is the genesis of sensation because primarily, at its origin, sensation is a wave of consciousness that was borne upon the stillness of Brihat. So, that is the primordial source. Creation began as a stretch of consciousness: for example you can imagine our ocean here, which without any ripples, looks like a vast lake. In this huge ocean of consciousness these ripples that came up, started touching each other; this touch is the sensation. What Sri Aurobindo tells us is that sensation is a form of consciousness, which refers to that primordial touch of the ripples of consciousness connecting one with another. If there is no consciousness, there is no sensation. If I am in coma, even if I touch this table, I cannot feel it, even if I am conscious at the comatose stage. This means the Life-Energy is there but there is no mental awareness.

Sri Aurobindo says that even after we suspend all mental, vital and physical activities, we can remain conscious. He goes on to say, “When the sensitive plant shrinks from a contact, it appears that it is nervously affected, that something in it dislikes the contact and tries to draw away from it...”²⁸ This question of subconscious sensation is really important. We have seen that there

is a nervous energy in the plant, which expresses itself through pain and pleasure and so forth. This means that there is something like sensation, which in other words is equivalent to consciousness. What is interesting is that both plants and human beings are endowed with consciousness. Then, what is the difference between the plant's consciousness and man's? The plant has a subconscious sensation, whereas man has a "subconscious mentality much vaster than the conscious":

...there is, in a word, a subconscious sensation in the plant, just as there are, as we have seen, subconscious operations of the same kind in ourselves. In the human system it is quite possible to bring these subconscious perceptions and sensations to the surface long after they have happened and have ceased to affect the nervous system; and an ever-increasing mass of evidence has irrefutably established the existence of a subconscious mentality in us much vaster than the conscious.²⁹

That is to say, man has a subconscious and, like the plant, he feels exactly the same when it comes to pain and pleasure. If we have similar sensations as the plant, then where lies the difference between the plant and us? There is some kind of difference obviously—it is the conscious mind. Plant has no conscious mind. We are able to access the Subconscious through memory, dreams, etc. These subconscious sensations come out or are brought forth consciously. This is what I was telling you, that there is hardly any difference between the plant and us as we have the common consciousness. When the Divine Consciousness wanted to express itself, it needed a new instrument and that new instrument is called "mind". So, it is really the same consciousness, it was happy to be dormant in the plant and in the animal, but in man it found a fit instrument to make use of all the subconscious experiences for its own expression. For example, the plant sees a sunrise and it responds to it, but when an artist sees a sunrise he can return home and, after a few days, recall the same experience, as it has sunk in his subconscious, and create a beautiful painting.

Now, if you want to use the word “evolution”, it is in this sense that there is the instrumentation’s evolution for self-expression. So, consciousness being the same, it can now express itself better. In the plant and the animal it could not express itself much. But now it says it wants to express itself better, so what is the best way to do so? It is to use the instrument called “mind”. For instance: just as in modern times we have cars, hundred years back there were only bullock carts, or horses to ride. At that time, man used to go at a slower speed. In order to move faster, man invented cars but man has remained the same, he has merely added a new instrument to carry him faster, but the consciousness in both stages is the same.

To read further what Sri Aurobindo states:

The mere fact that the plant has no superficially vigilant mind which can be awakened to the valuation of its subconscious sensations, makes no difference to the essential identity of the phenomena. The phenomena being the same, the thing they manifest must be the same, and that thing is a subconscious mind. And it is quite possible that there is a more rudimentary life operation of the subconscious sense-mind in the metal, although in the metal there is no bodily agitation corresponding to the nervous response;...³⁰

This is what he foretold, which we read yesterday, “And it is quite possible that there is a more rudimentary life operation of the subconscious sense-mind in the metal, although in the metal there is no bodily agitation corresponding to the nervous response...” How does he draw this conclusion? I would say it is mere logic. What Sri Aurobindo is doing here is to extend the logic to the metal. What is this logic? In man we have the conscious mind as an extra instrument of self-revelation. Basically, he has a subconscious mind, which the plant, the stone and the metal also have. Now let us study the logic again. Let me summarise this. In man, we have one more extra instrument called “mind” to express himself, but basically it is the subconscious mind which is also subconscious sensation. It is the same consciousness which is more dormant

in the plant and in the animal than in man; then, in the same way, in Matter it is even more dormant. You can follow the logic from man to plant to Matter: more conscious, less conscious and hardly conscious! This is a kind of a degree of consciousness as it devolves, but it is not the question of a more or less consciousness. It is only a better way of self-expression. In Matter, self-expression is the least as it is the field of the subconscious mind which is very much dormant. This stored energy takes upon itself sensation, locomotion and mind when it comes to man to express all the sensations. So, Sri Aurobindo is not using any occult knowledge as such but is applying pure logic to conclude that there is the subconscious in Matter too.

In the next paragraph, he continues, more or less, to discuss the same idea. He writes:

In certain forms of concentration, what we call the mentality, that is to say, the Prajnana or apprehensive consciousness almost or quite ceases to act consciously, yet the work of the body and the nerves and the sense-mind goes on unnoticed but constant and perfect; it has all become subconscious and only in one activity or chain of activities is the mind luminously active. While I write, the physical act of writing is largely or sometimes entirely done by the subconscious mind; the body makes, unconsciously as we say, certain nervous movements; the mind is awake only to the thought with which it is occupied. The whole man indeed may sink into the subconscious, yet habitual movements implying the action of mind may continue, as in many phenomena of sleep; or he may rise into the superconscious and yet be active with the subliminal mind in the body, as in certain phenomena of *samādhi* or Yoga trance.³¹

Sri Aurobindo gives here a wonderful example of how subconsciously we do certain actions, like writing. For instance, when I write the word “celebration”, my mind is not actively involved in it. Right from our childhood, we keep on writing the

same word so many times that it becomes our fingers' subconscious habit to write it with the correct spelling. You know, when we used to make mistakes, our teacher would ask us to write the correct spelling of those words ten times, hundred times even. It was boring. We did this in our French or Sanskrit classes; whenever we made any grammatical or spelling mistakes, we were asked to correct them many times! Why did we do that? Perhaps because by doing so our fingers would acquire a subconscious memory! So, when you write a word, you take the pen to write it and then, while writing, you would write the right spelling even though mentally, you have forgotten it. I am sure you all have experienced this. Basically what happens is that the Subconscient remembers the correct spelling of a word, whereas, our mental consciousness may have forgotten it. Even when I am writing and my mind is thinking of something else, my fingers write automatically. It is in an auto-mode—everything happens automatically. What does it mean? This shows us that we are doing subconsciously all actions even the act of breathing. The plant also is breathing, sensing and feeling pain and pleasure but it is not conscious of its activities, certain nervous movements, of which it will become conscious when it takes up a form called "man", with an instrument called "mind". What was being done subconsciously will be done consciously. "It does exactly the same things but in a different way and with a different value in terms of consciousness."³²

What is that "it"? It is the Consciousness. So, in the plant, it is doing everything subconsciously like my hand writing a sentence without the knowledge of my mind. But it will consciously perform the same activities when it becomes, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "...when it emerges in man from its absorption and begins to wake though still indirectly, to its knowledge-self."³³ Well, man is not completely conscious but definitely far more conscious than the plant.

So now you see how Sri Aurobindo goes deeper step by step. Starting from this question of the Subconscient in the plant, he "digs" deeper:

It is becoming possible now to conceive that in the very atom there is something that becomes in us a will and a desire, there is an attraction and repulsion which, though phenomenally other, are essentially the same thing as liking and disliking in ourselves, but are, as we say, inconscient or subconscient. This essence of will and desire are evident everywhere in Nature and, though this is not yet sufficiently envisaged, they are associated with and indeed the expression of a subconscient or, if you will, inconscient or quite involved sense and intelligence which are equally pervasive.³⁴

Now, what is this idea? The subconscious mind which is in man, in the plant and in Matter, is there even in every atom. And in every atom, there is basically, what he calls "a will and a desire". What do we mean by "will" and "desire"? What Sri Aurobindo tells us here is that whatever was there in the Subconscient, gets re-formed at the level of the atom as "attraction" and "repulsion". This is the fundamental idea. Those of you, who are students of science, know that in every structure of an atom, how electrons and protons are attracted to the nucleus. How is it possible for these neutrons and electrons to be rotating around the nucleus? It means that there is obviously a sense of attraction. What we mean is that there is a sense of centralisation.

So, you see how in Sri Aurobindo, all things converge to an important point! When we talked about life and death, life as centralisation and death as decentralisation, we meant that there is a nucleus somewhere, around which our whole body is centralised. When this nucleus is removed, the body collapses because the centre of the circle is gone and it cannot exist on its own. The same is at the level of the atom. We have the electrons and we have the nucleus and around the nucleus, these unite. When this nucleus is bombarded by scientists, there is a split, a separation of the electrons which creates this energy and heat and light. It is the same principle of attraction as in man, but there must be a nucleus. In man, this nucleus is called "the soul" while in the atom it is called "the nucleus". But even there, it is not physical Matter

but supramental Energy. It is therefore the Supermind which is potentially present in every atom. It is this nucleus which has this tremendous supramental energy. That is why when you blast it, infinite energy comes out because it is this dynamic supramental energy bursting forth. So, there is an attraction of the electrons and also a kind of repulsion. These attractions and repulsions, at the level of life, become "will" and "desire". Sri Aurobindo is going to give us the explanation later but let me tell you a little of about desire now. At the physical level it becomes attraction and repulsion, at the vital level "desire" and "will" at the mental level because it is already there in the atom. So, all that is formed out of this atom must also have the same attraction, the same repulsion, the same desire, and the same will. The plant is made out of this atom, so, it has desires; the man is made out of this atom as well, so, he has a will because it is the same atom which is present in all.

Now the question is, why is there an existence of "desire" in the atom itself? Let us go back to the source. The greatest joy in reading Sri Aurobindo is that he always takes us to the source; he does not stop mid-way. Many religions have talked about desire in man. Some said that desire should not be there. Buddha talked about removing desire. But how is it possible to remove desire when it is at the very atomic level? Desire is there at the very atomic level because atoms are themselves made of Chit-Shakti, which is nothing else but Knowledge-Will. Chit-Shakti is Consciousness-Force, another form of Knowledge-Will. Now, can you see this beautiful logical connection? In its involutory process, the Chit-Shakti ends up as atoms. Despite ending up as atoms, it has retained its fundamental characteristics of knowledge and will which are basically supramental characteristics. At this atomic level, the Chit-Shakti reveals itself as attraction and repulsion which, again, resurface in superman as knowledge and will. The same atom in the superman will translate into knowledge and will, which is the original Chit-Shakti.

Now you see how and why the advent of Supermind is so very essential. Because, only in Supermind, we get back that with which evolution itself had started, Knowledge-Will, and that is the state

yet to come. But you must remember that it is the same atom which forms the structure of the three bodies: Matter, Life and Mind. Stone or man—the atom exists in all, but it is simply expressing itself differently. This is what is so magnificent when we talk about the change of Matter. When we say “change of body”, we mean “transformation”. It may seem a complex idea indeed. But now, we know that it is not so difficult to understand this concept of transformation. In the stone, the same atom, which is Matter, has the characteristics of attraction and repulsion, it becomes more conscious, if I may use the word, or it reveals more of itself in the plant, which becomes “desire”. You can notice this transformation in the atom itself when it evolves into a plant. Similarly, when the same atom becomes man, Matter itself changes. The atoms of a human body and the atoms of Matter are different, as the human body expresses a will and a desire. The atom in Matter is dormant, though it has the capacity to attract. The quality of Matter changes in man because of the mental consciousness and with the addition of the soul. So, there is a transformation of Matter, right from Matter to plant to animal to man. Matter itself transforms. Therefore, what Sri Aurobindo is saying about the transformation of the body is already occurring in Nature.

So, we need not disbelieve that this body will someday become the supramental body. We could have asked the same question when Life burst forth from Matter, or Mind from Life. So, let us not be astonished that one day our body also will undergo a revolutionary transformation just like Matter did. It is only one more step and, of course, a big step but it is not illogical or unbelievable. If you tell a common man that there will be a new body or a transformed body, he may not believe you or he may laugh at you, but if you tell him about the process of the coming of the new body, he may understand and believe you. So, this is why it is so very essential to understand *The Life Divine*, to understand Sri Aurobindo’s futuristic vision. It is not just having faith in him, we must also understand his vision; and the beauty of it all is that, when you understand him, your faith increases; understanding and faith go together most wonderfully. This is

what we call “enlightened faith”, not blind faith. “Blind faith” in its religious meaning, tends to become fanatical, which has the danger of fossilising into caste and creed but this pure logical explanation given by Sri Aurobindo enables us to be both more open-minded and wide.

Well, let me now finish this paragraph and the chapter by reading the following:

That Force is fundamentally the Chit-Tapas or Chit-Shakti of the Vedanta, consciousness-force, inherent conscious force of conscious-being, which manifests itself as nervous energy full of submental sensation in the plant, as desire-sense and desire-will in the primary animal forms, as self-conscious sense and force in the developing animal, as mental will and knowledge topping all the rest in man.³⁵

The above seems to put everything together. He speaks of submental sensations in plants, desire-sense and desire-will in the primary animal forms and self-conscious sense and force in the developing animal, and mental-will together with knowledge topping all the rest in man. But you must remember that it is the one and the same consciousness in all. Now, from the point of view of argumentation that is the finale, but the chapter is concluded with the paragraph below:

Life then reveals itself as essentially the same everywhere from the atom to man, the atom containing the subconscious stuff and movement of being which are released into consciousness in the animal, with plant life as a midway stage in the evolution. Life is really a universal operation of Conscious-Force acting subconsciously on and in Matter; it is the operation that creates, maintains, destroys and re-creates forms or bodies and attempts by play of nerve-force, that is to say, by currents of interchange of stimulating energy to awake conscious sensation in those bodies. In this operation there are three stages; the lowest is that in which the vibration is still in the sleep of Matter, entirely

subconscious so as to seem wholly mechanical; the middle stage is that in which it becomes capable of a response still submental but on the verge of what we know as consciousness; the highest is that in which life develops a conscious mentality in the form of a mentally perceptible sensation which in this transition becomes the basis for the development of sense-mind and intelligence."³⁶

Well, as you know, Sri Aurobindo usually takes up the last paragraphs of a chapter, which not only give the conclusion but also serve to connect the opening paragraphs of the next chapter. So at present, I am not getting into further explanations of these paragraphs because he himself will explain them in the next chapter.

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(All references, unless otherwise mentioned, are from *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL)*, Volume 18, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1972.)

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End Notes

- a) *Sweet Mother, here it is written: "The method of the Divine Manifestation is through calm and harmony, not through a catastrophic upheaval."*

Yes. So? You don't know that? You ought to know it.

Some people always imagine that catastrophes are the result of the divine Will. There are others—as soon as they receive a force, they are terribly upset; and then they tell you “Ah, when the Divine acts He upsets one completely.” It is absolutely wrong. It is not the Divine who upsets you, it is your own imperfection or else it may be just an attack of one of the forces he speaks about—the adverse forces. But if you have no imperfection you cannot be upset. Still, it is certainly not the Divine who upsets you. It is as in what follows this, where it is said: it is not the Mother who is testing you, it is the outer circumstances. Isn't very comfortable this way? (*Mother laughs*) You seem to be sorry that it isn't the Divine who causes the upsettings.

The upsetting is always caused by a resistance. If there were no resistance there would be no upsetting. So it can be a resistance which is the cause of cataclysms, earthquakes and cyclones, tidal waves, engulfment of continents, volcanic eruptions, etc.

(*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 7. pp. 16-7)

Why do disasters occur?

Because a higher consciousness wants to manifest itself in the world, and man and Nature resist it.

This is partly true. But I don't think Nature has this feeling. When there is an earthquake, for instance, or a volcano erupts, if there are men staying nearby and these events cause their death, obviously it is for these men a catastrophe, but we could very well imagine that for Nature it is good fun! We say, “What a terrible wind!” Naturally, for men it is “terrible”, but not for Nature. It is a question of proportion, isn't it? I don't know if it is necessary to bring into the picture a higher force wanting to manifest and a resistance from Nature; it is possible, but not indispensable. It can be understood quite easily that it is the play of Nature with tremendous forces and that for her it is only a diversion; in any case, nothing catastrophic. For the

consciousness of Nature or the material consciousness, physical forms and humanity upon earth are like ants. You yourself, when you walk, you do not find it necessary to move out of the way to avoid crushing the ants! – unless you are a stubborn “non-violent” fellow. You walk, and if you crush a few hundred ants, it can’t be helped! Well, it is the same with Nature. She goes on, and if in the course of her march she destroys a few thousand men, it is not of much importance for her, she can make again a few millions! It is not difficult.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 4, p. 175)

b) *Are there really any beings on Jupiter or Mars?*

For me, if you ask me, there are beings everywhere. Everywhere. One doesn’t see them, that’s all. But they are everywhere. But certainly I don’t think they are like what we see in the pictures—the Martians you were shown in the pictures with grotesque forms. I have no reason to think that they are like that.

Have you heard the story of the flying saucer?

Ah, yes! I have studied it also. However, I am waiting to have a physical experience. I indeed saw a flying saucer pass over Pondicherry during the war, I saw it clearly, with open eyes, and going fairly slowly, coming from the sea to the land. It was light blue and had a slightly rounded shape like this. I saw it passing by and said to myself, “Why, I have a vision!” I rubbed my eyes but my eyes were open, completely open... Suddenly I saw a form passing in the sky like this; I told myself, “How strange it is!” but as no one had spoken about it till then, I thought that I had a vision. I see many things which people ordinarily don’t see; but when people started speaking about this, then I said to myself, “Why, I have seen a flying saucer pass by.” But I think Udar also has seen a flying saucer.

(Udar) Yes, Mother. (Laughter)

That it exists is unquestionable. What is it? Each one has his opinion. But what I would like is to find myself face to face

with the beings as they have been described. There is someone who has, supposedly... anyway, he said that he has spoken to a being who was in a flying saucer. Well, I would be very happy to meet a being like that. After that I shall tell you what it is - when I have met it.

Mother, it is said that there are other solar systems where perhaps one can find a similar situation as on earth. But down there can we find men like us?

You must go there and see. (*Laughter*)

Mother, can we go to the other planets by occult means?

Ah! Yes, one can go everywhere. What prevents us from going? One goes everywhere. Only, you see, we must know that it is not the physical body which goes; it is the most material thing... the most material vital; and this is already very difficult.

Usually it is the mental part of the vital which goes out; not the mind, the vital. For short distances one can go out from his body with the subtle physical, and in these cases one sees things materially as they are. But one can't go long distances. There are practical reasons, but above all there is the reason of safety; because if one goes too far with the subtle physical, the body is not only in a trance, it is in a cataleptic state, and then, unless it is guarded by someone who has a very profound knowledge and a great power, this can turn out badly. Therefore, for these long journeys it is usually the most subtle part of the vital (which corresponds to a kind of mental consciousness of the vital), which goes out.

So one sees everything which has a similar quality. But supposing there is something very material, one doesn't see it as it is. So one can't say with certainty, "It is like this or like that." One can say, "I saw this," that's all. But one can't recount stories like those in the papers about what is happening on the moon or Jupiter or Venus. One can have an experience and know certain things but usually they are things of a more psychological nature.

However, if it is in order to know whether there are some beings there, I don't think there's any place in the universe

where there aren't beings, because that's the very principle of this universe: individual creations. Everywhere there are individual creations but they have different densities. Most of them are invisible except to those with a similar density, and only those who have the capacity of coming out of their bodies and going for a stroll can see these things. But so long as you use these eyes you can't see very much.

Such a limited field of vision! In fact, when you think of it, such an absolutely ridiculous limitation! The field of our sense experience has an absolutely ridiculous limitation; while in the mind, if you think of someone or something, a city or a place, you are there immediately, instantaneously, you see. And you are there—it is not that you are not there, you are there, and you can have so precise a mental contact that you can have a conversation, ask questions and receive answers, on condition that the other person is fairly sensitive. Why, this is something which happens constantly, constantly. Only, you must have a little knowledge, naturally, for otherwise you don't even understand what is happening.

Even physically, with this, with the eyes, the nose, the fingers, the mouth, the ears, oh, it is ridiculous! One can develop these if one wants. One can succeed, for example, in hearing something which occurs at a fairly great distance and hearing it physically, not by another means than the physical, but one must have a control over his senses and be able to prolong their vibrations sufficiently. One can see at a distance also, and not by an occult vision. One can manage to stretch his vision, and if he knows how to prolong the vibration of his nerves outside the organ, he can prolong the contact, I don't say some kilometers away, no, but in a certain area, say, for example, through a wall, which is considered something impossible; one can see what is going on in a room which is separated from another by a wall. But a very methodical practice is necessary. Yet this is possible, seeing, feeling, hearing. If one wants to take the trouble, one can enlarge his field considerably. But it asks for work, for perseverance, a kind of assiduous effort. Why, it has even been found that one

can develop other visual centres than the eye. It has been tried out with people who, for some reason or other, have no vision in the eye. One can develop other centres or another centre of vision, by a continuous, methodical effort. Jules Romains has written a book about it. He himself conducted experiments and obtained very conclusive results.

This means that we have a number of possibilities which we let sleep within us, because we don't take the trouble to develop them very much. We can do infinitely more than we actually do. But we take things like that, as they come.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 7, p. 164-65)

- c) *"Death is the question Nature puts continually to Life and her reminder to it that it has not yet found itself. If there were no siege of death, the creature would be bound forever in the form of an imperfect living. Pursued by death he awakes to the idea of perfect life and seeks out its means and its possibility."*

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 16, p. 386)

There seems to be matter enough here for us not to need to go any further. This is a question which every person whose consciousness is awakened a little has asked himself at least once in his life. There is in the depths of the being such a need to perpetuate, to prolong, to develop life, that the moment one has a first contact with death, which, although it may be quite an accidental contact, is yet inevitable, there is a sort of recoil in the being.

In persons who are sensitive, it produces horror; in others, indignation. There is a tendency to ask oneself: "What is this monstrous farce in which one takes part without wanting to, without understanding it? Why are we born, if it is only to die? Why all this effort for development, progress, the flowering of the faculties, if it is to come to a diminution ending in decline and disintegration?..." Some feel a revolt in them, others less strong feel despair and always this question arises: "If there is a

conscious Will behind all that, this Will seems to be monstrous.”

But here Sri Aurobindo tells us that this was an indispensable means of awakening in the consciousness of matter the need for perfection, the necessity of progress, that without this catastrophe, all beings would have been satisfied with the condition they were in—perhaps... This is not certain.

But then, we have to take things as they are and tell ourselves that we must find the way out of it all.

The fact is that everything is in a state of perpetual progressive development, that is, the whole creation, the whole universe is advancing towards a perfection which seems to recede as one goes forward towards it, for what seemed a perfection at a certain moment is no longer perfect after a time. The most subtle states of being in the consciousness follow this progression even as it is going on, and the higher up the scale one goes, the more closely does the rhythm of the advance resemble the rhythm of the universal development, and approach the rhythm of the divine development; but the material world is rigid by nature, transformation is slow, and very slow, there, almost imperceptible for the measurement of time as human consciousness perceives it...and so there is a constant disequilibrium between the inner and outer movement, and this lack of balance, this incapacity of the outer forms to follow the movement of the inner progress brings about the necessity of decomposition and the change of forms. But if, into this matter, one could infuse enough consciousness to obtain the same rhythm, if matter could become plastic enough to follow the inner progression, this rupture of balance would not occur, and death would no longer be necessary.

So, according to what Sri Aurobindo tells us, Nature has found this rather radical means to awaken in the material consciousness the necessary aspiration and plasticity.

It is obvious that the most dominant characteristic of matter is inertia, and that, if there were not this violence, perhaps the individual consciousness would be so inert that rather than change it would accept to live in a perpetual imperfection...

That is possible. Anyway, this is how things are made, and for us who know a little more, there is only one thing that remains to be done it is to change all this, as far as we have the means, by calling the Force, the Consciousness, the new Power which is capable of infusing into material substance the vibration which can transform it, make it plastic, supple, progressive.

(Collected Works of the Mother, vol.9, pp. 33-35)

d) Death is the phenomenon of decentralisation and dispersion of the cells which make up the physical body.

The consciousness is, by its very nature, immortal, and in order to manifest in the physical world, it assumes more or less lasting material forms.

The material substance is in course of transformation in order to become a multiform and increasingly perfect and lasting mode of expression for this consciousness.

18 May 1968

(This time, Mother gave separate replies to the questions and sent them to the teacher:)

Does the decentralisation occur all at once or by degrees?

Everything does not disperse all at once; it takes a long time.

The central will of the physical being abdicates its will to hold all the cells together. That is the first phenomenon. It accepts dissolution for one reason or another. One of the strongest reasons is the sense of an irreparable disharmony; the other is a kind of disgust with continuing the effort of coordination and harmonisation. In fact, there are innumerable reasons, but unless there is a violent accident, it is above all this will to maintain cohesion which abdicates for one reason or another, or without reason. It is this which inevitably precedes death.

Must each cell be conscious of its oneness with the centre?

It is not like that. It is still a semi-collective consciousness, it is not an individual consciousness of the cells.

LIFE

Does decentralisation always occur after death, or can it start before?

It often starts before.

Do the cells disperse in space or in the body itself? If they disperse in space, the body must surely disappear with the cells?

Naturally, the body dissolves after death, but that takes a long time.

In the expression "dispersion of the cells", doesn't the word "dispersion" have a special meaning? If so, what is it?

I used the word dispersion of the cells in its most concrete sense.

When the concentration which forms the body comes to an end and the body dissolves, all the cells that have been especially developed and have become conscious of the divine Presence within them, are scattered and enter other combination.

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 12, pp. 342-45)

Lecture Notes

I. Origin of Life:

- a) What is the origin of Life-Principle? How is it linked to Supermind and the trinity.
- b) Is it an evil? Or is it a divine principle, some power of Delight?

II. Life As Cosmic Energy:

- a) Life is a form of cosmic Energy, a constant play of the Force which maintains the myriad Forms by a disintegration-called Death, and renewal, called Life.
- b) Even in the death of the body, there is no cessation of Life—the life energy continues in the disintegration itself and in the journey of the soul. A constant renewal is the secret of Life.
- c) This dynamic and eternal Life will still go on even if the universe were to be abolished.

III. Life as a Particular Result:

- a) How does life in the animal and the plant differ from other so called non-living things – the metal, the mineral and the chemical kingdom of science?
- b) What we call life in general is only the process of life, only the external characteristics, such as breathing, locomotion and eating.
- c) These means of living are also visible in the plants though different in apparent organization.
- d) Recent scientific studies have shown that even the Metals respond to stimulus as an infallible sign of the existence of life in them. This is further proved by the recent science of Kirlian photography.
- e) All these experiments only prove that there is no break in the hierarchy of life. It is there secret or manifest, organised or elemental, involved or evolved, but universal.
- f) Life–Energy, Mind–energy, Material–energy are different dynamisms of one World–Force.

IV. The Play of Life-Force:

- a) When a form appears to be dead, it can be revised within certain limits because the life force exists in it in potentiality. If such were not the case, it would be difficult to revive a body, as in the case of a catalepsy.
- b) So, too in a case of trance when the whole outer being lapses into subconscious while the inner being is lifted to the superconscious. In such a case also the life–force keeps a contact with the body.
- c) Unless the Will in the universal force that held the form together withdraws, no death in the real sense can occur. The Mother calls it the process of decentralization.

Death is the consequence of decentralization – of consciousness. It is now a mechanical process of nature. If it is replaced by a willed process of Centralization, then we have the first steps to Immortality.

- d) The Life-play is a constant interchange of stimulation and response to stimulation between the different forms.

V. Man and Plant: Differences

- a) If we remove the outer characteristics of life, we see that both man and plant have a great commonality. Man responds with the mental response of conscious sensation where as in the plant there is a subconscious sensation.
- b) Both Man and Plant possess the subconscious mind. Only man can bring it up to his surface consciousness, where as the plant cannot do so as it lacks a vigilant mind. In Man the conscious force has partly emerged out of the sleep of Matter which dominates plant life.
- c) Possibly, a more rudimentary life operation of the subconscious sense–mind is there also in the metal.

VI. Universality of Life:

- a) In the atom itself is the attraction and repulsion which in Man become will and desire. In fact the Chit Shakti or the Consciousness–Force manifests itself as nervous energy in the plant, as desire–sense and desire–will in the primary animal, as self-conscious sense and force in developing animal, as mental will and knowledge in man.
- b) The surface processes of birth, growth, death, propagation are the same in all the three forces of life, for it is the same Life–force that has evolved through all forms.
- c) On the level of Matter, the conscious–force is dormant and mechanical; in the middle stage, it is submental but still conscious; in the highest stage it is conscious mentality.
- d) Life is a middle term between Matter and Mind. It is the Prana, the nerve-energy that is there present in all forms down to the atom.

CHAPTER XX

Death, Desire and Incapacity

In this chapter, entitled “Death, Desire and Incapacity”, Sri Aurobindo outlines and discusses in detail the operations of the Life-principle in the individual formation called “man”. So here, as usual, he gives first a summary of the previous chapter in a few sentences. I will read two of them in order to recapitulate its main ideas.

Life is universal Force working so as to create, energise, maintain and modify, even to the extent of dissolving and reconstructing, substantial forms and with mutual play and interchange of an overtly or secretly conscious energy as its fundamental character.¹

This is precisely how the universal Force works: through the processes of dissolution and renewal. He continues:

The supramental Knowledge-Will is Consciousness-Force... operating for the maintenance of distinctly individual forms in a sort of demarcation, opposition and interchange in which the soul in each form of being works out its own mind and life as if they were separate from the others, though in fact they are never separate but are the play of the one Soul, Mind, Life in different forms of its single reality.²

This is where, in the second paragraph, Sri Aurobindo introduces us to a new concept:

...Life is the final operation by which the Force of Conscious-Being acting through the all-possessing and all-creative Will of the universal Supermind maintains and energises, constitutes and reconstitutes individual forms and acts in them as the basis of all the activities of the soul thus embodied.³

Now what are we to understand by the above? We have seen before that all is a creation of the Supramental consciousness in its triple poise. However, the origin of the Supramental consciousness is the Chit-Shakti. In fact, Chit-Shakti first descends in its triple poise and becomes the universe. This formation of the universe is the first step and, from there, Chit Shakti further comes down to the level of the Overmind, the Intuitive Mind and so forth until it ends up in the lowest level, that of the Inconscient. It is when we come down to the level of Mind, we see the beginning of individual formations.

The next level of the descent is the level of Mind into Life, which in its principle is not very different from Mind

...so also Mind and Life are the same Consciousness-Force, the same Knowledge-Will, but operating for the maintenance of distinctly individual forms...⁴

What then is the distinct role of Life and Mind? One is universal and the other individual. Once we have the universal forms, we get individual forms and these individual forms have a body. But what is the purpose of this body? It is, we could say, to find an earthly habitation for the individual soul who descends directly from the Jivatman. So, now you can see why this body has been created: it is for the soul's experience on earth. This is, of course, the real purpose of the creation of this body but, unfortunately, most of us do not know this secret; instead, we think that the body has been created in order to express the physical consciousness, the vital consciousness and the mental consciousness. So, our mistake is to think that this body has been created as a means to express our physical, vital and mental needs and desires. All these are partly true but the primary role of the individual body is to express the soul's need. We hardly ever ask for the soul. However, all that is an altogether different story which we cannot discuss at this stage: but by this analysis what we realise is that the body has been created in order for the soul to descend and experience this earth-life. Thus, says Sri Aurobindo:

...Life is the final operation by which the Force of Conscious-Being acting through the all-possessing and all-creative Will of the universal Supermind maintains and energises, constitutes and reconstitutes individual forms and acts in them as the basis of all the activities of the soul thus embodied. Life is the energy of the Divine continually generating itself in forms as in a dynamo and not only playing with the outgoing battery of its shocks on surrounding forms of things...⁵

It is the Life-Energy which maintains our body by a process of constant renewal. Whatever it is doing, it is for the sole intention of maintaining this body, so that the soul may use it for its own purpose for as long as it wants. Therefore, caring for this body is not for its own sake but for the sake of the soul. You might have noted that, usually, the moment the body is unable to fulfill the experiential needs of the soul, the Life-Force itself “cancels” the body, as if telling it: “See, if you are not useful for the soul’s purpose, you have no business to remain in this individual formation. You have been given this formation so that you may fulfill the demands of the soul. Or else you ought to be dissolved! “This is why Sri Aurobindo says that Life-Energy sustains, maintains and does it all in order for the soul to experience itself. And then he says:

...In fact, our Life, because it is subservient to the darkened and dividing operation of Mind, is itself darkened and divided and undergoes all that subjection to death, limitation, weakness, suffering, ignorant functioning of which the bound and limited creature-Mind is the parent and cause.⁶

Here begins the problem: at the level of the Mind perversion seems to set in. What happens is that at this level something “strange” takes over, which is not foreseen, and which we may call “ignorance”. How does it happen, you may ask? Do you remember what we had said in the previous talk? When the Supramental Consciousness passes through the level of the Mind it splits into infinite forms.

This splitting of the Supramental Consciousness into individual life-forms brings the sense of division. This is the primary change which occurs at the level of Mind. It is true that the consciousness of division sets in long before the level of the Mind, but at this level there is a greater sense of unity and harmony among the individual divisions.

What is this division? Another name for the consciousness of division is *avidya* or ignorance. You may have the knowledge of all the encyclopedias in the world, yet be in complete ignorance because you lack the consciousness of Oneness. But a person, who has read nothing, who did not even go to school, may have *vidya* or Knowledge because he has the consciousness of Oneness. There are so many saints, take for example the great saint Kabir and, of course, the unparalleled Sri Ramakrishna who did not know what a school was, yet they were the greatest of yogis for they harboured within themselves this consciousness of Oneness. Well, the body and the mind and the vital are in absolute ignorance because they are steeped in a consciousness of separation and division. But the most unfortunate thing is that the soul also believes that it is "a separate self-existent individuality". This is what is called "the unfortunate perversion". You see, it does not matter if mind and body thought that they are individuals but the real tragedy is that the soul also comes to believe that it is an individual, a separate entity. It loses also its own sense of fundamental oneness.

Here you may ask what we mean by a 'realised soul'? In India, it is commonly understood that a realised soul is a person who has renounced his material belongings and taken to asceticism. Truly, we may say that a realised in one that reawakens to original consciousness of unity with the Jivatman. When we talk about a realised soul, we are really talking about this highest reunion with the Jivatman. One may have an experience of love, compassion etc. but it is only a glimpse of the psychic being and not a true soul-realisation. This enlightenment is very different from the kind one can arrive at from the knowledge of outer things. True enlightenment is to gain the consciousness of Oneness.

To take up question of perversion once again, let me read what Sri Aurobindo writes:

The original source of the perversion was, we have seen, the self-limitation of the individual soul bound to self-ignorance because it regards itself by an exclusive concentration as a separate self-existent individuality and regards all cosmic action only as it presents itself to its own individual consciousness, knowledge, will, force, enjoyment and limited being instead of seeing itself as a conscious form of the One and embracing all consciousness, all knowledge, all will, all force, all enjoyment and all being as one with its own.⁷

So, now you can figure out where the problem began. On one side, we have this problem of the limited Mind; on the other side, we have the real problem of the soul forgetting itself. Now, from here where do we go? We are imprisoned in a body, in a mind which is full of ignorance; we are stuck with the soul which has forgotten its origin. We are in deep trouble as we are immersed in *avidya*, ignorance. Sri Aurobindo explains:

But as consciousness develops, as the light of its own being emerges from the inert darkness of the involutory sleep, the individual existence becomes dimly aware of the power in it and seeks first nervously and then mentally to master, use and enjoy the play. This awakening to the Power in it is the gradual awakening to self. For Life is Force and Force is Power and Power is Will and Will is the working of the Master-Consciousness...

...But though Life is Power and the growth of individual life means the growth of the individual Power, still the mere fact of its being a divided individualised life and force prevents it from really becoming master of its world.⁸₁

So, the story of involution seems to result in absolute Inconscient and ignorance. But these are not very focused terms in relation

to man. Sri Aurobindo gives us better terms. These terms are: “death, desire and incapacity.” He calls them the three badges of “individual life”. So, this is where the whole struggle begins; this divisive consciousness ended up in three badges, or these three limitations, and it is in this context that Sri Aurobindo will take up the concept of desire at a greater depth, on a different level.

Before going into the depth of this concept, let me give you some background to this idea of desire and incapacity. You see, when the supreme Chit-Shakti descended in involution, it ultimately became the individual. What does it mean? We must now understand the meaning of individualisation of the Transcendental consciousness. What is the difference between the transcendental poise and the individual poise? For example, look at the ocean, the vast Cosmic consciousness is like the ocean and in that vast ocean you see waves. There are waves all around—it is the same ocean which has transformed itself into these waves, whatever be the outer smaller forms and figures. There is actually no difference between the water in the waves and the water in the ocean. It is the same ocean water. Then, where lies the distinction between the two? Could we say it is in the difference between stillness and movement? Yes. The wave is an individualisation of the Transcendent. The still ocean becomes dynamic through the waves. But the moment the individual wave is formed, it perishes. However, there is another major difference of which Sri Aurobindo speaks—that of “incapacity”. Hence, it is basically an incapacity that results in all other differences such as impermanence, ignorance, death and desire. The same substance is in both the ocean and the waves but the capacity of the ocean is different from the capacity of the waves. This is where the whole problem begins; individualisation itself presupposes minimisation that is a decrease and a focus into a single form which cannot contain the infinite capacity of the ocean. It can have all the characteristics of the ocean: the salt water in the waves is the same as in the ocean but it does not have the capacity, the potency, the infinity of the ocean. Similarly, when a mother gives birth to a baby, the baby has a body similar to his/ her mother. Then, what is the major difference between the mother and

the child? It is that of capacity. The mother can do many activities but the child has all the potential to be able to do all that only in the future, but at that moment he/she cannot.

That is the incapacity which has come into the formation of the individual. In this universal creation, the Supreme Consciousness has, as it were, squeezed itself infinitesimally into a kind of limited capacity. This is the basic process of creation. That is why we call this creation a "self-limitation of the Transcendent". So, "incapacity" is another word for "self-limitation." Hence, individulisation is nothing but self-limitation. And it is this self-limitation which brings in the rest of the manifold problems of death, desire etc. We will analyse those later, but first of all let us keep in mind that even the beginning of this division is another form of self-limitation. When the limitation increases, the division also increases.

If you can grasp this idea and keep it at the back of your mind, you will understand all the rest very easily. Perhaps we can give ourselves another example to clarify this idea of self-limitation and incapacity. Say a man has a salary of only seven thousand rupees, at the moment. When he goes to the supermarket, he sees a beautiful colour TV which is priced at twelve thousand rupees. He cannot afford it now because of his limited means. So, what does he do? This is his limited budget but he has an eye on the Sony TV worth twelve thousand rupees. Now what is the solution? To increase his capacity! But how does he increase his earnings? He has to use his intelligence? He has to work harder? Yes, he has to work harder, to put in more hours of work; he has to take up different jobs, and make more money. Basically, he has to work harder, struggle to overcome his incapacity and limitations.

Now, what am I driving at with this example? Incapacity is the beginning of desire. You have desired a Sony TV and you want to possess it. This is what is called "desire". To wish to possess that which you do not have is another name for "desire". This wanting to expand, to increase in one's capacities, to expand in one's ability, is what is called "desire". And it is this desire which is there at the very atomic level itself. That is where it all starts. On the atomic level there is an attraction but what can an atom get attracted to?

you may ask. If you can now analyse it further, you will see a different meaning emerging.

When we said that at the atomic level, there is an attraction, what we meant is that there is a desire for the other. You get attracted to something, to another person, to a Sony TV, to food. There are million ways of getting attracted; which means being attracted to something that is not within yourself, being attracted to something outside of you. So, even at the atomic level, there is this attraction of one atom for another atom. And you have asked : “why is there this attraction?” This attraction is there in the atom because of the essential aspiration for integration and unification! In this creation, there are two forces constantly at work: one is the force of unification and the other the force of individualisation. These are the two basic forces in our life, which are the basis of everything—right from individual yoga to the realisation of human unity. When Sri Aurobindo talks about the possibility of human unity in the next future, he is referring to the process of the unification principle. At the same time, he insists that each nation is an individual form of the Divine Shakti and it has its own nation-soul: that is the application of the principle of individualisation. There must be human unity but not by “abolishing” individual nations or suppressing individual nation-souls. So, there is an absolute balance between the two eternal principles of manifestation. Similarly, in Integral yoga also there is an emphasis on individualisation. When I realise my own psychic being, only then have I realised my true individuality. But Sri Aurobindo also insists that a sadhak of the Integral Yoga must participate as well in a collective life. There must be the unification of the individual life and the collective life. So, Sri Aurobindo applies these two principles in all existence for they are basic to manifestation.

Let us take up once more the idea of the atom. There is in it, affirms Sri Aurobindo, a tremendous effort at remaining an individual. And this is perhaps why it is so very difficult to break an atom because it holds on tenaciously to its individuality; it does not want to be split at all! But again, there is the innate quality of

integration and unification which is nothing but essentially the oneness of Sachchidananda, the oneness of consciousness.

It is so marvellous to read all these explanations and realise how wonderfully this world is created. There is an innate oneness which can never ever be abrogated, in spite of all infinite multiplicity. Oneness is the first and essential consciousness; division is only second to it. So, this primary consciousness remains as the unifying consciousness of elements and therefore, at the atomic level, there is the possibility of an extreme individualisation, for that is what the Supreme wanted to become, the extreme individual. But the Supreme is basically Oneness; it is this oneness which becomes translated as "attraction". And this attraction for the other is what is commonly called "desire". And so, there is nothing wrong in desire because it is basically the spirit of unification, unifying with the other, at least on the atomic level. This is what you must understand to be the basis of desire.

Now, this basis of desire, this drive toward oneness, also evolves. How does it happen? At the atomic level, there is the principle of attraction to the other which leads to the formation of a molecule and a cell. The first cells are the unification of such atoms attracted to each other. What happens is simply this: atoms become cells and then cells again unify to become the elements and this is how the world is made out of the basic elements. Sri Aurobindo puts it like this:

In matter the process is a creation of infinitesimals charged with an immense energy, their association by design and number, the manifestation of larger infinitesimals on the primary basis, the grouping and association of these together to found the appearance of sensible objects, earth, water, minerals, metals, the whole material kingdom.⁹

In this manifestation of larger infinitesimals, vibrations of attraction and desire become buried, which are then released on different levels of evolution. On the physical level, this vibration or sensation is called "hunger". The physical is hungry for the

physical, Matter is hungry for matter. We normally say we are hungry when our body needs another solid matter for its basic physical sustenance. So, Matter devouring matter is hunger. Hence the famous Upanishadic saying: "Eater, eating is himself eaten." It is the first step, that of hunger. You see, we are discussing all this in detail only to clarify this aspect of oneness and how this oneness evolves, first at the physical level as hunger—to be more precise, it is the physical-vital hunger.

I am tracing one idea of the aspect of unity, how it is working itself out through evolution. If on the vital-mental it is desire, then, what is it on the mental level? Here, there are the rudiments—it is difficult to even call it this, but let me call it, to make it more explicit—of love. But why are we calling it "rudiments of love"? Now what is the difference between these three stages—the physical, the vital-physical and the mental? Can you see any difference between these levels? "Love is something more subtle." (*Replies a participant*) Yes! Can you use the same word for desire and hunger and love? Are they the same? You say love is subtle? In what way is it subtle? Is it a finer expression of the same feeling of hunger, of desire? Can we say it is the "rudiment of love"! Do you all agree? (*asking the class*) Well, on the contrary, there is an absolute difference between them. At this stage, putting it in very simple terms, at the stage of hunger and desire, there is a movement of taking in, of possessing, of wanting to make them a *part* of you. I mean you possess your TV, you possess your house, or you put food into your body (which is hunger), which means that all the time you are satisfying your physical body or the vital being. It is always craving, possessing, taking in. But when the mind comes into the evolution, there comes in the first rudiments of giving, sharing—that is what we call "love". Of course, love is said to be expressing itself in its lower levels as desire and hunger, but that is not love: it is physical or vital passion. Only when you begin to share, to give, only then do you experience the rudiments of true love. When you want to take things from your lover, it is not yet love. You may call it by any word—you may write all the poetry in the world calling it love—it is still desire. After this first experience of real love, there

is of course, the possibility of growing into the spiritual and that is the stage of true love. The spiritual is the last phase, where true love is there in its plenitude: there you experience absolute self-giving, no expectations of any return in any way, in any manner, be it on the physical, vital or mental levels. When one does not expect anything, it is true love, spiritual love. The moment you expect any fame, any recognition, any congratulation, your love stops being true because you are expecting an appreciation, recognition for your actions, and that supreme love can come only from the Divine because the Divine does not even expect a “thank you” from you. If you give, it is for your own good, but he is so compassionate that he just keeps giving without any kind of expectation.

On our human level, we can move towards a more and more divine love, only by the realisation of the psychic. The mental and the vital can never, ever taste what love is, they can never give you love. All the great lovers heard of in history, are all purely in vital and mental love. They may sacrifice themselves; they may die for each other, but all that is chiefly vital-physical love. All the sacrifices of the lover are absolutely vital; they have nothing to do with the spiritual. Psychic love does not want to kill itself for the sake of others. So, psychic love is the greatest and purest love because it is an expression of the divine love in man. It is itself an incarnation of the divine love in the human being.

To conclude, another name for absolute love is “oneness” or “perfect identity.” What started with the oneness of Sachchidananda went through the different levels of hunger, desire etc. to return to the source. This is the marvellous story of oneness: going through evolution and then returning to the Oneness and this seems to be the culmination of evolution. In the end, there is, however, a difference. In the beginning, there was only oneness, unity, but at the end of the evolutionary process there is an absolute identity – identity of the one with the other, of the individual with the Transcendent. Identity is a greater experience than the simple unity of the original oneness. The Mother would say that this identity, this returning to the oneness, is a much more fulfilling delight than the static bliss which existed before manifestation.

This is the story of involution and evolution.

What we have seen till now is that in the process of the self-limitation of the Supreme, there occur three things: incapacity, desire and death. We have traced the sequences of how incapacity leads to desire, and then obviously, you can yourself guess how desire leads to death!

Well, yesterday we discussed the three “badges” of individualisation: death, desire and incapacity. We have also seen that the basic incapacity in human nature is born out of the very fact of individualisation. You see, this incapacity or the limited capacity is caused by this self-limitation of the Infinite as the finite. So, it is in the very nature of individualisation that a limited capacity should come about in man. Well, for that matter, this incapacity, as we have seen, is not only in man but at the very level of Matter itself and because of this innate incapacity, there is the need for expansion, for becoming more and more capable which, in essence are different expressions of this manifestation’s two eternal principles: individualisation and aggrandisement. And because of these two eternal principles, there is this first need to increase, to aggrandise, which in its ultimate form is nothing but, as we discussed earlier, the sense of the original oneness. To put it differently, it is this original oneness, which translates itself as an urge for aggrandisement (or self-increasing) and as a result, it translates itself as hunger or desire. We had discussed yesterday till this point and today we will see how Sri Aurobindo concludes:

But this process is a necessity of that mutual devouring which we see to be the initial law of Life in Matter. Life, says the Upanishad, is Hunger which is Death, and by this Hunger which is Death, *asanayamrtyuh*, the material world has been created. For Life here assumes as its mould material substance, and material substance is Being infinitely divided and seeking infinitely to aggregate itself; between these two impulses of infinite division and infinite aggregation the material existence of the universe is constituted. The attempt of the individual,

the living atom, to maintain and aggrandise itself is the whole sense of Desire; a physical, vital, moral, mental increase by a more and more all-embracing experience, a more and a more all-embracing possession, absorption, assimilation, enjoyment is the inevitable, fundamental, ineradicable impulse of Existence, once divided and individualised, yet ever secretly conscious of its all-embracing, all-possessing infinity.¹⁰

This is what we were discussing: that the atom is a living entity wherein there is the necessity to maintain and aggrandise itself. At the same time also, for its own self-maintenance, it has to keep its individuality. But there is a greater thrust of aggrandisement and Sri Aurobindo explains it in a beautiful phrase, "...yet ever secretly conscious of its all-embracing, all-possessing infinity." You see, in man also there is this secret consciousness to expand, to progress; the term we normally use is "progress" which in its reality is nothing but this innate sense of aggrandisement. And so, even in Matter, the urge to "progress" is present: "The impulse to realise that secret consciousness is the spur of the cosmic Divine, the lust of the embodied Self within every individual creature..."¹¹

So, this is the reason why we make all these efforts to progress on the physical, vital, mental levels and on the spiritual level as well! We want to progress in our life, on whatever level it may be, because of the secret "spur of the Divine consciousness" or the unseen thrust in the consciousness itself which wants to return to its unity. So, Sri Aurobindo writes further:

...it is inevitable, just, salutary that it should seek to realise it first in the terms of life by an increasing growth and expansion. In the physical world this can be done by feeding on the environment, by aggrandising oneself through the absorption of others or of what is possessed by others; and this necessity is the universal justification of Hunger in all its forms.¹²

So, you see that all religions have taught us, and what morality has told us about this problem of desire and hunger, is perhaps to

maintain a social order and harmony. But in spite of all the dogmas of religions and moral schools, man remains the same because of this innate hunger and desire.

Sri Aurobindo explains:

“Still what devours must also be devoured; for the law of interchange, of action and reaction, of limited capacity and therefore of a final exhaustion and succumbing governs all life in the physical world.”¹³

One may argue that, as desire is an innate thing, one is justified in having a hunger and a craving for physical objects or for vital pleasures. The materialist may quote Sri Aurobindo and justify all his hunger and desire! But there is a “consequence”. You have the right to possess, the right to hunger, the right to desire but then “...what devours must also be devoured...” and, as goes the Upanishadic saying, “The eater eating is himself eaten.”¹⁴ You must be conscious of this law, of the “parallel” law that what devours is itself devoured by what is devoured. If you remember this factor, then, you can step back and ask yourself what are your limits? Where and when you should stop desiring; because if you manage to gain material possessions, at one point, the very same material possessions will possess you! So, you see that it is the innate problem of materialistic philosophy: if you can acquire all the material objects justifying your right to desire, then you may be aware that the effect of the possession is that these material objects will ultimately possess you and burden your living and being. If this is remembered, then we could, perhaps, find a sense of balance in our life.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo goes on to say:

In the conscious mind that which was still only a vital hunger in subconscious life, transforms itself into higher forms; hunger in the vital parts becomes craving of Desire in the mentalised life, straining of Will in the intellectual or thinking life. This movement of desire must and ought to continue until the

individual has grown sufficiently so that he can now at last become master of himself and by increasing union with the Infinite possessor of this universe. Desire is the lever by which the divine Life-principle effects its end of self-affirmation in the universe and the attempt to extinguish it in the interests of inertia is a denial of the divine Life-principle, a Will-not-to-be which is necessarily ignorance; for one cannot cease to be individually except by being infinitely.¹⁵

This sentence "...one cannot cease to be individually except by being infinitely" is marvellous. What Sri Aurobindo is saying here is that this movement of desire must and ought to continue. Obviously, by taking this stand he is not promoting the Buddhist ideal where it is said that desire reduced to the power of zero is Nirvana. Sri Aurobindo holds that to extinguish desire would be a negation of the divine Life-principle. You cannot really extinguish desire; moreover, you should not even try to do so as it is the very basis of life-expression. (Of course, here we are dealing with desire as a divine quality permeating all life right from the atomic level itself.) How do we understand desire or this thrust for self-aggrandisement? It is the return journey to the consciousness of oneness. This is the trend of the argument that you must keep in mind—let us not confuse this explanation of desire with the expression of the vital. In this context, desire is the path to ultimate oneness with the Infinite. So, in that sense what Sri Aurobindo means is that this kind of self-aggrandisement, this kind of a self-enlargement, of self-widening of consciousness, is the path to reunification with the Self. This is why the individual finds his fulfilment only in the Infinite. It is in this deeper sense that wherever there is the possibility of self-expansion, be it on the physical, the vital, the mental or the spiritual, it should not be stopped. Normally, this self-expansion in the form of desire is rejected in the name of religion, in the name of morality. We suffer already self-limitation in ourselves because of an innate incapacity, and if we further cut off this element of desire, in the true sense, then we are going against the Life-principle of expansion and growth. It is in

this deeper and universal sense that desire becomes an integral and necessary element in the Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo concludes that a will not to be the Infinite, a will not to have this widening consciousness is “necessarily ignorance.”

So, we must seek, all the time, the will to be, to become that infinite consciousness. There is, in this will, the will to be what I am originally, which is the Infinite Consciousness. The *swadharna* must not be denied, nor be suppressed. This is where Sri Aurobindo comes out boldly saying that desire, this desire which attaches you to a particular thing and delimits your consciousness should be denied or rejected. You must have noted that the moment you get attached to a particular object, a particular person, a specific idea, then, automatically, your consciousness seems to narrow down. So, this kind of a desire is not “desirable”, but that which is there in the very birth of creation, seeking self-expression and the return to the Divine Consciousness, should be maintained. See how Sri Aurobindo puts an emphasis on the desire of the Infinite:

Desire too can only cease rightly by becoming the desire of the infinite and satisfying itself with a supernal fulfilment and an infinite satisfaction in the all-possessing bliss of the Infinite.¹⁶

So, if you want to make a distinction between the two, it is between the desire of the finite and the desire of the Infinite. Then, what must you choose? It is the desire of the finite that must be shunned but the desire of the Infinite must be encouraged. But for the latter also, there is a process: the process of evolution, through hunger, through desire, through will, through aspiration, through love.

It is not practical to tell a young man that he should suppress all desire and turn to an ascetic life of renunciation. This is why our ancient system had the wisdom to observe that a common man must follow the *grihasthashrama* when one’s desires of *kama*, of wealth are to be fulfilled — fulfilled not in the sense of amassing wealth but fulfilled in the sense of growth, where hunger, desire for power and possessions etc. are experienced and then one has the possibility to go beyond the need for these material attachments.

That is where the desire for the finite can turn into the desire for the Infinite. If you remember, the Mother used to give us a red rose, which symbolises human love turned to the Divine: most of the time she gave this flower. It was to a very few that she gave other flowers with another meaning. That shows that human love must be only transformed. It is not a question of rejecting human love in its present form, on the contrary it must be transformed into the desire for the Infinite. If I can put it in another way, deep desire is nothing but aspiration; aspiration for the Divine is nothing but the desire for the Infinite. So, this is the right evolutionary path. The sentence I wanted to read goes thus:

Meanwhile it has to progress from the type of a mutually devouring hunger to the type of a mutual giving, of an increasingly joyous sacrifice of interchange;—the individual gives himself to other individuals and receives them back in exchange; the lower gives itself to the higher and the higher to the lower so that they may be fulfilled in each other; the human gives itself to the Divine and the Divine to the human...¹⁷

This is the end of common desire. When it becomes transformed from the act of possession into the act of giving it is the turning-point from the desire to possess to the desire of the Infinite. Desire of the finite remains as long as you want to possess or take from others. But the moment you begin to give, there begins the desire of the Infinite or what we said, the “rudiments of love”.

Let us now take up the next argument. How does desire lead (us) to, or yearning is the cause of death—the third badge of the individual consciousness. About death Sri Aurobindo explains:

The energy of life in the body has to support the attack of the energies external to it in the universe; it has to draw them in and feed upon them and is itself being constantly devoured by them. All Matter according to the Upanishad is food, and this is the formula of the material world that ‘the eater eating is himself eaten’. The life organised in the body is constantly

exposed to the possibility of being broken up by the attack of the life external to it or, its devouring capacity being insufficient or not properly served or there being no right balance between the capacity of devouring and the capacity or necessity of providing food for the life outside, it is unable to protect itself and is devoured or is unable to renew itself and therefore is wasted away or broken; it has to go through the process of death for a new construction or renewal.¹⁸

So here, we see the first cause of death: it is the principle of “the eater eating is himself eaten”. What do we understand by this principle? You see, there is constantly an interchange between the individual and the cosmic things “The life organised in the body is constantly exposed to the possibility of being broken up by the attack of the life external to it...”

So, when a person is eating something it means that he is absorbing something from outside. And that something from the outside is taken because he wants some energy in whatever form. For example, why do you take a slice of bread? Obviously, when you want to give some energy to the body. Now, in order to digest this slice of bread, the stomach itself consumes energy from the body, is it not? So, this consuming of energy is what is meant by “the eater is eaten”. That means this energy which is drawn from your body is partly eating away all the stored energy in it. And most often what happens is that there is an imbalance, when you overeat. If there is a right quantity, then there can be a good balance between the eating and the eaten; otherwise, in case of any imbalance, this eating by the body of its own resources results more in a loss of energy. This is where the value of food comes in—the intake of food. We have all these questions of dieting etc. which have the basic principle of a right food for a healthy body. It is not the question of losing weight and looking slim and attractive. To have this as a sole motivation is a misplaced appeal; if one can take it up and raise it to the spiritual level and see that a proper diet is the one which balances the energies between the eaten and the eating, then one can be perfectly healthy, I suppose.

This is best seen in a child. A child will reject all extra food that can take away all stored energy. A child has also the possibility of taking this external energy, not only from food but from the universal forces which do not eat away his body's stores. They add only to the energies in his body. This could be perhaps the next stage where man has to consciously acquire this possibility of the child, to be able to absorb, or feed upon, universal energies. This is what our sages, rishis had been doing: sitting in the forest they did not have three meals a day but what they did was to absorb universal energies and thereby maintain the energies of the body. "That is, of course, a thing of the past" so you may argue! The Mother too, it is said, used to take very little food which was more a means to keep contact with Matter—not that she could not take universal energies and get rid of food, but she had to keep the contact with Matter because she was there to transform it. Thus the wear and tear and the imbalance are among the causes of the body losing all its energy and, in the end, succumbing to death.

Now, we come to the second argument. It reads thus:

Not only so but, again in the language of the Upanishad, the life-force is the food of the body and the body the food of the life-force; in other words, the life-energy in us both supplies the material by which the form is built up and constantly maintained and renewed and is at the same time constantly using up the substantial form of itself which it thus creates and keeps in existence. If the balance between these two operations is imperfect or is disturbed or if the ordered play of the different currents of life-force is thrown out of gear, then disease and decay intervene and commence the process of disintegration. And the very struggle for conscious mastery and even the growth of mind make the maintenance of the life more difficult. For there is an increasing demand of the life-energy on the form, a demand which is in excess of the original system of supply and disturbs the original balance of supply and demand and, before a new balance can be established, many disorders are introduced inimical to the harmony and

to the length of maintenance of the life; in addition the attempt at mastery creates always a corresponding reaction in the environment which is full of forces that also desire fulfilment and are therefore intolerant of, revolt against and attack the existence which seeks to master them.¹⁹

Well, here there is the question of the life-forces which are within and without. This is again a very interesting thing. What happens is – those of you who read *Savitri* will understand – that there are vital forces, which try to feed upon man's energies. Most of these vital forces, vital beings if you may call them, survive upon our energies. In fact, we are the sustenance for these vital beings. I mean even the question of a brief anger, which is thrown out from our being, becomes food for a vital being. Jealousy, negative forces, thoughts and feelings which are there in man become not only food for these vital forces but the more we release these negative energies, the more our body becomes a kind of a feasting ground for these vital beings. So, the greater the violence in us – of emotions, of anger, of jealousy, of all these negative attitudes – the more we become a feasting ground for these external forces. And being so, gradually, our bodies decline and we become prone to death!

Therefore, in sadhana one of the secrets is to invoke the higher consciousness which alone can protect our body from those vital forces which normally feed on our energies. Hence, sadhana implies not only aspiration and surrender but also rejection of the negative forces and tendencies in us by the help of a higher consciousness.

Sometimes, the life-forces within and without are the same. There is a battle, a disharmony between these very forces, inside each one of us. So, this kind of disharmony and a constant self-battling also brings in some disequilibrium, which brings about the body's decline often ending in death. So, here we have two attacks: one is from within, which is basically one of inner disharmony, and the other is from outside, by the outer vital forces. So, what shall we do about this? For both problems the solution lies in realising the psychic being. Hence you see, how fundamental this

question of psychic realisation is! All my readings of the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's works have shown me only one thing: we may only delay the psychic realisation but we cannot forever evade it. The faster we do it, the more we aspire for it, the better for us. So, on every level, there seems to be the same solution for all our problems—be they on the physical, the vital or the mental levels.

From the psychic, we now go to the problem of the soul related to death. What exactly is it? Let me read the next paragraph:

But, apart from all these necessities, there is the one fundamental necessity of the nature and object of embodied life itself, which is to seek infinite experience on a finite basis, and since the form, the basis by its very organisation limits the possibility of experience, this can only be done by dissolving it and seeking new forms. For the soul, having once limited itself by concentrating on the moment and the field, is driven to seek its infinity again by the principle of succession, by adding moment to moment and thus storing up a Time-experience which it calls its past; in that Time it moves through successive fields, successive experiences or lives, successive accumulations of knowledge, capacity, enjoyment, and all this it holds in subconscious or superconscious memory as its fund of past acquisition in Time. To this process change of form is essential, and for the soul involved in individual body change of form means dissolution of the body in subjection to the law and compulsion of the All-life in the material universe, to its law of supply of the material of form and demand on the material, to its principle of constant intershock and the struggle of the embodied life to exist in a world of mutual devouring. And this is the law of Death.²⁰

You must have noted the phrase, "...seek infinite experience on a finite basis..." Who is the seeker? It is the soul who is seeking infinite experience on a finite basis. In fact, this is perhaps the central reason for death because the soul seeks infinite experiences on a

finite basis, which is the body. And since the form is the basis for seeking infinite experience, it can be done only by the dissolution of the old body and taking up a new form, a new body. In fact, this is the real motive, the real reason for creation: Sachchidananda becomes multiple bodies in order to experience Ananda, the bliss in each individual formation or body.

This is the real aim of manifestation. Sachchidananda descends as the soul in each individual in order to experience the delight of existence. Descending as the soul in the individual it seeks infinite experience, infinite Ananda. So ultimately, it is this infinite Ananda which is to be achieved in the finite body, in the physical, in the vital and in the mental. This is the whole aim. What is one to do for that? One cannot achieve this infinite Ananda in only one life. One has to come again and again, millions of times if necessary, in order to grow gradually from life to life only to experience this Ananda in its ultimate magnitude.

So, if this is the soul's aim it is but natural that it comes again and again, because it cannot attain in a single body-life immortality or absolute Ananda. For example, say someone lives a number of years and then dies. Then, what does the soul do? It may say to itself, "Well, this much in this life. But I will come back again and start from where I left, but not in the same trajectory because Ananda is not experienced only in one line or manner; there are infinite ways of experiencing Ananda." That is what Sachchidananda does in the blade of grass, in the atom, in the worm, in man, in a Vibhuti, in an Avatar: each form is an expression of progressive Ananda. So, there is this absolute necessity for the soul to change forms. Death becomes a kind of a passage, from one life to another, so that the soul may withdraw in this interim period and gather into itself all the experiences or as Sri Aurobindo puts it here: "For the soul, having once limited itself by concentrating on the moment and the field, is driven to seek its infinity again by the principle of succession, by adding moment to moment and thus storing up a Time-experience which it calls its past..."

You may have noticed the sentence here which is very interesting: "For the soul, having once limited itself by concentrating on the

moment and the field..." So, this concentration, or you can say, focusing, is what leads to temporary ignorance. In the beginning, when the body is formed and when the soul comes in it, it also plunges into ignorance. It is accepted that the body thinks that it is a separate self with its own individuality but the soul too, in the beginning, associates itself so much with the body that it thinks it is the body. This is a mistaken association. It is like looking into water and thinking that the reflection is oneself. When the soul identifies itself with the ego-self, it loses itself in ignorance. The day it realises that it is only its reflection, it then awakens to the realisation. So, although it is the consciousness of Infinity, this soul loses it as soon as it plunges into the body of ignorance. And it is through the process of birth and rebirth, through the process of pleasure and sorrow, of beatings of pain, failures and disillusionment that life slowly drives us towards our inner being. Most of the time it is these negative happenings and events of life which are responsible for making us move forward in life or towards a higher consciousness.

If we do not come in touch with our inner being with each problem and pain in life, then the slaps of pain recur again and again because their purpose is to awaken us to greater depths. We have become so deaf and so dumb to pain that whenever we have a problem or pain we just tell ourselves "I will go to the Nursing Home and I will be all right and then I can come back to my life-routine." Well, the whole business of pain continues, given by different persons, on different occasions. When you have repeated pains and when it becomes unbearable you cry out for God's help and intervention. Perhaps God's reply would be: "Look at the track of your life. I had indicated to you several times, through different means and signals that this track you are on will always end up in pain and suffering, you did not listen to me. You thought that external means would be sufficient to relieve you from all sufferings. Change your track!" To quote from *Savitri*:

O mortal, bear this great world's law of pain,
In thy hard passage through a suffering world

DEATH, DESIRE AND INCAPACITY

Lean for thy soul's support on Heaven's strength,
Turn towards high Truth, aspire to love and peace.
A little bliss is lent thee from above,
A touch divine upon thy human days:
Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage,
For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards God.²¹

So, it is only a change of track – the track on the level of consciousness that can pull us out of our present suffering. We cannot be eternally hanging on God's mercy. The Divine will not pamper us forever; after all, the whole reason of all this suffering is to bring the soul forward.

If the Divine eternally pampers us, the soul will be eternally dormant. So, it may be that the Divine will pamper us only for a while and then ask us to walk on the inner path by self-effort. It is like a mother who gives to her child too many chocolates. The child seems to enjoy his mother giving him so much chocolate. But later, when the child has a dental problem and has to go to the doctor to have its painful tooth pulled out, he may blame his mother for giving him so much! Only when the child is experiencing the pain on the dentist's chair does he realise the evil of excessive chocolate-eating. Therefore, the Divine may also pamper you, but when in a single blow you are down on the ground, you may "accuse" the Divine and ask him why he did not guide you properly by not allowing all the indulgence? Well, the Divine does use all kinds of methods, some full of sorrow and others full of joy in order to lead the dormant soul to its awakening. If you read the Mother's writings and, especially, Sri Aurobindo's letters, they always have this one "theme" – that everything in this life is meant to be. We may not realise it, we may not take it really seriously, but everything in life, good and bad, failure and success, is supposed to lead us to this awakening of the soul, and to the true purpose for which it had taken this particular birth.

In fact, it is said that we are the architects of our own sorrows. We sort of give each of them a different filename and put them away in the hard-disk. Behind all those files are the same sufferings,

which have come up for the sole purpose of diminishing our ego and proportionately increase our true consciousness, but we conveniently give them different names, saying this suffering came “because of this” and that suffering “because of that”; there is no “because of this” and “because of that”, here is only one “because” and that is to really awaken the soul. So, this is the experience, the infinite experience which takes innumerable number of births because of our own doing.

Sri Aurobindo ends this argument by stating: “To this process change of form is essential, and for the soul involved in individual body change of form means dissolution of the body in subjection to the law and compulsion of the All-life in the material universe, to its law of supply of the material of form and demand on the material...”

Well, when there is dissolution of the body, the soul goes to its own world and all the materials that it has used,—which are the physical body, the vital being and the mental being,—all of them get dissolved and the same material is reused to make new formations. Just as this physical material is used to form another body, the vital energies and mental energies or substance are used to make another vital being or another mental being. So, the substances do not go out of existence, do not vanish; they are part of the renewal of forms on all three levels: of body, life and mind.

So, ultimately in all the causes of death, the final justification lies with the necessity of the physical’s change because the physical is not yet supple and receptive enough to give the soul all the infinite experiences. When it is transformed into the supramental body it will be able to give without dissolving itself the necessary infinite experiences to the soul, whereas the present body of man has to necessarily dissolve itself because of its incapacity to change according to the need of the soul’s experience. This is the only difference. So, if my body could live on for a thousand years, then perhaps the soul would get many different experiences. But you must remember that the extension of the body’s life alone is not sufficient; there must be a prolongation of the life of the vital being

as well as that of the mental being. It is not just the length of time; it also means the possibility of adapting itself to new requirements, to new experiences. Therefore, when the scientist speaks of prolonging the life of the body, trying to achieve an immortal body, at least a body that lives for a longer time, it is not enough. This is why the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have concentrated on transforming this physical body and not just extending its lifespan by manipulating the genes. It will not help. At the same time, in the long run, science may prepare a kind of basis, quite ready for the supramental consciousness when it comes and says "I want a body which is not prone to disease and its present problems of wear and tear." The scientist may help humanity to that extent, but beyond that it is the spiritualist who has to do the work. So, I would certainly say that what the scientist is doing today is not something useless; perhaps he is preparing something well in advance for future humanity.

Having studied in detail the three badges of incapacity, desire and death, let us conclude with the last paragraph:

This then is the necessity and justification of Death, not as a denial of Life, but as a process of Life; death is necessary because eternal change of form is the sole immortality to which the finite living substance can aspire and eternal change of experience the sole infinity to which the finite mind involved in living body can attain.²²

So, for now, the immortality of the body is eternal change. He adds:

This change of form cannot be allowed to remain merely a constant renewal of the same form-type such as constitutes our bodily life between birth and death; for unless the form-type is changed and the experiencing mind thrown into new forms in new circumstances of time, place and environment, the necessary variation of experience which the very nature of existence in Time and Space demands, cannot be effectuated.²³

Did you catch the point here? The soul has to completely change this entire form, I mean not only the physical form but the vital and the mental forms as well because it is not just a question of constant renewal of the same formation. That is to say, when my body was ten years old it had a particular form but now at this age it has changed completely. I mean different things have come in but, nevertheless, it is basically the same form which has undergone some changes. But such a change will not help the soul; the present body has to be fully rejected and it must take up a completely new physical, vital and mental formation along with a new place, and a new environment. All these things have to change when the soul takes a new birth. Then alone can it have a completely new experience. Otherwise, it will be too much linked to its past and because of that burden of memory it may not be able to grow. That is why Sri Aurobindo says that death, as a complete renewal and rebirth, is absolutely necessary.

And the beginning of the last paragraph reads thus:

If the individualised force were the energy of a mind free from ignorance, no such limitation, no such necessity of desire would intervene. For a mind not separated from Supermind, a mind of divine knowledge would know the intention, scope and inevitable result of its every act and would not crave or struggle but put forth an assured force self-limited to the immediate object in view. It would, even in stretching beyond the present, even in undertaking movements not intended to succeed immediately, yet not be subject to desire or limitation. For the failures also of the Divine are acts of its omniscient omnipotence which knows the right time and circumstance for the incipience, the vicissitudes, the immediate and the final results of all its cosmic undertakings.²⁴

That is, I would say, the conclusion of this chapter. Sri Aurobindo began this chapter with the problem created by the Mind. If you remember, in the involutory level, after the Mind came the Life-principle, with its multiple forms. Because the ignorant Mind

is the beginning, all its following creations, all the formations below it are also full of ignorance. All that has proceeded from Mind share the same ignorance and this is what we have dealt with in this chapter.

Now, what is the meaning of this ignorance and what is the effect of this ignorance? It is death, desire and incapacity. As long as we live in this mental consciousness, do what we will with all the religions combined in the world, with the help of the rishis and saints, nothing can change this world and man. As long as we are under the control of the Mind, nothing can ever change because the Mind carries the indelible stamp of death, desire and incapacity. It is only by going beyond the Mind that we grow into greater knowledge and reach the Supermind where we gain absolute Knowledge and absolute Will. This is the only way out for an absolute transformation. Therefore, what Sri Aurobindo tells us, time and again, is that nothing in the world till now has been the solution for man. Nothing can really take man out of death, desire and incapacity which are the basic causes of all pain and suffering. That is why it is not the question of Sri Aurobindo belittling any religion or any saint when he says that we have to exceed the present consciousness. All he says is that such things as religion, morality etc. was all important for the evolution till now, but not hereafter. Whatever little relief they have brought until now, to erase man's pain and suffering, was good enough until the present level of evolution; that was only like a temporary aspirin tablet for a headache but the permanent cure will be only by going beyond the head—the mental consciousness itself!

References

(All references, unless otherwise mentioned, are from *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL)*, Vol.18, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry, 1972.)

1. SABCL, Vol.18, p. 188
2. Ibid., p. 189

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 190
7. Ibid., pp. 190-91
8. Ibid., p. 191
9. *SABCL*, Vol.19, p. 829-30
10. *SABCL*, Vol.18, p. 194
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., pp. 194-95
14. Ibid., p. 192
15. Ibid., p. 195
16. Ibid., p. 195
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p. 192
19. Ibid., pp. 192-93
20. Ibid., p. 193
21. *SABCL*, Vol.29, p. 451
22. *SABCL*, Vol. 18 p. 193
23. Ibid., pp. 193-94
24. Ibid., p. 196

Lecture Notes

I. Self-Limitation:

- a) Life, being subservient to the darkened and dividing operation of Mind, is itself darkened and undergoes all that subjection to death and limitation.
- b) The original source of perversion is the self-limitation of the individual soul bound to self-ignorance.

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- c) Because of this divided individual life. Life is subject to the three Badges of its limitation: Death, Desire and Incapacity.

II. Causes of Death:

- a) The eater eating is eaten: Life in the body is exposed to the possibility of being broken up by the attack of the life.
- b) Life–force is the food of the body and body the food of the life–force.
- c) There is the one fundamental necessity of the embodied life which is to seek infinite experience on a finite basis. And this leads to dissolution of the body and seeking new forms.
- d) Death is necessary because eternal change of form is the sole immortality.
- e) It is the sense of being devoured, broken up, destroyed or forced away which is the sting of Death.

III. Genesis of Desire:

- a) By the two principles of infinite division and infinite aggregation the material universe is constituted. This is the genesis of Desire, which is Hunger on the physical level.
- b) Physical-vital = Hunger; Vital-Mental = Desire Intellectual Mind = Will

These movements are necessary until the individual becomes the possessor of this universe. "One cannot cease to be individually except by being infinitely."

- c) Desire ceases to be when it becomes the Desire for the Infinite. For this, it has to go through the process of a mutual giving, the joy of sacrifice of interchange. Thus the Law of Hunger is replaced by the Law of Love.

IV. Need of Triple Mask:

- a) Desire is the impulse of the Force of the individualised Being trying .to find in Time and Space its own infinite Bliss.
- b) This impulse is necessitated by the law of Incapacity in the individualized life–force. The individual is subject to

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control and denial by the infinite Life because their wills do not match.

- c) If the Mind were free from ignorance, one with Supermind then such desired, incapacity and death would not be necessary. Until then, the triple mask is necessary for self-transcendence.

CHAPTER XXI

The Ascent of Life

Right in the beginning, Sri Aurobindo links this chapter to the previous one, “Death, Desire and Incapacity” as he underlines the three terms of life and their relation to death, desire and incapacity. The first long sentence of the opening paragraph is a summary of what we read last time:

We have seen that as the divided mortal Mind, parent of limitation and ignorance and the dualities, is only a dark figure of the supermind, of the self-luminous divine Consciousness in its first dealings with the apparent negation of itself from which our cosmos commences, so also Life as it emerges in our material universe, an energy of the dividing Mind subconscious, submerged, imprisoned in Matter, Life as the parent of death, hunger and incapacity, is only a dark figure of the divine superconscient Force whose highest terms are immortality, satisfied delight and omnipotence.¹

Thus, he says that, although life is at present full of death, desire and incapacity, it “is only a dark figure of the superconscient Force”. Just as the mind at the moment is full of ignorance, so is life filled with death, ignorance and incapacity. Just as the mind, which is supported by the Supermind, is there to lead us towards Supermind, so is life equally borne by the superconscient Force or Chit-Tapas, to ultimately lead us to “immortality, satisfied delight and omnipotence.”

We dwelt previously on the question of recovering the Sachchidananda consciousness. The aim of evolution is to regain that unity, that oneness of Sachchidananda. Then, we clarified that reunification is richer than the original unified consciousness.

The words used here are “satisfied delight.” It is not just about returning to Ananda, to delight; it is “a satisfied delight”, satisfied because it possesses all Manifestation, not only the delight of the Unmanifest. When in its evolutionary march this Manifestation returns to the Supreme, we can then say that it is a “satisfied delight”, not just Ananda, but a “satisfied” Ananda. This is the distinction between the delight of Manifestation and the delight of Non-manifestation.

This relation fixes the nature of that great cosmic process of which we are a part; it determines the first, the middle and the ultimate terms of our evolution. The first terms of Life are division, a force-driven subconscious will, apparent not as will but as dumb urge of physical energy, and the impotence of an inert subjection to the mechanical forces that govern the interchange between the form and its environment. This inconscience and this blind but potent action of Energy are the type of the material universe as the physical scientist sees it and this his view of things extends and turns into the whole of basic existence; it is the consciousness of Matter and the accomplished type of material living.²

In the previous chapter, Sri Aurobindo had taken up the question of life as a cosmic energy and dealt with the question of the Life-principle, especially its dark side—its present state full of death, desire and incapacity.

Now, here, Sri Aurobindo is not going to lead us to its bright side. On the contrary, he deals with such questions as: “is the present going to be eternally like this? How will it evolve?” So he goes once again to the cosmic side of the Life-principle and elaborates upon the first term of its existence — the lowest form of the Life-force at the level of the Subconscious and Matter. We see there the deep division, “a force-driven subconscious will and the impotence of an inert subjection to mechanical forces”... This is exactly what the physical scientist has discovered and believed it to be the basis of all existence. He may be right in believing so, but

is that all there is beyond these characteristics of Life?

Sri Aurobindo takes it further:

But there comes a new equipoise, there intervenes a new set of terms which increase in proportion as Life delivers itself out of this form and begins to evolve towards conscious Mind; for the middle terms of Life are death and mutual devouring, hunger and conscious desire, the sense of a limited room and capacity and the struggle to increase, to expand, to conquer and to possess.³

What are the three things we see here? “Death and mutual devouring, hunger and conscious desire, the sense of a limited room and capacity”! So what we had read in the previous chapter is brought back here. But why have they been brought back at all? Is there any deeper purpose behind death, desire and incapacity? Let us see what he has to say:

These three terms are the basis of that status of evolution which the Darwinian theory first made plain to human knowledge. For the phenomenon of death involves in itself a struggle to survive, since death is only the negative term in which Life hides from itself and tempts its own positive being to seek for immortality.⁴

Now, that is interesting. Death by itself may be negative. It is negative and dark in essence but positive in practical life. In which way is it practical? He puts it thus: the very effort of man to survive death brings about the positive results of progress—progress not only on the external level but on the inner level as well! Through this process of death, which we have analysed before, there is an inner evolution, a movement towards experiencing the Infinite. That is to say, the soul desiring to experience the Infinite makes use of death as a process. These negative and positive aspects of death are dealt with by Sri Aurobindo in a short poem, “The Fear of Death”:

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death
Is busy with each intake of our breath.
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face
All rosy with the light of jocund grace!
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light.
Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull
And ghastly now that was so beautiful?
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?
Death is but changing of our robes to wait
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.⁵

We can see now that the basic fear of death or the misunderstanding about death lies, as he puts it, in these questions: "Is it because the twisted stem must feel/Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?" You know he is comparing death to a lady, to a lovely and kind maiden who is "culling flowers". The lady plucks the flower, causing it pain and so the poet asks: 'Is it that pain you are afraid of? Or is it because the "flowerless stalk droops dull"? There was once a beautiful flower in the garden, but today it is no more. Are we sad because it has been taken away? "Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar/That shakes you?" Death is a passage into another world. Literally, it is a passage because, as we know, once the body is dead, the soul travels into internal worlds. It is a long journey; it may take an indefinite time; it is not that it goes back immediately to its own world to rest. On its return journey, it passes from the physical world to higher worlds. When there is an opening of the door to pass from one world to another, there is a jarring sound. Perhaps we are afraid of this grating sound of the portal! Again the poet compares death to a "changing of our robes": "changing of our robes to wait/In wedding garments at the

Eternal's gate." This image refers to the Hindu tradition in which a woman who dies is dressed as a bride. It represents her marriage, the way she had come to the wedding hall—this is a symbol: she is now going to be married to the Divine. The human marriage is over; a greater marriage with the Eternal now awaits her. So there is nothing about death to be afraid of. It is a passage from life to life but all this time, while we live, we struggle and suffer.

Imagine, if we were told that our life is going to last for three hundred years, what would be our effort in trying to perfect ourselves? If we had such an assurance of three hundred years of life, we would not, perhaps, make any effort to change and progress. We might say: "Oh! I have three hundred years of life! Why bother now? Let me live as I am. When I am a hundred or two hundred years I'll try to change and progress". But now this is not the case: we do not know the exact time of our death but we know that it is a very short life. We never know when it will end. Those who are very serious about life, feel that they have a mission, they resolve to work as best as they can—to the utmost—so that they may bring to fruition what they had set out to achieve.

Hence, death acts on us as a subconscious pressure to make our lives more and more perfect. Death is indeed a negative term but it seeks immortality. All that science does is to improve our life-style, to give us a better, longer, healthier life. Behind all these efforts is the question of immortality! I am referring here to the first chapter of *The Life Divine* where Sri Aurobindo writes that man's immemorial quest has been towards God, Light, Freedom and *Immortality* [*italics added*]. So right from the beginning of man's civilisation, immortality has attracted him as much as the concept of God and Freedom and Light. Although at every moment man sees people dying around him, yet, he never lets go off the hope and the ideal of immortality. So, somehow, death is a goading spirit, a goading force. So, in its own way, death is a positive force.

Similarly:

The phenomenon of hunger and desire involves a struggle towards a status of satisfaction and security, since desire is

only the stimulus by which Life tempts its own positive being to rise out of the negation of unfulfilled hunger towards the full possession of the delight of existence.⁶

As to hunger and desire which we have seen as part of the creation itself, are they negative? Surely, they are not. They involve “the struggle towards the status of satisfaction and security”. We are constantly working towards greater satisfaction—satisfaction in material possessions, satisfaction in love, satisfaction in achievement etc. Of course, there is at the same time hunger and desire for security—security of money, of property, of housing etc. These ideals may not appear spiritual, nevertheless they make man work for a stimulus which, Sri Aurobindo says, could ultimately give him “the delight of existence”.

This satisfaction could be temporary. But, when one is working towards this satisfaction, towards this security, one enjoys countless moments of joy in life. One does not reach this satisfaction and this security by sitting in the corner of a room. One has worked for it, let us say thirty or forty years. During these years one has tasted the joy of life which may not be a deep spiritual delight. Nevertheless, it was a great joy of fulfilment. It is true that during this period of joy one has also experienced pain and suffering. But the sum of joy far exceeds all of one’s pain and suffering put together. Imagine a white board where there is one black dot. When you look at the board, all your attention is on that black dot. Likewise, in spite of all the joys in life all your attention is on your pain. So it may be inappropriate to dwell on this life’s only pain and suffering and feel that we should find ways to escape from them. Therefore, pain and suffering only enhance our struggle for a greater joy. Like death, they also are negative in essence but positive in their effects. Similarly,

The phenomenon of limited capacity involves a struggle towards expansion, mastery and possession, the possession of the self and the conquest of the environment, since limitation and defect are only the negation by which Life tempts its own

positive being to seek for the perfection of which it is eternally capable.⁷

When we had gone over the question of incapacity we had concluded that because of his basic incapacity man puts in all his efforts to overcome it in some way or other. For instance, when a young student comes in the class and says that he cannot understand a math problem, then it is the responsibility of the teacher to help him understand it. And when the student understands it, he is immensely happy because he has overcome one of his weaknesses and limitations. Therefore, joy is essentially a conquest over a limitation, a shortcoming. Perhaps this is the reason why the Buddha had said that overcoming a desire gives one a joy greater than satisfying it.

The Mother explains this phenomenon from a different angle, saying that by not fulfilling a desire – remember it is not a desire for the Infinite but the desire for the finite – one experiences a greater joy because at that moment, when you have conquered the lower desire for the finite, you connect yourself to the psychic joy. With that spurt of joy you say, “Hey! I have conquered that defect, that limitation in me, that desire, that greed in me!” So we think of it as only a vital and a mental reaction, but this, says the Mother, is a psychic joy. Hence, each time we conquer a desire of the finite, we have the joy of the Infinite.

Thinking of the conquests of man, I remember an incident. When I flew non-stop for nineteen hours from California to Taipei, in the thick darkness over the oceans, I realised at that moment what a great conquests man has made! At that point of time I had the greatest joy of man’s conquest over one of the natural obstacles. So one can sense how fundamental this conquest turns out to be “since limitation and defect are only the negation by which Life tempts its own positive being to seek for the perfection of which it is eternally capable.”

The next sentence, “The struggle for life is not only a struggle to survive, it is also a struggle for possession and perfection...” is crucial. This is a new dimension added by Sri Aurobindo: we are

not here on earth only to exist or to somehow survive, that is the survival of the fittest, but we are here on earth for “possession and perfection”. Yes, man struggles to possess the world and in the process makes immense outer progress. He struggles for perfection both in the outer and inner worlds and is thus compelled to reach a divine delight and immortality. Hence Darwin’s theory of existence belongs only to the physical level and does not include the other dimensions of human life and evolution. Sri Aurobindo goes much beyond when he insists:

The struggle for life is not only a struggle to survive, it is also a struggle for possession and perfection, since only by taking hold of the environment whether more or less, whether by self-adaptation to it or by adapting it to oneself either by accepting and conciliating it or by conquering and changing it, can survival be secured, and equally is it true that only a greater and greater perfection can assure a continuous permanence, a lasting survival.⁸

Only to repeat what we said before, Darwinism is true to a great extent but only on the level of the physical-vital, which is the plant level, on the animal level, but we cannot impose the same law on man, which is what happened in the Western life’s perspective. The Darwinian philosophy of survival of the fittest has been translated into a life-formula of emphasis on self-preservation, self-assertion and aggression. This formula is based on the belief that if one is not the fittest, the strongest, the most intelligent, one cannot survive in the competitive world. This is how such emphasis on physical existence and life has ultimately landed the modern world in a materialist pattern of life.

While visiting Western countries, I observed this in most of the youngsters, and also in many elderly people, that unless they assert themselves aggressively in attitude and life it is difficult to progress and survive. Being aggressive is not necessarily fighting another person but the way one presents oneself, communicates or behaves. If one is a bit introvert, who doesn’t like to talk much,

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if one does not have a compelling self-confidence, then one finds it difficult to be accepted for any job, especially in the corporate world. I have seen people getting jobs who are useless when it comes to capacity, useless and incapable but who have learnt the art of articulation in smartly putting forward their ideas and thoughts. But someone sincere, who really knows his work, but by nature more submissive and reserved, is not given a chance because most believe in bold living. You must sell the goods, your products and ideas; be aggressive and self-assertive. Each individual and each company need to be accepted, to impose recognition. This is how a materialist, competitive society has developed. It is such an aggressive attitude towards life, now adopted by both the Western and Eastern cultures, which is the negative contribution of Darwin to human society.

To continue, Sri Aurobindo's next argument widens the future for man:

For these two first states of Life contain in themselves the seeds of a new principle and another state which must increase in proportion as Mind evolves out of matter through the vital formula into its own law. And still more must all things change when as Life evolves upward towards Mind, so Mind evolves upward towards Supermind and Spirit. Precisely because the struggle for survival, the impulse towards permanence is contradicted by the law of death, the individual life is compelled, and used, to secure permanence rather for its species than for itself; but this it cannot do without the co-operation of others; and the principle of co-operation and mutual help, the desire of others, the desire of the wife, the child, the friend and helper, the associated group, the practice of association, of conscious joining and interchange are the seeds out of which flowers the principle of love.⁹

Here we have the third level: "as Mind evolves out of matter through the vital formula into its own law." On this level something new is going to be realised: the law of love. If we can evolve to a deeper

insight into the world at present, we will understand that we are really moving towards the pinnacle of the mental consciousness and that we are about to cross into a new Consciousness. What are the signs of such an event? You may ask. One of the signs is cooperation, association and mutual help now fast spreading in all areas of human life.

We pointed out in the previous chapter, the individual struggles for permanence, immortality, self-satisfaction, for delight or for, what Sri Aurobindo calls, the “hunger for perfection”. In the past the methods used for attaining this kind of permanence have been crude and vital. But soon enough man realised that the permanence he is seeking cannot be achieved on the individual level; it can only be achieved in the species itself or at the level of a collective consciousness.

This is how the individual is compelled to think of collectivity. If a businessman wants his business empire to last and go on after him, he has to think of the human race as such. He is convinced that passing on his business to others is the best way to achieve all that he has been trying to achieve in his own individual capacity. So there is the necessity of cooperation and association. In India, we still have quite a number of family businesses. Business and property are passed on to the children in the family but it is only a system of inheritance. However, it does contribute to the new ideal of working for the progress of mankind as a species. Interestingly, in the past few decades, the concept of the “family” has undergone a sea-change: it is now enlarged to include corporate bodies, associations etc. We see the merging of large companies in information technologies, medicine etc. They are turning themselves into greater cooperative bodies so that they can become more permanent, more powerful and derive from them greater satisfaction and better efficiency.

Spiritually, we can see that these movements of human effort towards a larger cooperation are indications of the emergence of a deeper human character – that of true love. It is a fact that, at present, human love is only an “extended selfishness” and that all these steps towards cooperation, mutual help etc. are only

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aspects of a greater collective ego or greater selfishness, if one may call it such. Nevertheless, such move towards a greater collective group-spirit is needed for man to become aware that “the natural individual is a minor term of being and exists by the universal.”¹⁰

This question of collectivity comes in because the individual becomes conscious, in other words if he wants to “ensure” all he has gained must be only through the universal or the collectivity. Once this is discovered and practiced on all levels of human life man’s destiny is determined—he reaches a point where the mind can open to supramental Truth, something beyond itself. From that moment onwards, his evolution towards Supermind is assured, however obscure and slow at the present moment. So, what is the beginning of love? It is but an “extended selfishness.” We may speak volumes about our human love but at its best it is only an “extended selfishness”, because, as Sri Aurobindo explains elsewhere, in another context, we love someone and expect to be loved in return! You see, it is not that you say, “I love the person irrespective of the way that person loves me”. The whole problem is that you love another person and expect that person will love you on the same terms. That is why this expectation, between spouses, is so much of a problem. They argue: “I did this for you, why don’t you do the same thing for me?” So there begins the conflict. It is my own image that I love in the other one. But, at a higher level, love becomes purer without any expectation whatsoever.

Well, here ends the first analysis of what Sri Aurobindo called the three terms of existence: the lower is the physical-vital where there is a subconscious will, along with the working of mechanical forces. Nature moves in its slow ionic march. On the second level, the negative aspects of death, desire and incapacity are introduced. But these are there only to shake man out of his inertia, of his lethargy, of the pull of his subconscious. Man being a product of the Inconscient, his body is full of *tamas* and his mind and vital gravitate towards the lower forces. So, death, desire and incapacity are like an antidote — they act like a brutal spur or a ruthless whip so that man evolves, above the gravitational forces, towards the superconscient forces. When you start the engine of your car

and put it in first gear, the motion is the slowest, and the energy required is the maximum because it has to be pulled out of its static position. Once the car picks up some speed, you shift to higher gears so the motion is faster and the spent energy less. So it is the same with the evolutionary process. Once someone had asked Sri Aurobindo "Will Supermind take as much time to come as it took for the other principles to manifest?" Obviously, it will not take that much time, because evolution has gone through its first three "gears" and it is at present in its top gear! It is moving very rapidly. Hence, the new Consciousness will come to lead mankind and it will not take as much time to bring forth Life and Mind.

Sri Aurobindo writes that "the practice of association, of conscious joining and interchange are the seeds out of which flowers the principle of love." Indeed, the love principle has bloomed and has even taken the next step, of an aspiration for something beyond materialistic life. We can now see the possibilities of a spiritual age's beginning which in turn will bring about an intense aspiration for a divine life. If universally more and more people begin to aspire for a divine life, then, of course, the supramental consciousness working as principle of evolution will not be very far!

In fact, aspiration awakens the psychic being. Once man reaches the psychic realisation, true love, the divine love will take over human nature. This will be followed by a spiritual transformation culminating in a supramental transformation. That is the finale of the first cycle of evolution; then the second cycle of evolution will begin.

I will now go on to the next paragraph where Sri Aurobindo completes more or less the new argument:

Therefore, Life is predestined by its own nature to a third status, a third set of terms of its self-expression. If we examine this ascent of Life we shall see that the last terms of its actual evolution, the terms of that which we have called its third status, must necessarily be in appearance the very contradiction and opposite but in fact the very fulfilment and transfiguration of its first conditions. Life starts with the extreme divisions

and rigid forms of Matter, and of this rigid division the atom, which is the basis of all material form, is the very type. The atom stands apart from all others even in its union with them, rejects death and dissolution under any ordinary force and is the physical type of the separate ego defining its existence against the principle of fusion in Nature. But unity is as strong a principle in Nature as division; it is indeed the master principle of which division is only a subordinate term, and to the principle of unity every divided form must therefore subordinate itself in one fashion or another by mechanical necessity, by compulsion, by assent or inducement.¹¹

Sri Aurobindo now tackles the two principles of division and unity. We have, in a different way, already looked into these two eternal principles. Then, why has Sri Aurobindo brought them back? Is it to link them with human life and human endeavour?

As we said, on the level of the physical, there is the atom, which resists all pressure to break it as it wants to retain its individuality. Of course, man has blasted the atom, but it still maintains its essential individuality and solidity and so it does not want to lose its individuality. There are the cells which aggregated into bodies—bodies of the amoeba, of the plant or the animal. In each, the atom has kept its individuality. This is the wonderful thing about Nature: it has achieved an extraordinary balance between absolute individuality and absolute aggregation—which, I suppose, is the marvel of Matter.

What can be compared to this atomic individuality in man is the ego. So you can imagine how very difficult it is to break the ego. We glibly talk about getting rid of it in any way but, here, we can see that just like the atom ego too resists all kinds of dissolution. It does not want to be dissolved, yet, there is the evolutionary need of unification for which there is the absolute necessity for it to dissolve. All in all, man has not managed to dissolve or abolish it because of the same principle of stubborn individuality. In all its forms whether they be mental, vital or physical, it resists the very possibility of dissolution. Hence, there is the difficulty in the

practice of integral yoga where it is imperative to surrender one's ego. But as we now see that this ego-principle cannot be dissolved, where do we stand? Where do we go from here?

We have to move to the third level where the ego is not dissolved but transformed. Let me put it this way: even though the term "transformation" may be difficult to grasp, we can understand that the ego is transcended at the level of the psychic realisation. In Matter, we could break the atomic nucleus but here, with the ego, no morality nor religion, no mental will can dissolve it. As we have seen, ego is the helper in man's evolution and it cannot be dissolved until, and unless, its purpose in evolution has been achieved. So what we can do on the spiritual level, the level of the yoga, is to minimise it, then bypass it and enter the psychic zone. As we said earlier, what happens here is that under the psychic being's influence and impact the ego moves towards a greater universal consciousness. It becomes connected to the group-soul, the soul of humanity and, as it loses its individuality, it becomes ready to merge with the universal consciousness. This is the importance of a collective yoga where the ego automatically shrinks to a smaller size. When we work in a collectivity the ego is compelled to be humble (at least in a sincere *sadhak*) and such humility is the precondition to move to the psychic being which seals a real unity with the universal and transcendental Divine consciousness. This is the highest experience of the spiritual man when he keeps intact his true individual, the psychic being, and thus unites not only with others in Nature but also with the Supreme in His triple poise. Thus, the two essential principles of existence, the individuality and the collectivity or division and unity, are maintained in a perfect balance/by the spiritual man.

In Matter there is this perfect balance but it is unconscious. In man it needs to be recovered consciously. Actually, the spiritual man who can realise this absolute individuality and absolute unity is none else but the superman. You may argue that many yogis, saints and rishis have done this; they have realised the *atman* and they have united in their consciousness with the larger soul of humanity. The yogis have achieved it but it was on the psychic

level and not on the physical. However great the yogis were, they had to ultimately leave their physical body. The Gnostic being or the Supramental being alone is capable of retaining the individual physical entity while at the same time keeping the Divine multiplicity. The Supramental being is the ultimate of this creation because in him alone the two principles of creation will fully manifest, right from the physical level to the collective level. The absolute equilibrium between the one and the many of creation will be recovered in this Gnostic being.

Until now we have dealt with the two fundamental principles of Life – the principle of division and the principle of unity with an emphasis on unity. Between these two principles of unity and division, the most important principle is obviously that of unity. Because creation begins from unity or from Oneness, this is the predominant factor. The question of division and of individualisation is secondary; so is it subordinate. However, as manifestation implies division, it is best found at the atomic level where there is absolute division. Yet, even in this absolute division, there is a hidden secret, an urge, an impetus towards oneness. In fact, the whole meaning of evolution is to find once again this unity and oneness. The whole process of involution is nothing but the play of division to a maximum. So, in the process of evolution the atom also moves towards unity. But at the same time, it stands apart from all others, it rejects dissolution by any ordinary force. Well, the bombardment of the atom was not done by an ordinary force; it was an artificial force created by man. Under natural circumstances, atom is this creation's unique individual aspect which does not get fused; it maintains its absolute individuality. However, the atom itself, at a point in evolution, moved also towards some kind of aggregation without giving up its own individuality. It thus formed the first unicellular body, and then the simple cells became more complex and brought about a developed human body:

Therefore, if Nature for her own ends, in order principally to have a firm basis for her combinations and a fixed seed of forms, allows the atom ordinarily to resist the process of fusion

by dissolution, she compels it to subserve the process of fusion by aggregation; the atom, as it is the first aggregate, is also the first basis of aggregate unit.¹²

Thus is formed the complex body, not by “fusion by dissolution” but by the process of aggregation. It is very symbolic in the sense that, in the future, the next evolutionary stages, we will come to some sort of a situation where there is individuality and yet unity, not just aggregation. This is the promise of the supramental race, when each superman will be an absolute individual, like his counterpart at the physical level, the atom, and yet will unite with others and not merely aggregate in order to form a collectivity. The atomic aggregation is a kind of primary laboratory of Nature where she works out the principles of tomorrow.

Let us now see what happens on the next stage of evolution – the stage of Life:

When Life reaches its second status, that which we recognise as vitality, the contrary phenomenon takes the lead and the physical basis of the vital ego is obliged to consent to dissolution. Its constituents are broken up so that the elements of one life can be used to enter into the elemental formation of other lives. The extent to which this law reigns in Nature has not yet been fully recognised and indeed cannot be until we have a science of mental life and spiritual existence as sound as our present science of physical life and the existence of Matter.¹³

Perhaps, the science of yoga could be the “science of mental life and spiritual existence” for it is yoga, especially the integral yoga, which reveals the process of the entire body-system’s dissolution and shows how both these vital and mental sheaths dissolve and lend themselves to the constitution of other vital and mental bodies.

A similar law governs the mutual relations of our mental life with the mental life of other thinking creatures. There

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is a constant dissolution, dispersion and a reconstruction effected by the shock of mind upon mind and with a constant interchange and fusion of elements. Interchange, intermixture and fusion of being with being, is the very process of life, a law of its existence.¹⁴

We normally think that we are quite individualistic on the mental and the vital levels. But, as Sri Aurobindo observes, there is “a constant interchange” and what we think to be our ideas, our emotions, our reactions, our habits have been greatly influenced by others. Even here, on the physical level, there may be some interchange now and then, but on the vital and the mental, there is an intermixture and a fusion of being with being. This life-process is rather interesting; it is active not only while we are in this body but this intermixture of the vital and the mental continues even when we leave our body. So, perhaps we could say that in life there is an interchange and after death there is an intermixture! Well, at this stage of our evolution this interchange of thoughts and emotions is done unconsciously. But, in the next stage of evolution, it should become conscious.

The next lines go thus:

In the atomic life therefore the individual form persists as the basis and secures by its aggregation with others the more or less prolonged existence of aggregate forms which shall be the basis of vital and mental individualisations. But as soon as Nature has secured a sufficient firmness in this respect for the safe conduct of her ulterior operations, she reverses the process; the individual form perishes and the aggregate life profits by the elements of the form that is thus dissolved. This, however, cannot be the last stage; that can only be reached when the two principles are harmonised, when the individual is able to persist in the consciousness of his individuality and yet fuse himself with others without disturbance of preservative equilibrium and interruption of survival.¹⁵

You see Nature's grand scheme! Why does Nature maintain on the physical level this absolute firmness of the individual, the atomic individual? The atomic individual is ready to aggregate, but not willing to fuse because it is its absolute firmness which gives life a secure base. Imagine if atoms were also to easily fuse themselves, then Matter would be fluid and the vital and the mental individual would not have a stable base. So Nature's logic lies in creating a solid foundation in Matter for the "upper floors" of Life and Mind. If the foundation of our house is solid then we can build any number of floors with various designs. Similarly, in Nature the material foundation, the body foundation must be firm, solid. Then the emotional and the mental being can have their play. This solidity is indispensable in evolution.

Try to catch this idea: on the level of Matter, the individual atom is firm, individuality is important. On the level of Life, the group and the race and the species itself are important; the individual is unimportant. Thus Life brings in death to dissolve individual formations as soon as their work is over. The individual form is sacrificed but the aggregate, the humanity, the race of mankind gain whatever the individual body has achieved. What is important is to develop the collective aggregate consciousness.

On the supramental level both these qualities—of the individual body and the collective consciousness—become firmly united and established. There is a wonderful rhythm in Nature's march. It is because of the fundamental experiment of Nature herself, that we can say that the animal or man is basically a creature of herd-mentality. On the Life-level it is the law of existence that we should move towards collectivity. That is why wherever mankind lived – be it in caves, forests, villages or cities, its meaning was to form an aggregation or a collectivity. Such is Nature's scheme. But there is one more element in man which can survive the individual's dissolution. The body dissolves, the vital dissolves, emotions dissolve, but this element survives death:

Only a mental being, supported by the psychic nodus within which expresses or begins to express the secret soul, can hope

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to persist by his power of linking on the past to the future in a stream of continuity which the breaking of the form may break in the physical memory but need not destroy in the mental being itself and which may even by an eventual development bridge over the gap of physical memory created by death and birth of the body.¹⁶

What is really the prerogative of man is mind. While the "ordinary" minds are dissolved, the mental being supported by the psychic being survives death and dissolution. How does it happen? After shedding the physical body and the vital-sheath, the soul does away with the mental-sheath. Then it reaches the mental plane. Why does it take time to dissolve? Because this sheath is full of ambitions, mental preferences, mental ideas, mental plans etc. which were left incomplete and unfulfilled while the soul was in the body; and they remain as part of the *manomaya kosha*. It is very fortunate that the body is cremated and destroyed very fast. Not so with the vital being as it is attached to the world and worldly matters such as property, money relations etc. The mesh formed out of desires, attachments etc. may be absorbed in other human beings and, until the entire mesh of the vital around the soul is dissolved, it cannot go beyond into higher regions. This is the period that may be the longest one. When all these are dissolved, then the soul can proceed to the mental level.

On the mental level also the mesh of ambition, of attachments to mental ideas etc. have to be dissolved, only then can the psychic being proceed on its onward journey. This is the normal journey of all mental beings but a mental being "supported by the psychic nodus" does not need to follow this path. "The mental being supported by the psychic nodus" means that the individual who, while living in the body has offered his mind to the Divine, and is beyond preferences and attachments! One who is surrendered to the Divine or else influenced by the psychic, that mental being can survive physical death. It is under the aura or influence of the psychic being that he has all the possibilities of remaining as a mental being even in the mental world. Such a *purusha* is not at all

a hindrance to the soul's march, He is the only one who can survive the dissolution.

In due time the physical and the vital dissolve, but the mind under the psychic's influence can survive. We have a fine example in Mr. X. We were told that he had completely surrendered his mind to Sri Aurobindo. Hence, when he left his body, the Mother is said to have remarked that his mind remained in the Ashram atmosphere, helping all those who want to understand Sri Aurobindo. I am not sure of the story's details, but this is the main idea.

Let us now tackle Sri Aurobindo's next elaboration:

Association with love as its secret principle and its emergent summit is the type, the power of this new relation and therefore the governing principle of the development into the third status of life. The conscious preservation of individuality along with the consciously accepted necessity and desire of interchange, self-giving and fusion with other individuals, is necessary for the working of the principle of love; for if either is abolished, the working of love ceases, whatever may take its place. Fulfilment of love by entire self-immolation, even with an illusion of self-annihilation, is indeed an idea and an impulse in the mental being, but it points to a development beyond this third status of Life.

This third status is a condition in which we rise progressively beyond the struggle for life by mutual devouring and the survival of the fittest by that struggle; for there is more and more a survival by mutual help and a self-perfecting by mutual adaptation, interchange and fusion. Life is a self-affirmation of being, even a development and survival of ego, but of a being that has need of other beings, an ego that seeks to meet and include other egos and to be included in their life.¹⁷

What we understand by this is that the unconscious aggregation at the atomic level has to be consciously achieved on the mental level. If on the mental level we are to have a conscious unity, this mental must acquire a sense of oneness, which can come by

the principle of love alone. Very interestingly, it is only with the coming of mind that the principle of love comes into evolution. This principle of love may develop the sense of self-immolation, self-annihilation and sacrifice. These are all the ideals of the mind. When we say someone has sacrificed his life for his nation, for his ideals, we call it the greatest expression of love. This principle automatically comes in evolution along with the principle of Mind. What does it show? It really points to the fact that the moment we really call ourselves “man”, in its true sense, it also means that man is the one who has begun to love and to share. Until then we may be evolutionary-wise human beings but not real men if we do not have the capacity to love, the will to share with others. It is true that even the animal kingdom shows deep signs of love, of sacrifice, of sharing etc. but that kind of love does not show except in exceptional cases may be, much of “survival by mutual help and a self-perfecting by mutual adaptation, interchange and fusion”.

When we say ‘mind’ we think of great ideas, the intellect or *buddhi* but it also implies the principle of “mutual adaptation, interchange and fusion.” That is why human beings have this great difference in people—those who love and those who do not love. We may not like competitive and selfish people. We like another person! When he/she begins to share, to love! Then we say, “This person is full of great feelings and emotions, he/she is a real good human being!” A man may be very rich or brilliant but, unless and until he can share or have the sense of “mutual-adaptation, interchange and fusion”, he is not truly a mental being; he may be only a vital-mental being. A highly developed mind automatically evolves into a deeper love. That is why it may be said that to be pure in mind is to be pure in heart. The more the mental consciousness develops towards higher ranges or planes of consciousness, the more the emotional consciousness deepens. That is perhaps one of the criterions to judge how much a man is really spiritually advanced by seeing how much he is ready for “mutual adaptation, interchange and fusion”.

Then says Sri Aurobindo:

The individuals and the aggregates who develop most the law of association and the law of love, of common help, kindness, affection, comradeship, unity, who harmonise most successfully survival and mutual self-giving, the aggregate increasing the individual and the individual the aggregate, as well as individual increasing individual and aggregate aggregate by mutual interchange, will be the fittest for survival in this tertiary status of the evolution.¹⁸

This is a very important sentence. Who are those meant for the third evolutionary status? Yesterday, somebody asked me, "How to become this new creation, how to be a supramental being or at least work towards that?" Here is a practical hint. It is those people who have taken to the "law of association and the law of love, of common help, kindness, affection, comradeship, unity." Is this not the ideal of most religions? Is this not the ideal of morality? In India we very often talk about a *sattwic* person. He is one whose ideal is harmony, love, kindness and affection. However, these are qualities that are essential not only for being a good man, an ethical man, a religious man, but also, for becoming an apprentice of the new Consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo's use of the expression, "fittest for survival", similar to Darwin's phrase "survival of the fittest" here has a different meaning. Darwin may or may not have meant it, but his idea has come to be interpreted as meaning that only those who are self-assertive, aggressive can survive in this world. What Darwin said really applies on the animal level but it was wrongly applied to human beings. In the present times this aggressive philosophy of life has made today's men worse than animals: killing each other, destroying Nature! Thus, aggression, selfishness have become the hallmarks of men's life today. In Sri Aurobindo's interpretation, the individuals who will be the "fittest for survival" on the third level are those who follow the "law of association and the law of love, of common help, kindness, affection, comradeship, unity" – not those who are aggressive and assertive. These are the *sattwic* qualities that are insisted upon in Eastern culture whereas success,

aggressiveness, individualism are given much more importance in the Western culture.

Next comes Sri Aurobindo's comment:

This development is significant of the increasing predominance of Mind which progressively imposes its own law more and more upon the material existence. For mind by its greater subtlety does not need to devour in order to assimilate, possess and grow; rather the more it gives, the more it receives and grows; and the more it fuses itself into others, the more it fuses others into itself and increases the scope of its being.¹⁹

That is the marvellous thing about mind; it is most unlike the physical and the vital. How does it enlarge itself? The body grows by taking in physical energies, physical matter; the vital being, made of ego and desires increases by possessions. But the mind follows a reverse process – it enlarges, increases in its capacity, not by taking in but by giving out and sharing: “the more it gives, the more it receives and grows.” That is the fundamental basis of knowledge: it is meant to be imparted and shared. This is why our sages never accepted money in exchange of spreading the knowledge and wisdom of the scriptures.

The next sentence, “it fuses itself into others, the more it fuses others into itself” is more revealing. Take the example of Sri Aurobindo. Today more and more people in the world absorb his ideas and vision and the more they do so, the more they fuse themselves into him. The increasing number of “Aurobindonians” could be due to his thought spreading rapidly all over the world. In fact, SACAR's work, is precisely to spread Sri Aurobindo's thought among the people. It is with this enthusiasm that I started our research centre here (Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, SACAR) – to spread his thought in the world. And automatically those who are receptive will be fused with Sri Aurobindo, that is, fused not only in his thoughts but with his consciousness also!

People will be attracted to his thoughts, then to his consciousness and then Sri Aurobindo himself will take up each individual's

aspiration and prayers. Perhaps this is what the Mother wanted when she started *Sri Aurobindo's Action*. She had told us to give Sri Aurobindo's solutions to life-problems to all those who were interested and it is he who will act on them. Therefore our latest program, I earlier announced to you, is to start a "virtual" university—the University of Tomorrow. In a physical place, only a limited number of students can come to listen to our lectures and talks but by a virtual university we can reach many more learners across the globe. Thanks to my father, V. Madhusudan Reddy, who had the idea of starting the University, we have the blessings of the Mother to do it. In fact, the Mother had told my father to take it up as soon as he could; she was eager to see this work undertaken. The whole idea is now to spread Sri Aurobindo's vision by taking the help of modern means.

This is exactly the secret of Sri Aurobindo's thought which is spreading fast nowadays. The more his thought permeates into others, the more they are fused to Sri Aurobindo's consciousness thus increasing the growth of their inner being. The power of his thought is immense and miraculous!

So, he says:

Physical life exhausts itself by too much giving and ruins itself by too much devouring; but though Mind in proportion as it leans on the law of Matter suffers the same limitation, yet, on the other hand, in proportion as it grows into its own law it tends to overcome this limitation, and in proportion as it overcomes the material limitation giving and receiving become one.²⁰

Thus, mind alone has the privilege of giving endlessly and yet remaining as rich and powerful as before; whereas the physical and the vital cannot. You can exert physically but there is a limit to it beyond which it collapses. You may say mind also gets tired after a while. It is so because it is under the influence of Matter, *tamas* and the Subconscious—"as it leans on the law of Matter". Thus, at present, mind also is limited. But it is far superior to the physical and the vital at any point in time. Admittedly, it is only the

Supermind which will not be under the pull of *tamas* and Matter.

Let us not forget that Sri Aurobindo is not dwelling on the issue of Mind just of its own sake. He is seeking rather the different possibilities in which Mind can survive individual dissolution. It is the Mind alone which can enrich itself endlessly and thus acquire love. Next he writes:

The growth into the third status of life by the principle of association, the growth of love, does not abolish the law of desire, but rather transforms and fulfils it. Love is in its nature the desire to give oneself to others and to receive others in exchange; it is a commerce between being and being. Physical life does not desire to give itself, it desires only to receive. It is true that it is compelled to give itself, for the life which only receives and does not give must become barren, wither and perish,—if indeed such life in its entirety is possible at all here or in any world; but it is compelled, not willing, it obeys the subconscious impulse of Nature rather than consciously shares in it. Even when love intervenes, the self-giving at first still preserves to a large extent the mechanical character of the subconscious will in the atom. Love itself at first obeys the law of hunger and enjoys the receiving and the exacting from others rather than the giving and surrendering to others which it admits chiefly as a necessary price for the thing that it desires.²¹

This is what we discussed the other day when I talked about love. Some of us said love is the same as hunger and desire. Well, here is what Sri Aurobindo means: that in its initial stage love is hunger and desire as it is under the influence of the physical and the vital. When it is born in man it is in the form of hunger and romantic desire. At that time what does it do? It receives and demands of others instead of giving and surrendering. But here it has not yet attained its true nature; it is still mixed with the physical and the vital. Divorce and separation is the result of couples not giving each other enough time to graduate their relationship into the true

love which is beyond the physical and the vital. By the time they move out of the physical and the vital, they are out of each other's life! I have seen couples who, after changing three or four partners, gradually settle down, because by then the drive of the physical and the vital has lowered down and love, on the mental level, grows. Then comes the true aspect of understanding, of giving, of sharing or as Sri Aurobindo says, "...its true law is to establish an equal commerce in which the joy of giving is equal to the joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater;..."

Well, I would like to illustrate this with a recent experience in my own life. I was in the U.S.A, participating in one of the AUM conferences. I had to share a room with someone during the seminar. He asked me certain questions and clarifications about Sri Aurobindo. One day we got up early; it was a cold and a lovely day with nothing to do. We were sitting on our beds, wrapped in blankets, chatting for hours on end! I was telling him about some insights and sidelights from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. He was deeply touched, and as you know, people in the West appreciate very much the time you give them. In India nobody bothers; people think that it is their right to spend two hours with the chief guest and that it is his *duty* to answer their questions! However, we thanked each other at the end of the chat and went to attend the seminar. The next day he told me that he really appreciated what I told him the previous day: "You do not know how much you helped me, not only in understanding but in some personal problem as well." On the day of departure, when we were packing up, he said: "You are doing an extraordinary work at SACAR. I would like to give you something." I told him not to bother about giving me anything. He said, "It is not a question of bothering. Please do not deny me the joy of giving". He gave me a non-digital camera first, and then followed it by giving me a digital camera too! When I hesitated in taking the second gift, he replied, "What you gave me is of immense value." He held my hands and said, "Please, do not resist. I request you not to take away this joy of giving; it is a great joy to give to the Mother and SACAR." Then, I could neither refuse his offer nor deny his joy of giving.

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This small incident was only to illustrate that there is an equal joy in giving as in receiving. Mr. B was happy to give and I to receive. I then thanked the Mother in my heart, “*Ma*, you are really great!” Just the previous evening I had thought of getting a digital camera for SACAR and within twenty four hours she made it happen! Mr. B felt that I had helped him intellectually with the Mother’s thought. I had nothing substantial to give him in exchange. But he said, “Ananda, you need not give me any object but you have brought the light and consciousness of the Mother to this seminar. It was a great pleasure to have been with you these last few days.”

There is a joy of giving and taking, not only on the material level but on the level of love and other levels as well:

...its true law is to establish an equal commerce in which the joy of giving is equal to the joy of receiving and tends in the end to become even greater; but that is when it is shooting beyond itself under the pressure of the psychic flame to attain to the fulfilment of utter unity and has therefore to realise that which seemed to it not-self as an even greater and dearer self than its own individuality.²²

Well, if you recollect, this is the gist of a story from the Upanishad in which Yagnavalkya says that he loves his wife because of the atman in her. This is the essence of the experience when you go beyond human love to the love of the Self. When the psychic flame rises within you, you “realise that which seemed to it not-self as an even greater and dearer self than its own individuality”. You begin to see the greater self, the greater entity in that person, the soul in that person. This is the ultimate source of unity and identity. This is what we ended up with in our discussions yesterday when we concluded that the psychic flame, the psychic light alone can unite mankind because we see humans not as useful or helpful, but as beings with the same Self that you have and there is a complete identification with others. The highest level of unification and identification can come only with the psychic being.

This is the whole meaning of the yogic experience that it is love which is within this evolution's foundation. The first traces of love are very crude as it follows the physical-vital love—desire and greed. But when it comes to the mind it understands the meaning of love but it is still, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, an "extended selfishness." When the mind comes under the influence of the psychic it begins to realise true love and that true love sees this self in others. Once my soul recognises the soul in you, it identifies with you. That is what is real identification and union. The highest form of unity is not to lose oneself in the union but to retain one's individuality, one's identity. Identity cannot be obtained by mental or emotional sympathy. Normally, we say that a mother and her child have a true identification with each other as they are one body. It need not be so. The best of the mother-child relationship is emotional, is mental and, from a certain angle, it is even selfish. Nothing short of the psychic love can be called "true love".

We come to the end of this chapter, the essence of which I gave yesterday and traced its development. Well, here Sri Aurobindo introduces a new thought:

For, if the data with which we have started are correct, the end of the road, the goal itself can only be reached by Mind passing beyond itself into that which is beyond Mind, since of That the Mind is only an inferior term and an instrument first for descent into form and individuality and secondly for reascension into that reality which the form embodies and the individuality represents. Therefore the perfect solution of the problem of Life is not likely to be realised by association, interchange and accommodations of love alone or through the law of the mind and the heart alone. It must come by a fourth status of life in which the eternal unity of the many is realised through the spirit and the conscious foundation of all the operations of life is laid no longer in the divisions of body, nor in the passions and hungers of the vitality, nor in the groupings and the imperfect harmonies of the mind, nor in a combination of all these, but in the unity and freedom of the Spirit.²³

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We have already elaborated on this idea, that neither the mind nor the heart can unite. It is only by moving to the fourth level, the level of the psychic being, and then the level of spirit, the level of the New Consciousness—call it what you will—that true unity can be reached and true solutions to life-problems be found.

We have seen how Sri Aurobindo establishes a link right from the physical, to the vital, to the mental, to the psychic and the spiritual. This is the evolution's journey; perhaps all these explanations are mentally satisfying as one comes to know what Sri Aurobindo said, but, somewhere, we are bogged down by the questions of life, with our day to day problems. Let us see what Sri Aurobindo has to say about these problems in the next chapter entitled "The Problem of Life"!

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Lecture Notes

- I. First Terms of Life: Matter to Life
 - a) The first terms of Life are division, a force-driven subconscious will and an inert subjection to the mechanical forces.
 - b) This inconscience and the potent action of Energy are the type of the material universe.
- II. Middle Terms of Life: Life to Mind
 - a) Death and mutual devouring – involves a struggle which leads to immortality.
 - b) Hunger and conscious desire – involves a struggle to realise the full possession of the delight of existence.
 - c) Incapacity or limited capacity – involves a struggle towards expansion, mastery and possession of a perfection of it is eternally capable. This is in fact the inner truth of Darwinism.
 - d) This mechanical principle was extended to life proper and this gave way to self-preservation, self-assertion and aggressive living.
- III. Last Terms of Life: Mind to Supermind
 - a) Because of the principle of Death, the struggle towards

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permanence is secured not on an individual basis but on the basis of species. And this automatically involves co-operation and mutual help.

- b) Out of the efforts of interchange is born the principle of Love which in its beginnings is only an extended selfishness.
- c) At a later stage of evolution, Mind realises that there is something beyond itself and with this realisation its evolution towards superman.

IV. The Two Basic Principles of Life: Division and Unity

- a) On the level of Matter, Atom stands apart from all other atoms even though it is united with others to form the basis of matter. It is the first aggregate as well as the first basis of aggregate unities.
- b) On the level of vitality of Life, there is the process of the breaking up of the constituents so that the elements of one life can be used for the formation of other lives.
- c) On the level of mind too there is a constant dissolution and reconstruction effected by the shock of mind upon mind.

V. Evolution through the Three Terms

- a) On the atomic life, the individual form persists as the basis and secures by aggregation a solid basis for the vital and mental individualisation.
- b) Once this solid basis of matter is formed, there is the dissolution of the individual forms and survival of the aggregate.
- c) Only a mental being, supported by a psychic nodus within which expresses the secret soul, can hope to persist. He can be the nodus of the persistent individual and the persistent aggregate life.

VI. The Principle of Love in the Third Status:

- a) The principle of love is the governing principle of the third term of Life. It is the basis of self-giving and fusion.
- b) Individuals and aggregates who develop most this law of

love and association will be the fittest for survival in the tertiary status of evolution.

- c) By giving more the Mind receives and grows. The more it fuses into others, the more it fuses others into itself.

VII. Fourth Status of Life:

- a) The principle of love does not abolish the law of desire – it transforms and fulfils it. In the beginning, love itself obeys the law of hunger and enjoys receiving from others. But that is not its true nature.
- b) Under the presence of the psychic flame, love ultimately attains its true self of utter unity.
- c) It is through the spirit alone that the eternal unity of the many is achieved – and that is the fourth status of life.

The Problem of Life

In the previous chapter, we have asked ourselves, what could be really called “the problem of life” because if we see individually there are an infinite number of problems of life. But in the title of this chapter Sri Aurobindo uses the word “problem” in the singular. So, if we can identify that one problem, that one source of life’s numerous problems, — which manifests separately, in different forms, with different intensity in each human being — it would become easier to find a solution. Otherwise, if we feel we have to do it for each of these infinite problems, we ask for the impossible.

So, if we are to find the source of all the problems, we need to go back to the beginning of Life, and see at what point exactly the problems started. Can anyone guess at what point the problems began? (*Participant’s reply*) “The mind; the vital level; ego-sense; division?” Yes, you have rightly described the multiple source-aspects of all the problems: the mind, the ego-sense, division, the separative consciousness. Basically these different sources boil down to one: the mind. Hence, it can be said that the whole problem started with mind and the “... solution has to be sought by the mind, but not in the mind alone...”¹

What exactly do we mean when we say the problem started with the mind? “Individualisation”! (*Participant replies*) Yes! You are close to it but I want the exact word. Division? Again what is the meaning of this word? I want you to go a little deeper. “Division from Oneness and Sachchidananda!” (*Participant replies*) Yes! You are almost there but still one word is missing. “Separation?” Correct! The moment there is a separation from the Origin, the manifestation ends in the Many. Also, apparent division of the Many is not wrong, but what is lost in the process is the sense of

oneness: the Many forget that each individual is essentially one with the Supreme. That is the beginning of all the problems.

Sri Aurobindo explains it thus:

The central circumstance of this cosmic process, in so far as it differs in its appearances from the purity of the infinite Existence and the self-possession of the undivided Energy, is the dividing faculty of the Mind obscured by ignorance.²

We are all equally trying to satisfy ourselves in our life. In this process of fulfilling ourselves, we grab whatever we can from each other because of the acute sense of absolute separation between ourselves. It is this sense of "myself" and, "the other", which is the cause of this whole mass of problems of life.

The line I would like you to concentrate upon is this one: "Consciousness as Force has created the world-movement and its problems;"³ Why is Sri Aurobindo writing "Consciousness as Force"? Is he making a distinction between Consciousness and Force? Consciousness can be non-manifest when it is an integral part of Sachchidananda but in the manifestation there is Sat, Chit-Tapas and Ananda. So, Tapas or force has a role to play whereas in non-manifestation, Force or Tapas is quiescent. Sachchidananda could be unmanifest but Sat, Chit-Tapas implies manifestation.

So, obviously there is here the play of the Force. When this Force is set in motion, the world is manifested, but unfortunately it has ended up in the present problems. What is to be done? "This solution has to be sought by the mind, but not by the mind alone; it has to be a solution in Life, in act of being as well as in consciousness of being."⁴ Yes, the problem is the mind which has a fragmentary and divisive consciousness and hence the solution also begins at least with the mind although it has to be sought equally beyond the mind.

Before the manifestation of the mind-principle, there were no such problems of life. In the evolutionary process till now, there were three stages:

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The first is material, — a submerged consciousness is concealed in its own superficial expressive action and representative forms of force; for the consciousness itself disappears from view in the act and is lost in the form.⁵

Sri Aurobindo writes that in Matter the "...consciousness itself disappears from view..." Perhaps, it is because of this apparent nature of Matter that we hold the common view that it has no consciousness and that it is Inconscient.

The second is vital,—an emerging consciousness is half-apparent as power of life and process of the growth, activity and decay of form, it is half-delivered out of its original imprisonment, it has become vibrant in power, as vital craving and satisfaction or repulsion, but at first not at all and then only imperfectly vibrant in light as knowledge of its own self-existence and its environment.⁶

At the second level, the consciousness which was dormant became half-apparent and it has become vibrant also because of its vital cravings.

The third is mental,—an emerged consciousness reflects fact of life as mental sense and responsive perception and idea while as new idea it tries to become fact of life, modifies the internal and attempts to modify conformably the external existence of the being. Here, in mind, consciousness is delivered out of its imprisonment in the act and form of its own force; but it is not yet master of the act and form because it has emerged as an individual consciousness and is aware therefore only of a fragmentary movement of its own total activities.⁷

So, Consciousness is completely dormant in matter, half-awake in the plant and the animal, but in man it is "delivered out of its imprisonment in the act and form of its own force". However, if it

implies that it is fully awake in man how then does man differ from the superman? This is now the question. We may reply that man perhaps becomes more or less fully conscious of his individual self but he is not equally conscious of his collective self. While as a superman he will be fully self-awake and at the same time fully conscious of the universe, he will have the consciousness of the individual as well as that of the universal. Man has the consciousness of the individual alone; the superman will have the added dimension of the universal.

In this difference is seen the real problem of the Mind:

The whole crux and difficulty of human life lies here. Man is this mental being, this mental consciousness working as mental force, aware in a way of the universal force and life of which he is part but, because he has not knowledge of its universality or even of the totality of his own being, unable to deal either with life in general or with his own life in a really effective and victorious movement of mastery.⁸

The first problem with man lies in his divided mental consciousness. As seen in the previous paragraph, man is aware only of “a fragmentary movement of its own total activities” which means that he is not fully aware of “the totality of his own being”, his own individual consciousness. That is the reason why he is not able to deal with his outer life effectively. He does not know what is within him, let alone what is outside of him. If he wants to know the outer in its true and deeper sense, not in the sense of knowing the world “in order to be master of the material environment, to know Life in order to be master of the vital existence, to know Mind in order to be master of the great obscure movement of mentality” — he has to know the inner worlds. Sri Aurobindo did not study science as a scientist, but still he could give us knowledge of the future direction of the growth of science. How did he do that? Even the Vedic Rishis could foresee so much the future of the world’s development. They could do so because the Rishi, or Sri Aurobindo, knew the world within and the principles of creation

and knowing them, they could know all that is outside of them, though not in its scientific details but in its essentiality.

Now, let us see how Sri Aurobindo elaborates the problem which started with the mind's divided consciousness. He will deal with the basic constituents of life's problems and its details. This chapter is, so I feel, meant more for the psychologist and the psychotherapist than for the philosopher. On the basis of these principles one could truly build a psychological theory and even principles of psychotherapy.

As discussed earlier, man is aware neither of the universal forces, because he has no knowledge of their complexity, nor of the totality of his own being. What he is attempting to do is that, even before knowing himself fully, he endeavours to master the world outside, the world of Matter, the world of Life, the world of Mind. Is it not a paradox? Why is man pursuing this kind of paradoxical aim? One may ask. He does so partly because he is not able to find the conditions under which his inner impulses are satisfied. However, wanting to master the outer world is not a wrong endeavour, because, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, it is the very "urge of Existence in him":

This is the urge of Existence in him, the necessity of the Consciousness he is, the impulsion of the Force that is his life, the secret will of Sachchidananda appearing as the individual in a world in which He expresses and yet seems to deny Himself.⁹

This is a beautiful synthesis that is special to Sri Aurobindo! Man, although ignorant of this within, is trying to master the outside because such impulse is there, innate to his consciousness. What then is this impulse? To know the universal! How did it come about? It came in the very descent of the Consciousness in its involutionary process. Consciousness plunged into the Many in order to delight in infinite forms. And, if delight in form has to be experienced, then it becomes imperative to have a contact with other forms as well! This is the basic instinct of creation, of manifestation—to know first other forms. Of course one can

question the methodology but this “urge of Existence” is genuine and justified.

Therefore, man is ever eager to know the vast world and he is not wrong in his attempt to know others outside of himself because the individual Sachchidananda in one wants to contact the Sachchidananda in the other—be it an animal or a tree or a bird. It is in this light that we ought to perceive man’s innate urge of Existence; he cannot avoid this urge for long. For, otherwise, he may not be able to fulfil his manhood:

To find the conditions under which this inner impulsion is satisfied is the problem man must strive always to resolve and to that he is compelled by the very nature of his own existence and by the Deity seated within him; and until the problem is solved, the impulse satisfied, the human race cannot rest from its labour. Either man must fulfil himself by satisfying the Divine within him or he must produce out of himself a new and greater being who will be more capable of satisfying it. He must either himself become a divine humanity or give place to Superman.¹⁰

In this evolution from Matter to Life and then to Mind there is a secret urge which is ultimately the evolutionary will of the Conscious-Being. At the level of man this urge becomes self-conscious and first it leaps to know, to contact the outer world and later his own secret world within. He has to find the right methods to know the world within and at present the right method seems to be integral yoga—it is the way of psychicisation and of spiritualisation of oneself, of self-perfection.

The other day someone asked me, “How to go beyond the levels above Mind?” The simple thing is that you must first contact your guru. He will lead you. But then, who is the guru? It is the psychic being! It is the living, ever present guru within, the guide of our yoga. He will lead you either to the Supermind or to the realisation of some other aspect of the Divine. The guru will tell you what to do, how to do and how far to go. It is also under the

leadership of this inner guru, that we have to find the knowledge of the outer, but, if human beings, as Sri Aurobindo warned in one of his books, do not consent to be spiritualised, they could be replaced by another race, that of the Superman.

Now the second argument here is one of the most crucial ideas in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy: "All life depends for its nature on the fundamental poise of its own constituting consciousness; for as the Consciousness is, so will the Force be."¹¹ If you want to put Sri Aurobindo's yoga and philosophy in one simple sentence, then it is this sentence: "...as the Consciousness is, so will the Force be." In fact, that explains the whole system of our life, the problem of our life, as well as the solution to our life. This is the real master sentence which could be compared to Sri Aurobindo's *mantric* sentence from *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "All Life is Yoga."

To continue with the reading:

Where the Consciousness is infinite, one, transcendent of its acts and forms even while embracing and informing, organising and executing them, as is the consciousness of Sachchidananda, so will be the Force, infinite in its scope, one in its works, transcendent in its power and self-knowledge.¹²

This is the central thesis: all things depend upon the level of our consciousness. If the consciousness is "transcendent", "infinite" and "one", so will be the matching force transcendent in its power and self-knowledge and "infinite in its scope". So, to be brief, if the consciousness is infinite, so is the force infinite; if the consciousness is limited, the force also is limited. It is almost like a mathematics axiom. We can now appreciate how Sri Aurobindo keeps reminding us *ad infinitum* that we must change and grow in consciousness, evolve in our consciousness because without changing our consciousness if we want to improve our life—if we want greater happiness, greater harmony—it is not possible to do so because the force is the executive power, it is the active energy. So whatever you want in this world, if you do not put in the necessary consciousness behind it, you will not be able to

receive it. Then how come some people, whose consciousness is not high, is not spiritual at all, manage to become rich and also happy? Well, the next line explains this:

Where the Consciousness is like that of material Nature, submerged, self-oblivious, driving along in the drift of its own Force without seeming to know it, even though by the very nature of the eternal relation between the two terms it really determines the drift which drives it, so will be the Force: it will be a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient, unaware of what it contains, seeming mechanically to fulfil itself by a sort of inexorable accident, an inevitably happy chance, even while all the while it really obeys faultlessly the law of the Right and Truth fixed for it by the will of the supernal Conscious-Being concealed within its movement.¹³

Well, before we answer this question, let us go on with what Sri Aurobindo tells us. On Matter's level of Sachchidananda there is infinite Consciousness and infinite Force. Then on the level of Matter per se, there are three divisions: the first level is that of Matter where consciousness itself disappears from view. Consciousness may be completely invisible, but the Force, "unaware of what it contains" flows as a "...a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient". On the level of Matter, we encounter a stupendous energy, slowly and helplessly meandering over millions of years. There is no helplessly apparent direction or aim. Matter took millions of years to mature and imperceptibly somewhere came about the birth of the green flora. On this level we can see a different dynamism of energy. Here Consciousness has gone one step higher—what was completely dormant has now become half-awakened. And then, there is the birth of the mind-principle.

Here is something that should not be missed: "...all the while it really obeys faultlessly the law of the Right and Truth..." This sentence is very important because otherwise we would be talking like scientists who believe that there is only energy in Matter and no consciousness. They would also say that in Matter there is

only an infinite, mechanic force which has been working since millions of years and with no consciousness to guide it or give it any direction. Sri Aurobindo mentions this idea very poignantly in another chapter of this book, 'Man and the Evolution': "a scientific reasoning proceeding on the assumption that all is the work of an Inconscient Energy which acts automatically by mechanical processes and can have no element of purpose in it, ..."14

And then he puts forward the view of the spiritualist who believes that:

Even in the Inconscient there seems to be at least an urge of inherent necessity producing the evolution of forms and in the forms a developing Consciousness, and it may well be held that this urge is the evolutionary will of a secret Conscious-Being and its push of progressive manifestation the evidence of an innate intention in the evolution.15

Thus, whatever is happening in Nature is not without guidance; it is not without a proper direction; it is simply spaced out in millions of years: "...the law of Right and Truth" or the Supermind is behind everything and wherever there is the Supermind, there is always a proper direction, a definite aim, a teleological purpose.

Now, coming to the third level:

Where the Consciousness is divided in itself, as in Mind, limiting itself in various centres, setting each to fulfil itself without knowledge of what is in other centres and of its relation to others, aware of things and forces in their apparent division and opposition to each other but not in their real unity, such will be the Force: it will be a life like that we are and see around us; it will be a clash and intertwining of individual lives seeking each its own fulfilment without knowing its relation to others...16

This is the answer to our question: why is our life in such a web of problems? It is because of the level of our consciousness which is "divided in itself..." That is the crucial phrase: "...consciousness

is divided in itself..." We have to understand that our life is a struggle, a conflict, a clash of forces, etc. because not only is there an original division on the Overmental level, but, as we discussed earlier, on the mental level the division gets sealed once for all. We are not one consciousness, a unified consciousness. We are a complex of the physical, the vital, the mental and the psychic consciousness. All kinds of consciousness are within us; they are necessarily there to help build our inner being but there is no unity amongst them. So Sri Aurobindo says that it is because of this divided consciousness within us that we have all these problems: "Where the Consciousness is divided in itself, as in Mind, limiting itself in various centres, setting each to fulfil itself without knowledge of what is in other centres and of its relation to others..."

Therefore, in this economy of Nature, some people are achievers. We may ask: "Is the consciousness of the rich man different from the consciousness of the poor man?" This is where we err by judging consciousness according to external signs of comfort, success or fame. Consciousness and riches or consciousness and poverty have nothing to do with each other. It is a completely different story of why one is rich and another one is poor. We should not take the poverty and wealth as parameters of one's level of consciousness. In general, all problems of life begin at the mental level, the division in our being. The story does not stop there; there are other complexities. As Sri Aurobindo says:

But where the Consciousness is in possession of both the diversity and the unity and the latter contains and governs the former, where it is aware at once of the Law, Truth and Right of the All and the Law, Truth and Right of the individual and the two become consciously harmonised in a mutual unity, where the whole nature of the consciousness is the One knowing itself as the Many and the Many knowing themselves as the One, there the Force also will be of the same nature...¹⁷

On reading the above, we could say that the relation between Consciousness and Force is almost one of equals. It implies that

Force is an exact proportion of Consciousness. By Force again, you should understand the Force of expression, of manifestation. Well, as an example: if somebody wants to achieve a certain thing in one's life, be it a business venture, a political adventure or any other activity, what does he do? First of all, he wills it: he decides what he wants to become. The moment he decides, he has to change his life the way he lives; a person who wants to achieve excellence in his work, cannot waste his time, his life. As a next step, he disciplines himself, he focuses his consciousness on that particular work and this very focus creates its own energy. The Mother, while explaining this, added one more thing: that this effort creates not only an effective force but also connects itself to the universal forces. This is the secret of success. You may say X is an illiterate who has gone into business and is successful; whereas, Y has an M.B.A and yet he is not successful.

So, it is not a question of having a degree or not: what matters is the person's consciousness which has gone into the work. The Mother gives the example of a writer. If somebody wants to become a writer and tries his hand at writing—in the beginning his writings may be "rubbish". I suppose that is the reason why in the in the beginning many novelists and writers throw out page after page in the waste paper basket! But if he/she is at it regularly and perseveres—of course, this question of perseverance applies also to the sadhana—the Mother says that the writer connects himself to the world of ideas. But it must be a dogged perseverance upheld by patience. It is the same thing with the artist, the poet, the musician etc. This is what we normally call *tapas*, *tapasya*. In everything there is a *tapasya* which truly connects one to the universal level of art, of music etc. Thus all progress and success fall in line with this theory of consciousness-force.

Comes now the next point:

...the source of all this progressive relation between Consciousness and Force, is their poise in the being of Sachchidananda where they are one; for there the Force is consciousness of being working itself out without ever

ceasing to be consciousness and the Consciousness is similarly luminous Force of being eternally aware of itself and of its own Delight and never ceasing to be this power of utter light and self-possession.¹⁸

Here, as we have already pointed out, on the superconscious level of Sachchidananda, Consciousness and Force are one and equal.

The second relation is that of material Nature; it is the poise of being in the material universe which is the great denial of Sachchidananda by Himself: for here there is the utter apparent separation of Force from Consciousness, the specious miracle of the all-governing and infallible Inconscient which is only the mask but which modern knowledge has mistaken for the real face of the cosmic Deity.¹⁹

We see once again that on the level of Matter Consciousness separates itself from Force and the scientist sees only the Force in its active dynamism and concludes that it is the cosmic Deity.

The third relation is the poise of being in Mind and in the Life which we see emerging out of this denial, bewildered by it, struggling—without any possibility of cessation by submission, but also without any clear knowledge or instinct of a victorious solution—against the thousand and one problems involved in this perplexing apparition of man the half-potent conscient being out of the omnipotent Inconscience of the material universe.²⁰

The third relation is of course that of the mental level where life struggles “against the thousand and one problems”.

The fourth relation is the poise of being in Supermind: it is the fulfilled existence which will eventually solve all this complex problem created by the partial affirmation emerging out of the total denial; and it must needs solve it in the only possible way,

by the complete affirmation fulfilling all that was secretly there contained in potentiality and intended in fact of evolution behind the mask of the great denial.²¹

Thus, Supermind alone can be the consciousness where all the problems of life can be solved for it fulfils “all that was secretly contained in potentiality” in evolution. The material world is only a part of an integral totality, argues Sri Aurobindo elsewhere in *The Life Divine*. And it is only by the full descent and the participation of all that is involved in Matter that there will be the full manifestation of the integral Divine liberating Life from all its endless problems.

To sum up what we have read till now, Sri Aurobindo’s analysis points out that the source of life’s problems lies in the mind’s division. He goes a step further to ask for what reason these problems have taken birth with the mind? It is so because it is the Consciousness itself which has brought in further divisions in the mind. Not only has it separated itself from the Supermind but, it has further divided itself. The greater the division of consciousness, the weaker the Force becomes. Thus the force of execution becomes limited. As the Force becomes increasingly powerless our problems increase. But, that is not the end of the problems.

Unfortunately, we have a second layer of problems which is within man himself. He is aware only of the external and superficial entity we call mind, life and body, but is absolutely unaware of the second level of this entity within himself called “the subliminal”. Man has some knowledge of mind, life and body, but he is absolutely unconnected with the subliminal—the subtle-mind, the subtle-vital and the subtle-physical. What is the consequence of being unaware of the subliminal? That is the main question. Sri Aurobindo would say that the external consciousness is like the tip of an iceberg, below it is the 9/10th of our being we are totally unaware of. But then if we see the reality of our day to day existence, it is this 9/10th that influences a person. The mind, life and body are constantly under the influence of the subliminal and the subconscious forces. So when one becomes angry, desire

certain things, one does not see that it is this subconscious, this greater part which is really the master influencing the small beings: mind, life and body. The whole problem is here. This ignorance is one of the causes of our problems. If we become conscious of the subliminal and the subconscious, we will come to know the source of our thoughts, of our feelings, of our urges and desires. We can then control them, we can even reject them and purify ourselves. But at present, unfortunately, we are not at all conscious of these levels in our own consciousness!

Furthermore, due to our ignorance of subliminal and the subconscious, we are not aware of our deeper Purushas, what we call the *manomaya purusha*, the *pranamaya purusha* and the *annamaya purusha*. We are not aware of them and finally we are not aware even of the psychic being. So one can see the magnitude of our ignorance: we hardly know our mind, our emotions, our body and all the subliminal ranges of our being!

What kind of problems do we face because of this deep ignorance of our being? Well, to begin with we are in the dark about the subconscious and subliminal influence on our being. Second, there is a disharmony between mind, life and body. One's mind is often a tyrant and exerts a pressure on the body. It also pressurises life. And things may go vice-versa, so there is, first of all, a total disharmony among these three parts of our being. Every human being has these problems which manifest in each one of us in a different manner. Sri Aurobindo focuses on these essential problems of life and not on the variations of their manifestation.

Thus, the first problem of life is our ignorance of the subconscious and the subliminal. The second one is an absolute disharmony between the three parts of our outer nature. The third problem is the struggle between the soul and Nature. Soul versus Nature! What does this mean? The *manomaya*, *pranamaya* and *annamaya purusha* are in conflict with their respective parts in Nature. Why are they in conflict with each other? What the *manomaya purusha* wants to express, the mind cannot and does not want to express because of its incapacity. The Purusha wants to express himself, wants to use the mind as his instrument, but the mind is preoccupied with

the outer world fulfilling its egoistic ambitions. All this creates a conflict and a pressure in our mental consciousness resulting in deep disharmony.

It is the same thing with the *pranamaya purusha*. We are constantly busy with the external life, spending, earning and achieving. This is what the Mother told me once: how human beings are busy with their external life from their birth till their death. They are born, they get married, they settle down in life, they have children, they retire and then they say they are ready to dedicate themselves to the Divine. They go on pilgrimages after their retirement; some go to the southern *dhamms* and others to the northern *dhamms*. So all the *dhamms* begin only after you retire and have all the time and the money! But the person who goes on these pilgrimages is usually a sick body, a corrupted vital and an exhausted mind! What then remains to be offered to the Divine? The Mother added that when all focus is on the mind, life, and body, the soul peeps out and says, "Hey! I am here! Look at me." But we have no time to look at it. We have time for it only after our retirement. By the age of sixty or so they have their children, their grandchildren, good bank accounts, jobs, name and fame. So they give time to the soul only after sixty! But nowadays, unfortunately, even after sixty, how many can go were it only on pilgrimages. Nowadays many parents have become baby-sitters for their grandchildren in the USA! So sixty turns seventy, seventy eighty, and eighty Eternity! This is the tragedy of such a life of appearance and reality!

So, here, obviously there is tension. The *pranamaya purusha* cannot express what the inner Purusha wants. Similarly, with the *annamaya purusha*: the body looks at itself in the mirror and is lost in its beauty and does not listen to the demands of its Purusha! Thus, there is a constant conflict between Purusha and Prakriti. Prakriti is the external nature, busy with this world. Therefore she does not obey the Purusha. This is the third conflict and there is the fourth and the deepest conflict pertaining to the soul who tries to influence Prakriti. But, unfortunately, there are thick curtains and walls between the soul and Prakriti which are an obstruction to the penetration of the soul. And, especially, there is the ego-

sense which stands like a guard and does not allow any contact between the soul and the world. These days the ego apparently feels insecure because if the soul contacts the outer world, it then loses its post and power. So it does not allow the soul to come out into the outer world lest its importance be diminished!

Usually, we do not believe that these are the real causes of life's problems. We go by external symptoms and we try to find temporary solutions. But this kind of "allopathic" treatment does not cure the problematic disease. Its cure must be more in the nature of homeopathic treatment. We have to try and eliminate the problem from its roots, as does the homeopathic medicine which is akin to yoga. One has to start yoga early in life in order to fight the problems of life. This is what the Mother had once told me: "Spirituality must begin when one is young".

Let us recapitulate. Yesterday, we were looking into the argument where Sri Aurobindo speaks of the relation between Consciousness and Force and the crucial sentence we noted was: "All life depends for its nature on the fundamental poise of its own constituting consciousness; for as the Consciousness is, so will the Force be." This is one of Sri Aurobindo's main ideas. This is why he constantly dwells on the idea that unless and until consciousness is raised, nothing can be effectively changed because the Force is almost in exact proportion—not quantitywise but qualitywise—to the level of consciousness itself.

Let us now take up the problems of which you were given an outline yesterday. We will begin by looking in detail, into the description of these problems:

From the data we have now before us we can see that the difficulties which arise from the imperfect poise of Consciousness and Force in man in his present status of mind and life are principally three.²²

As one can see again, this is the crux of the problem, "the imperfect poise of Consciousness and Force".

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE

First, he is aware only of a small part of his own being: his surface mentality, his surface life, his surface physical being is all that he knows and he does not know even all of that; below is the occult surge of his subconscious and his subliminal mind, his subconscious and his subliminal life-impulses, his subconscious corporeality, all that large part of himself which he does not know and cannot govern, but which rather knows and governs him.²³

Yesterday, we did deliberate on these ideas. But today these ideas can be looked at from a different angle. We have the first formula of Sachchidananda where all three aspects are in perfect balance or poise. The law on the Superconscious level also applies on the level of manifestation. What does it imply? It implies that also in this lower hemisphere Force is commensurate with Consciousness because fundamentally Sat, Chit, Tapas and Ananda are inseparable aspects and they go together on all levels of manifestation.

What is the present existence of man? His is a divided consciousness caused by the mind. So in this divided consciousness what would you expect from Force? The same kind of a division would imply incapacity of force. This is the reason why we are not able to do things as we so wish them to be. If we evolve towards the consciousness of oneness, an infinite consciousness, then automatically the force would also increase towards an infinite capacity.

So, if we wish to increase our executive capacity, we are required to heighten or widen our consciousness. Without heightening the consciousness, we cannot increase the force. Therefore, there is this imperative need to widen our consciousness! There are three ways of doing so: one would be a heightening of consciousness, the other would be a widening of consciousness and the third would be deepening the consciousness. By these three processes we can increase the power, the power of *tapas*, the power of the Force.

Comes now the next important point:

The second difficulty is that man is separated in his mind, his life, his body from the universal and therefore, even as he does not know himself, is equally and even more incapable of knowing his fellow-creatures. He forms by inferences, theories, observations and a certain imperfect capacity of sympathy a rough mental construction about them; but this is not knowledge. Knowledge can only come by conscious identity, for that is the only true knowledge,—existence aware of itself.²⁴

This is the pathetic condition of man: he knows neither himself nor his fellow creatures. So, all his knowledge is only a mockery for it is based on inferences, perceptions, testimonials etc. True knowledge, says Sri Aurobindo, is knowledge that is obtained by identity. We are at present far from such a consciousness.

Indeed, our knowledge of others is more or less some kind of a guesswork. We are not at all certain of it. We have formulated some theories based on psychology, morality, religion, or tradition etc. But such knowledge is never exact or assured. That is perhaps why in yoga—the Mother and Sri Aurobindo keep telling us again and again—we are not to give any importance to others' opinion because, how much can one know of another person? Each of our judgments depends on the state of consciousness we are at that time. For example, in one of her replies to my letters, the Mother had written something which was not very clear. I wrote back telling her that I did not understand what she meant. She answered that I could not understand because I was in a particular state of consciousness. Actually, what she had implied was that if I changed my consciousness, I would be able to do so.

On the Ashram notice board, there are new messages every week. Many read those at one time or another. It happens that on a certain day, someone feels, "Today's message is meant for me", whereas, along with him I may have also read it but it may not strike me as anything special either because of the level of my own consciousness or my inner need at that particular time. You see there are innumerable instances showing us how our mental

understanding, our judgments and opinions of others entirely reflect our own consciousness.

So this is where comes in the question of the incapacity to know our fellow creatures. In ordinary life, it is a common fact to pass comments about our fellow beings, but when one turns to yoga, one of the first things we are asked to do is to stop judging others. Not only is the mind incapable of judging others but our consciousness is lowered when it does so. Sri Aurobindo explains it on a deeper level: we cannot know others because "Knowledge can only come by conscious identity, for that is the only true knowledge, — existence aware of itself." This sentence is apparently simple but it is of great depth. Sri Aurobindo comes up with such sentences now and then which are like flashlights: they suddenly open up new vistas of understanding. You see what we have been discussing since yesterday is caught in this single expression "Existence aware of itself." Let's now apply this to life. It is the same thing: when one is aware, conscious of a certain thing, one has its knowledge. To be conscious of certain things is to be identified with them. For instance, in which way is one aware of the glass on this table? One's eyes are looking at it; one's consciousness wraps around this glass. It is a kind of a projection of one's consciousness-force, of identity; that is why one is able to see this glass of water.

Human eyes do not have the capacity to know the nature of the glass. They can only see the colour of the glass, its form etc. But, how to know what are its qualities? What is its consciousness? One's consciousness is not yet at that level where it can identify itself with the glass. So one's knowledge of the glass is only superficial but if one's deeper consciousness could have identified itself with this glass then one would have known its inner nature. The other day, when we had a demonstration of Kirlian photography, we were amazed to see the inner life of the flowers, their responses, their vibrations. We realised that each flower emanates a different light, different wave-lengths, whereas we just see their shape and their colour or smell their fragrance. It proves that our senses can identify with an object with our outer vision, only to a certain extent. But the Mother could identify with their inner vibrations,

their colours, their rhythmical patterns and their aspirations. This is how she gave them their names according to their aspiration and nature. Therefore, the highest knowledge is "existence aware of itself": Sat-Chit always go together. That is why when we identify with certain things or persons, our very existence changes.

Now skipping a line, we come to the next sentence:

Therefore we must arrive at a conscious unity with our fellow-beings and not merely at the sympathy created by love or the understanding created by mental knowledge, which will always be the knowledge of their superficial existence and therefore imperfect in itself and subject to denial and frustration by the uprush of the unknown and unmastered from the subconscious or the subliminal in them and us.²⁵

A very clear message indeed! "We must arrive at a conscious unity with our fellow-beings and not merely at the sympathy created by love or the understanding created by mental knowledge." Normally we believe that it is through love that we can identify with others. Well yes, true love does bring identity but did we not say that our love in the beginning is only on the vital-physical level? And as long as it is on that level it only possesses the other person and there is hardly any identification with the not-self. However selfish it may be it is only at the mental level that there is the beginning of love, and then, there is the beginning of sympathy with others. So the "sympathy created by love" is more or less the mental sympathy. This way one cannot know the other fellow human being. That kind of knowledge by sympathy is imperfect and it might lead us to frustration, even self-denial. It is only at the psychic level that pure love is born and "the fullness of the universal" comes only at the supramental level:

But this conscious oneness can only be established by entering into that in which we are one with them, the universal; and the fullness of the universal exists consciently only in that which is superconscient to us, in the Supermind: for here in our normal

being the greater part of it is subconscious and therefore in this normal poise of mind, life and body it cannot be possessed.²⁶

How does this identification with other human beings come on the universal level? Let us try to understand a little of its process. Here we are all individuals; this is the realm of the individual. It is not possible to connect one on one at the individual level because of our exclusive ego-self. There is another way of doing it. Do you know how the internet works? (*Asking the class participants*) The message that we send goes to the satellite and from the satellite to the receiver wherever he/she may be. That is precisely what can be done on the human level also. We cannot connect to each other on the individual level but on the universal level we can. The universal is like a cosmic satellite to which I connect myself and then this is reflected in the consciousness of another person across the world. This is one way of bringing together two individuals on the level of consciousness!

There is another way: the psychic way. Suppose there are two individuals. These are two individuals with their own separate layers of mind, life and body but by the identification with their psychic being, each one can contact the other on the deeper level. There are thus two ways: one is the way of the universal satellite and the other is that of the psychic antenna. But how will you connect with the other person unless and until you know your own psychic being? When I want to throw light on another person, I must hold the flashlight in my hand so that I can use it and switch it on and off when needed. So I must be able to hold this flashlight, this psychic being. I must have the consciousness, the realisation of my own psychic being first, then only can I enlighten the other person. It may be that the moment I realise my psychic being there is an automatic symbiosis with the psychic being in others.

But ultimately these two ways are more or less the same. The process may be different because the latter is called psychisation and the former is called spiritualisation but the end result is the same. These ways may lead one to the "fullness of the universal", that is when the individual can maintain his identity, his individuality

without defusing, eliminating it. This “fullness of the universal” can be realised, as analysed before, only in the Supermind: “The lower conscious nature is bound down to ego in all its activities, chained triply to the stake of differentiated individuality. The Supermind alone commands unity in diversity.”²⁷

Coming to the next difficulty, Sri Aurobindo writes: “The third difficulty is the division between force and consciousness in the evolutionary existence.”²⁸ See how Sri Aurobindo is dwelling on the single theme of force and consciousness. The first problem is that we are unaware of our subliminal and of the subconscious leading to a limited force. The second problem is that our consciousness being small and individualistic, purely based on the mental level, is unable to identify itself with the universal consciousness. So here also the force is limited. The third problem he says, “...is the division between force and consciousness in the evolutionary existence.” What it means is that there is —

... the division which has been created by the evolution itself in its three successive formations of Matter, Life and Mind, each with its own law of working. The Life is at war with the body; it attempts to force it to satisfy life’s desires, impulses, satisfactions and demands from its limited capacity what could only be possible to an immortal and divine body;...²⁹

This division between Body, Life and Mind, which has come through the evolutionary process, has its own difficulties. Life is constantly pressurising the body and demanding certain things, which only an immortal body can give. It means that, to achieve what Life wants to achieve — its happiness, its progress, its ambition — would require an extraordinary amount of energy from the body, an infinite life-force which are not available to it at present because the body is, as we have seen earlier, within certain limitations:

...and the body, enslaved and tyrannised over, suffers and is in constant dumb revolt against the demands made upon it

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by the Life. The Mind is at war with both: sometimes it helps the Life against the Body, sometimes restrains the vital urge and seeks to protect the corporeal frame from life's desires, passions and over-driving energies; it also seeks to possess the Life and turn its energy to the mind's own ends, to the utmost joys of the mind's own activity, to the satisfaction of mental, aesthetic, emotional aims and their fulfilment in human existence; and the Life too finds itself enslaved and misused and is in frequent insurrection against the ignorant, half-wise tyrant seated above it.³⁰

That is the present condition of our busy lives. We have constant deadlines in front of us, either in our work, in our business or in our service. We must complete a project within a deadline; we must finish the business transaction by this day etc. Therefore, our mental ambition forces itself upon the body. People work day in and day out with hardly any amount of sleep and with no regular intake of food. Then, what happens? The body takes all the pressure and we say we suffer from hypertension, we have this disease or that ailment. We do not see the root-cause. Well, then we try the same symptomatic treatment to get over these tensions: we try all kinds of meditations and methods of relaxation. But as soon as these periods of "treatment" are over and one comes back to the rhythm of normal life, this attitude of the mind to enslave body and life returns with a greater ardour!

About the question of tyrannising the body and life, it is the combination of the vital and the mental which is responsible. For example, people like to go to clubs because they think that is the best way to relax. But what happens in the clubs? Some get drunk, some overeat which causes tension in the body. And all the chatting, gossiping, and criticism that ensue in the clubs inevitably land one in a lower consciousness. More and more ingrained in the human consciousness is, as the Mother tells us, what we human beings think of relaxation: that is indulging in such activities as collective drinking, eating, parties which are, one can guess, sure means of lowering one's consciousness.

Thus, our body is under the pressure of the Mind and also tyrannised by Life. Body is the victim most of the times as it has two bosses: Life and Mind. Both bosses' demands on the body make it sick. In this context, we see and appreciate the wisdom of the rhythm of the Ashram life established by the Mother: in the morning one works and in the evening one exercises. In the physical education's program, there is a total cutting off from the intellectual activities. When the intellectual mind is put aside, the body-consciousness takes over and replenishes itself with energy.

The beautiful rhythm of individual meditation in the morning and the collective meditation in the evening is another aspect of our life in the Ashram to be taken into account. There is a kind of a balanced living: each part of the being is given sufficient space and time for a deeper contact with its own inner dimension. One can suppose this to be an integral pattern of living where the whole being is renewed and nourished every day. In the ordinary rhythm of life, this does not take place:

This is the war of our members which the mind cannot satisfactorily resolve because it has to deal with a problem insoluble to it, the aspiration of an immortal being in a mortal life and body.³¹

And then another problem sets in. While one is "the war of our members" the other is somewhat beyond the understanding of the common man. It is, as described by Sri Aurobindo:

But there is also that fundamental division within between force of Nature and the conscious being which is the original cause of this incapacity. Not only is there a division between the mental, the vital and the physical being, but each of them is also divided against itself. The capacity of the body is less than the capacity of the instinctive soul or conscious being, the physical Purusha within it, the capacity of the vital force less than the capacity of the impulsive soul, the vital conscious being or Purusha within it, the capacity of the mental energy

less than the capacity of the intellectual and emotional soul, the mental Purusha within it.³²

This idea was dwelt on in the previous talk. Let us return to it and analyse it further. Just as the whole human being has a Purusha and Prakriti, the witness Soul within and Nature without, so too each of our three parts—the physical, the vital and the mental—has its own counterpart on the inner level. In the subliminal we have the triple Purusha and the psychic being or the *chaitya purusha*. Corresponding to the mind is the *manomaya purusha*. Corresponding to the life is the *pranamaya purusha* and corresponding to the body is the *annamaya purusha*. So what happens is that sometimes, when an individual has a very developed mind, he has a very active *manomaya purusha*. An artist, a musician, a poet may have a very dynamic *pranamaya purusha*, which guides them. Similarly, one with a developed physical consciousness may be under the influence and guidance of *annamaya purusha*. Actually, it is the *chaitya purusha* that delegates its power to these three Purushas and just as these outer parts are under the control of the ego, so are these three Purushas under the guidance of the central soul.

With these divisions within divisions, we are trapped in a massive ignorance. How can we expect any kind of immortality, any kind of greater consciousness when there are such innate divisions in the structure of man? So, the Integral yoga which seeks a complete self-awareness of one's inner self and the transformation of the outer nature becomes a seemingly impossible task!

With all these divisions and incapacities, man is a sure victim of desires that lead to all kinds of problems in life:

For the soul is the inner consciousness which aspires to its own complete self-realisation and therefore always exceeds the individual formation of the moment, and the Force which has taken its poise in the formation is always pushed by its soul to that which is abnormal to the poise, transcendent of it; thus constantly pushed it has much trouble in answering, more

in evolving from the present to a greater capacity. In trying to fulfil the demands of this triple soul it is distracted and driven to set instinct against instinct, impulse against impulse, emotion against emotion, idea against idea, satisfying this, denying that, then repenting and returning on what it has done, adjusting, compensating, readjusting *ad infinitum*, but not arriving at any principle of unity.³³

What can a weak man do with so many clashes within himself? There is a pressure of the Mind on Life; there is a pressure of the Mind on the Body; there is a pressure of Life on the Body; there is a pressure of the *manomaya purusha* on the Mind, of the *pranamaya purusha* on Life and the *annamaya purusha* on the Body. It is like a big cauldron of activities, setting this idea against that idea, this emotion against that emotion, satisfying this desire and suppressing another. We are not aware of all these constant conflicts in our being. If we become aware of the inner Purushas, the inner being, the subliminal, our consciousness becomes heightened, deepened, widened and consequently the capacity of the executive force increases in us, enabling us to deal with the problem of life on different levels.

In brief, the real solution to the problems of life is to rediscover that unity which is reached only in the Supermind:

The principle of unity is above in the Supermind: for there alone is the conscious unity of all diversities; there alone will and knowledge are equal and in perfect harmony; there alone Consciousness and Force arrive at their divine equation.³⁴

The more one reads Sri Aurobindo, the clearer becomes the whole universal structure. Even for one's own sadhana, one should read *The Life Divine*. It gives not only immense knowledge but also something more which helps us in our own sadhana and in our surrender to the Mother. There is such a clarity of thinking here which can be of help in our own existential problems. It gives us greater understanding and this understanding brings quietness

not only to the mind but also to our whole being. As a poet puts it, there is “the peace of understanding” that comes to us through knowledge. For most the peace of mind comes through meditation but, to some, reading *The Life Divine* brings them integral peace. Often, when I read any chapter from this book, my thought gets frozen and my mind goes beyond thought. Well, it may also have a different impact on different people, according to the way they approach it.

The next paragraph holds a deep message for our spiritual life:

Man, in proportion as he develops into a self-conscious and truly thinking being, becomes acutely aware of all this discord and disparateness in his parts and he seeks to arrive at a harmony of his mind, life and body, a harmony of his knowledge and will and emotion, a harmony of all his members. Sometimes this desire stops short at the attainment of a workable compromise which will bring with it a relative peace; but compromise can only be a halt on the way, since the Deity within will not be satisfied eventually with less than a perfect harmony combining in itself the integral development of our many-sided potentialities. Less than this would be an evasion of the problem, not its solution, or else only a temporary solution provided as a resting-place for the soul in its continual self-enlargement and ascension. Such a perfect harmony would demand as essential terms a perfect mentality, a perfect play of vital force, a perfect physical existence.³⁵

The message is both on the individual and the collective levels. So, personally, one would rather stick to the main path of integral yoga and stop wherever one has to, but surely not to some “temporary solution” that would apparently provide a resting place for one’s soul. But, on the collective level also, there is a wonderful message: humanity cannot stop at any temporary solution, be it asceticism, materialism or any other “ism” for the ultimate destiny of the soul of humanity is to attain “a perfect harmony”.

In the last but one paragraph Sri Aurobindo concludes:

Equally, man, as he develops, becomes acutely aware of the discord and ignorance that governs his relations with the world, acutely intolerant of it, more and more set upon finding a principle of harmony, peace, joy and unity. This too can only come to him from above. For only by developing a mind which shall have knowledge of the mind of others as of itself, free from our mutual ignorance and misunderstanding, a will that feels and makes itself one with the will of others, an emotional heart that contains the emotions of others as its own, a life-force that senses the energies of others and accepts them for its own and seeks to fulfil them as its own, and a body that is not a wall of imprisonment and defence against the world,—but all this under the law of a Light and Truth that shall transcend the aberrations and errors, the much sin and falsehood of our and others' minds, wills, emotions, life-energies,—only so can the life of man spiritually and practically become one with that of his fellow-beings and the individual recover his own universal self.³⁶

So one can see the greater aim set in front of man. All these shortcuts of trying to know others, of finding a solution in one's individual life are useless, for nothing will work until everything is worked out. The last few sentences of this chapter say it all:

Unless therefore the race is to fall by the wayside and leave the victory to other and new creations of the eager travelling Mother, it must aspire to this ascent, conducted indeed through love, mental illumination and the vital urge to possession and self-giving, but leading beyond to the supramental unity which transcends and fulfils them; in the founding of human life upon the supramental realisation of conscious unity with the One and with all in our being and in all its members humanity must seek its final good and salvation. And this is what we have described as the fourth status of Life in its ascent towards the Godhead.³⁷

Well, what a delightful reading and understanding it has been—the way Sri Aurobindo took up Life right from its cosmic sources and came down to the human level to show exactly the problem of man’s life and its central solution. He does not give solutions to each and every human problem but convinces us that all problems have the same origin, the same cause and therefore all problems have the same solution, which is in the fourth status of life, the spiritual life, the inner divinity — the psychic being.

What exactly is the psychic being? What is its difference with the soul? To know what they are we have to read the next chapter, “The Double Soul in Man”. It is a marvellous chapter, a very poetic one as it describes the most beautiful and divine part of our being—the psychic being.

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Lecture Notes

I. Three Appearances of Life:

- a) Consciousness as Force has created the world–movement and its problems; consciousness as Force has to solve the problems it has created and carry the world–movement

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to the inevitable fulfilment of its secret sense and evolving Truth.

- b) The first appearance of life is material – when consciousness is lost in form.
- c) The second appearance of life is vital – where consciousness is half-apparent as power of life and process of the growth.
- d) The third is mental where consciousness has emerged only as an individual consciousness and therefore not aware of its universality.

II. Mind's Dilemma:

- a) Man not being able to know the totality of his own being is unable to know effectively his own life or the life in general.
- b) He attempts to master himself and the world because there is the secret nisus in him to know and to master.
- c) Man must satisfy the Divine within him, become himself a divine humanity or give place to Superman.
- d) The line of evolutionary creation in which he has appeared cannot stop – so man has to go beyond himself and fulfil himself in the satisfied delight of existence.

III. Relation between Consciousness and Force:

- a) As the consciousness is, so will the Force be.
- b) Where the Consciousness is infinite, the Force is. infinite in its scope. Where it is submerged, as in Nature, the force is a monstrous movement of the Inert and Inconscient. Where it is divided in itself, as in Mind, the Force too will be full of clashes in lives.
- c) If the Consciousness is in possession of both the diversity and the Unity, the Force fulfills in unity all the diversity.

IV. The Four Positions:

- a) Consciousness and Force are one in Sachchidananda.
- b) Apparent separation of Consciousness and Force in Matter
- c) The poise of being in Mind and Life which we see emerging out of this denial in Matter.

- d) The poise of being in Supermind fulfilling all that was secretly there and intended in fact evolution.

V. The Three Difficulties in Man:

- a) Man is aware of a small part of his being – his surface mentality, his surface life, his surface physical being. In reality, Man is an instrument of his subliminal and subconscious.
- b) Man is separated in his mind, his life, his body from the universal and therefore incapable of knowing his fellow-creative.

A conscious unity with others can be established only with that in which we are one with them – the universal or in the Supramental.

- c) The division between force and consciousness in the evolutionary existence.
 - i) The division in the forms of Matter, Life and Mind leading to the war of our members.
 - ii) The division between force of nature and the conscious being.

VI. Man's Attempt to Harmonise:

- a) As man develops into a self-conscious and truly thinking being, he seeks to bring about a harmony of all his members.
- b) A perfect harmony would demand a perfect mentality, a perfect play of vital force and a perfect physical existence.
- c) Such a perfection is available only in the superconscient and not in the mind or the subconscious.

VIII. Man and the World:

- a) Man is aware of his discord with the world and tries for harmony, peace, joy and unity.
- b) This too he can find only in the Godhead seated in the sea of eternal light – in the fourth status of Life in its ascent towards the Supermind.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Double Soul in Man

This chapter seems to be purely meant for psychologists, not as much for philosophers, because it deals entirely with the inner being of man. However, Sri Aurobindo continues at the same time with his philosophic analysis of the personification of delight, the soul or the psychic being.

He begins by tracing in quick steps the evolutionary pattern which was also seen in the previous chapter:

The first status of Life we found to be characterised by a dumb inconscient drive or urge, a force of some involved will in the material or atomic existence, not free and possessor of itself or its works or their results, but entirely possessed by the universal movement in which it arises as the obscure unformed seed of individuality.¹

On the level of Matter, Consciousness is apparently dormant but, on the level of Life, although Consciousness is still dormant, the Force is seen having a “drive” and an “urge”—however “dumb” it may be. Therefore, the universal energies of Life seem to have no direction. They seem to be moving without any purpose but, as we analysed earlier, there is behind all these movements the secret supramental consciousness. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, this “inconscient drive” is experienced on the level of Matter as “hunger”, hunger for material things. Then with the coming of Life in a form, the plant or the animal, there is “desire”. “The root of the second status is desire, eager to possess but limited in capacity; the bud of the third is Love which seeks both to possess and be possessed, to receive and to give itself;”² This is on the mental level where love is not yet pure for it wants to give and at

the same time expects to receive something in return. Then comes the fourth level:

... the fine flower of the fourth, its sign of perfection, we conceive as the pure and full emergence of the original will, the illumined fulfilment of the intermediate desire, the high and deep satisfaction of the conscious interchange of Love by the unification of the state of the possessor and possessed in the divine unity of souls which is the foundation of the supramental existence.³

In short, this is how the “inconscious drive” expresses itself on different stages of evolution: starting with hunger on the level of matter, to desire, then to love and will, and ultimately to Divine love, expressed in the divine unity of souls. In all these changes from stage to stage, there must be something common which unveils itself or expresses itself, otherwise it makes no sense. Obviously, at the root of all this, there is something of the Divine. The Upanishads call it “Delight”; the Mother and Sri Aurobindo call it “Love.” So, essentially, there is this aspect of Divine Love at the root of the Inconscious which evolves towards the Superconscious.

The Divine Sachchidananda descending through different levels to the Inconscious is known as the process of involution. But then there is also the direct descent of the Divine into the Inconscious as Love in order to start the return journey; the evolutionary process. It is Divine Love alone which has the capacity to transform Matter back into its original status. It is the Divine Love and Delight at the root of Matter which form the evolutionary nexus. On the level of Life, the plant and the animal, it is the same Divine Love and Delight which takes the form of desire. And again on the level of Mind, it is the same Divine ardour which expresses itself as rudimentary love. Ultimately, on the supramental level, there is the full expression of divine Delight and Love.

Now, here we may ask: if this is the pattern of evolution, then where does love and delight harbour themselves in man? If you

remember, we came across the fourfold formula of Sat, Chit, Ananda and the Supermind. Each of these aspects brings in manifestation a different principle. From Supermind we have Mind, from Chit we have Life and from Sat we have Matter. Then the question is: how does Ananda express itself in man? Obviously, the psychic being is the delegate of Ananda. Now the picture is complete: the fourfold aspect of the Infinite manifests itself in the fourfold aspect of the finite. It is because of this one-to-one relationship with the Superconscient that there is the possibility of each human part transforming itself into its original nature.

Now, let us take up Sri Aurobindo's question: "But where in us is this principle of Delight" located?

Then, equally, the principle of divine Bliss must be omnipresent in the cosmos, veiled indeed and possessing itself behind the actual phenomenon of things, but still manifested in us through some subordinate principle of its own in which it is hidden and by which it must be found and achieved in the action of the universe.⁴

What is this "subordinate principle" which manifests the divine Bliss? Is it not the psychic being? Sri Aurobindo describes it as:

That term is something in us which we sometimes call in a special sense the soul,—that is to say, the psychic principle which is not the life or the mind, much less the body, but which holds in itself the opening and flowering of the essence of all these to their own peculiar delight of self, to light, to love, to joy and beauty and to a refined purity of being. In fact, however, there is a double soul or psychic term in us, as every other cosmic principle in us is also double.⁵

Having discussed these in the previous chapter, we have now a fairly good idea of the principles of mind, life and body but to formulate again the idea, this time in Sri Aurobindo's words:

For we have two minds, one the surface mind of our expressed evolutionary ego, the superficial mentality created by us in our emergence out of Matter, another a subliminal mind which is not hampered by our actual mental life and its strict limitations, something large, powerful and luminous, the true mental being behind that superficial form of mental personality which we mistake for ourselves.⁶

And Sri Aurobindo elaborates further:

So also we have two lives, one outer, involved in the physical body, bound by its past evolution in Matter, which lives and was born and will die, the other a subliminal force of life which is not cabined between the narrow boundaries of our physical birth and death, but is our true vital being behind the form of living which we ignorantly take for our real existence. Even in the matter of our being there is this duality; for behind our body we have a subtler material existence which provides the substance not only of our physical but of our vital and mental sheaths and is therefore our real substance supporting this physical form which we erroneously imagine to be the whole body of our spirit.⁷

Well, this is very clear. There are the external mind, the external life and the external body, and in the subliminal, there are the subtle-mind, the subtle-life and the subtle-body. So such is the double existence of each in our being. In the soul as well:

So too we have a double psychic entity in us, the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness, and a subliminal psychic entity, a pure power of light, love, joy and refined essence of being which is our true soul behind the outer form of psychic existence we so often dignify by the name. It is when some reflection of this larger and purer psychic entity comes to the surface that we say of

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a man, he has a soul, and when it is absent in his outward psychic life that we say of him, he has no soul.⁸

This is the main definition we need to look into: “the surface desire-soul which works in our vital cravings”. Where is this surface “desire-soul” located? Is it there in our outer being, in the mind, life and body, controlling “our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness”. But why does Sri Aurobindo call it the “soul” for isn’t the word “soul” used for the divine spark that exists below – that is, in things below the evolutionary level of man? Is there a difference between the two terms, the “true soul” and the “psychic entity”? Again, is there a difference between “psychic entity” and “psychic being”? And yet again, is there a difference between “the soul” and “the psychic being”? This is what is so very confusing. Most of the time, in our normal parlance, we are not careful when we mention the psychic being or the soul. We do not care much about it but now, as we are studying these terms, we must define them properly.

As we saw earlier, man’s psychological structure consists of the soul, the evolving psychic being, the three Purushas, the subliminal being, the outer being and what Sri Aurobindo calls “the Circumconscient”. Circumconscient means from the external circumstances or the outer world, we are connected through the ego to the circumconscient. The difference between the soul and the psychic being is only this: that the former is the spark of the Divine which is in every atomic structure of this creation. But why do we not speak of the soul in man? When the evolutionary process comes to the level of the human being, the soul takes a form called “the psychic being”. Thus, the psychic being is present exclusively in man. Let us take an example: (*Asking a participant*) can you see that light? If you see only the spotlight there, not the tube lights, you realise that you do not see a form but only a circle of light. This circle of light is the soul, the Divine light. But when you come close to it you see this light coming from a form, which we call “the bulb”. This bulb is the psychic being and the light which we see even without seeing the form is the Divine spark or the soul. So, the

psychic being is a kind of formation of this light which happens to be only in the human being. The soul is there in the animal, in the bird, in the tree. It is that which guides and sustains, which gives the intelligence, the instinct and everything. It is again the soul which is referred to as “psychic entity” and not as “psychic being”.

For a better distinction between the outer being and the subliminal, let us read further:

The external forms of our being are those of our small egoistic existence; the subliminal are the formations of our larger true individuality. Therefore are these that concealed part of our being in which our individuality is close to our universality, touches it, is in constant relation and commerce with it. The subliminal mind in us is open to the universal knowledge of the cosmic Mind, the subliminal life in us to the universal force of the cosmic Life, the subliminal physicality in us to the universal force formation of cosmic Matter;...⁹

The external being is actually our individual personality whereas the subliminal is in contact with the universal. In *Savitri* we come to know the various worlds beyond the physical such as the “Kingdom of Subtle-Matter”, the “Kingdom of Little Life”, the “World of Falsehood”, the “Paradise of the Life-Gods”, the “Kingdom of the Little Mind”, the “Kingdom of the Greater Mind”, the “Heavens of the Ideal” and the “Kingdom of the Greater Knowledge” etc. All these cosmic worlds beyond the earth are connected to the subliminal in man. And in man there is the Transcendent in the form of the psychic being. Thus, the human being is in reality a microcosm of the Supreme Being. Similar to an Avatar who descends with all the three poises—the Transcendental, the Universal and the Individual—man also is a descent, an *avatarana*, who holds within himself the representatives of the three poises of the Supreme. The only difference between the Avatar and man seems to be that of awareness—man is not aware of the Individual, the Universal and the Transcendental within and around him, whereas the Avatar is fully and constantly aware of his triple poise,

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as a Divine manifestation come down to help the evolution. In fact the teleological intention of evolution is to make the human being aware of this triple status of consciousness. This is why Sri Aurobindo says somewhere that man is God in the making.

Coming back to the topic of the subliminal:

So too is the subliminal soul in us open to the universal delight which the cosmic soul takes in its own existence and in the existence of the myriad souls that represent it and in the operations of mind, life and matter by which Nature lends herself to their play and development; but from this cosmic delight the surface soul is shut off by egoistic walls of great thickness which have indeed gates of penetration, but in their entry through them the touches of the divine cosmic Delight become dwarfed, distorted or have to come in masked as their own opposites.¹⁰

Just as the mind is open to the universal mind, life to the universal life and body to the universal body, the subliminal soul also is open to the universal delight. But our outer being does not become connected with this universal delight because of the “egoistic walls”. Our way of contacting the world is purely ego-centric and therefore we have no cosmic Delight or perhaps, as says Sri Aurobindo, only in a “distorted” or “masked” form. Therefore, we are asked by all spiritual masters to go within. But what does one find by going deeper? One may experience some kind of peace. This happens because the moment one gets closer to the subliminal, one transcends one’s individual limits and automatically enters the zone of the universal. So, with one little touch of the universal mind one’s understanding of life changes — because one no longer wears the “lenses” of the individual, which, most of the times, give one a distorted picture of the world. So, the more one goes within, and towards the psychic being, the more one experiences the joy and light and peace. At this point, we get the rationale of the psychological need to delve deeper into our subliminal being!

Speaking of the psychological necessity to go within, we may add that such a “stepping back” could bring greater harmony in the collective living. A contact with the subliminal changes one’s way of looking at others. One could easily embrace the other’s point of view and not insist on one’s own. What the Mother has told us about identifying oneself with the other’s point of view could be achieved by this method of interiorisation. The moment one realises that the other person is equal, that he/she has as much right as oneself, it could be considered as being the first sign of mental maturity. It is not just a moral or an ideological statement that everyone has equal rights because we all are equally the children of God! When one says that the other person’s views are right as much as one’s own views, it is because one realises that it is the same universal consciousness which is at work in each one of us! The only thing is that each person’s receptivity is different from the other. It is because of this difference that there are such variations in the individuals’ expression of the universal.

It is such an exercise of going within, delving deeper into the universal, thereby transcending one’s individuality, which could be the source and the solution to a collective living. It is not a brilliant mind that is the solution to life’s problems—it is this universal living which could be the basis of a spiritual living or a life of peace and harmony. Therefore, we always venerate the sages or Rishis, great spiritual figures because they live in the universal consciousness. They may not be experts in economics or in political science or management etc. We need someone who is immersed in the universal as well as in the psychic. So a spiritual collectivity does not depend on individual brilliance—however great an artist, economist or manager one may be, they cannot solve life’s deeper psychological and spiritual problems. Perhaps now I understand why the Mother did not select advanced yogis as sadhaks in the Ashram. Such confirmed yogis are often closed in their minds and hearts; they may not be receptive to higher spiritual forces. An ordinary man can have a better chance of opening himself to higher truths because he is more flexible. In this context I remember a very significant message the Mother gave to some Aurovillians:

THE DOUBLE SOUL IN MAN

From the spiritual point of view, India is the foremost country in the world. Her mission is to set the example of spirituality. Sri Aurobindo came on earth to teach this to the world.

This fact is so obvious that a simple and ignorant peasant here is, in his heart, closer to the Divine than the intellectuals of Europe.

All those who want to become Aurovilians must know this and behave accordingly; otherwise they are unworthy of being Aurovilians.¹¹

Therefore in collective living, we ought to encourage the opening of the inner being rather than the brilliance of the mind in all its outer manifestations. The mind has its place in one's outer life but it should not be at the cost of the inmost being's opening. These mental and vital egoistic walls stop us from reaching the Divine delight.

We have one more paragraph to read before taking up the next argument. It reads thus:

It follows that in this surface or desire-soul there is no true soul-life, but a psychic deformation and wrong reception of the touch of things. The malady of the world is that the individual cannot find his real soul, and the root-cause of this malady is again that he cannot meet in his embrace of things the real soul of the world in which he lives. He seeks to find there the essence of being, the essence of power, the essence of conscious-existence, the essence of delight, but receives instead a crowd of contradictory touches and impressions.¹²

In spite of all his efforts, man is unable to go deeper into delight, consciousness and power because he "follows ... in this surface or desire-soul [where] there is no true soul-life, but a psychic deformation..." So it seems, according to what we understand here, that even this "desire-soul" is somewhat a remote reflection of the psychic being itself. Let us try to understand further how Sri Aurobindo links the "desire-soul" with "the psychic". Can

we say that there is something of the desire of the psychic being even in the ego! Otherwise, he would have not used the word “the soul” in the “desire-soul”, is it not? So the original vibration comes from the psychic being but when it reaches the level of the ego, it becomes distorted. The psychic seems to be constantly penetrating the subliminal, the mind, the life and the body and coming out into the circumconscient but this exit-door called “the ego”, ego of the mind, of the life and of the body prevents the psychic from contacting the outer world.

Perhaps we can understand the whole explanation from another angle. How can we explain man’s attempt to find beauty, and delight in the outer world if it were not for the psychic urge? Left to his mind and vital, he would have never sought to find eternal justice, beauty, delight, compassion and love for they are not essential qualities of the mind and the vital. These are essentially psychic qualities. So, it is because of the inner thrust in man, because of the psychic love trying to express itself in life that we experience love—to begin with it may be on the vital or the physical levels. Now we understand why it is said that, when looking at a flower, at the smile of a baby, at the sunrise etc. we feel pure joy or love for it is the expression of the soul. How is it so, you may ask? It is so because when in certain moments the channels of the mind and life are a little open and clear, the psychic being comes forward bringing with it beauty and delight. Let us try to find this psychic delight in our own life. One sees flowers every day; one passes by the same garden every day. Why is it that one does not enjoy them every day? But one day when one stops by a wayside lily, one is caught in thoughts of admiration for the flower! That is because the instrumental outer channels are open and the psychic being pours in them its consciousness of love and delight.

When the mental, the vital and the physical doors are shut there are too many obstacles on the way. A cleansing of this instrument is required for us to find that “essence”:

If he could find that essence, he would find also the one universal being, power, conscious existence and delight even

in this throng of touches and impressions; the contradictions of what seems would be reconciled in the unity and harmony of the Truth that reaches out to us in these contacts. At the same time he would find his own true soul and through it his self, because the true soul is his self's delegate and his self and the self of the world are one.¹³

In order to understand the meaning of "the true soul is his self's delegate" we need to bring in the concepts of Paramatman, Jivatman and Atman. To put it in layman's language: Paramatman is the Brahman. Jivatman is the child of Brahman and the father of the soul, Atman. It is the pure individual formation of the supreme Brahman or Paramatman. It does not yet have the body, but it maintains the same unique consciousness of the Brahman. Now, this Jivatman sends its delegate, which is called the "Atman", in the world. Jivatman remains beyond evolution and Atman comes into evolution. This is why we said that the Jivatman is "the child" of Brahman but "the father" of Atman. Our soul is the direct delegate of Jivatman whereas the Jivatman is the direct self-formation of the Brahman. So in the sentence "because the true soul is his self's delegate" the "self" is the Jivatman, and "his self and the self of the world are one." They are "one" like the rays of the sun, exactly the same as the sun itself but only individual formations of the sun. This is also why our Atman, Jivatman and Paramatman are absolutely one and the same but they become individualised in the manifestation. This is also why our souls are called "delegates". Do you know the meaning of a "delegate"? (*Asking the class*) If you send a delegate to a particular country, it means he is a representative of that country. Our soul has been sent by the Jivatman into this world for a particular experience and mission. Remember that it is a particular mission for which each soul comes on earth. And that particular mission, life after life, is the soul's destiny.

Let me give you here an interesting sidelight. Somewhere in Europe, someone once told me that all of us have to aspire to be supermen. I asked him "Who told you that?" He replied that it was Sri Aurobindo who said so! I wondered at his self-assured views.

In fact what Sri Aurobindo has written is:

“It must be conceded at once that there is not the least probability or possibility of the whole human race rising in a block to the supramental level; what is suggested is nothing so revolutionary and astonishing, but only the capacity in the human mentality, when it has reached a certain level or a certain point of stress of the evolutionary impetus, to press towards higher plane of consciousness and its embodiment in the being.¹⁴

So, we understand that the Supermind is the destiny of the earth’s evolution but all human beings need not be supermen as it may not be their destiny at all. Why should anyone aspire to be a superman? Is it not an egoistic ambition? May be one’s destiny in this world is to be a servant or a sweeper, or a *bhakta* devoted to the Divine. There is nothing wrong with it. The avataric Sri Ramakrishna never went to school and yet he had realised the highest divine Shakti. Rishi Ramana left his home at the age of sixteen, and identified himself with the Brahman. He did not aspire to become a superman! So each soul’s destiny is different. The soul’s journey need not end up as a superman. To aspire for supermanhood may not be wrong but to aspire to fulfill one’s soul’s journey ought to be the aim. We do not know what it is but we can ask the Mother who knows our soul’s destiny. The only thing we could do is to pray: “Sweet Mother, fulfill our soul’s destiny in the quickest and the best possible way”.

To give you a relevant example: has anyone here seen the wonderful exhibition of “History of Ashram Buildings”, held some time back in February or March. Did you notice how the Mother had named each of the rooms in the Ashram main building? Where Nolini-da used to stay it was called “Transformation”. And another room was named “Surrender”. Yet it may be that another room was named “Compassion”. All these divine qualities are equally important in the manifestation of the Divine. So everyone need not be a superman. One who surrenders, one who is divinely

compassionate, one who is full of Ananda is as important as another because all are aspects of the Divine. So why should we egoistically ask the Mother: "I want to be a superman". The question of our soul's destiny is in the hands of the Jivatman of which each soul is only a delegate.

Yesterday, we had focused our attention on "psychic deformation" in the sentence, "It follows that in this surface or desire-soul there is no true soul-life, but a psychic deformation and wrong reception of the touch of things." And the last sentence where we stopped was:

It is the desire-soul that by its wrong reception of life becomes the cause of a triple misinterpretation of the *rasa*, the delight in things, so that, instead of figuring the pure essential joy of being, it comes rendered unequally into the three terms of pleasure, pain and indifference.¹⁵

As we said before, we have within us the psychic being, the various layers of the subliminal and then the outer being. The outer being is centered around the ego, called the "desire soul", which has connection with the world of experience. Now what happens is that this psychic being goes through all these layers and attempts to contact the outer world of experience. But right at this point, there is a kind of misinterpretation or what is called a "wrong reception of life". Wrong reception is by our senses, our mind and our life, which are really the gateways to the world. In spite of all their misinterpretation and wrong reception, there is no option for the psychic other than to use the senses to gather its experiences. The psychic being, with the help of the subliminal, can, of course, enter into the universal worlds to experience them because they—the subtle-physical, the subtle-mental, the subtle-vital—are perfect channels to experience the universal. Fine, but if the psychic wants to experience this world, the material world, it has no other possibility than to use the outer instruments of Nature.

Now the question is: what capacity do the senses have to become the channels of the psychic being? Let us say that the

wiring we do at home has the capacity to receive one hundred watts but if you put a sixty-watt bulb, you will get only sixty-watt of light. So it depends on the instrument's capacity to receive. The psychic may be giving out all its power, but the instruments limit it and often deform it. The limits of the instruments, say of touch, sight, hearing and smell, have a double incapacity: on the one hand they cannot receive the purity of the psychic light, power and consciousness, and on the other they cannot receive the beauty and delight of the outer world. For instance, our senses experience pain because of their incapacity to open to the delight of existence. They are incapable of receiving all the universal delight that exists in the world. This is the paradox: the Divine is ubiquitous but because of our narrow vision, our inability to go through the surface reality, we are unable to experience the Divine around us. We cannot taste the *rasa*, the divine Delight in the deeper layers of existence. Because of this there is a kind of a misinterpretation of the truth of life. For instance, when I touch the bark of the tree I say "it is dry and hard"; I do not feel any vibration of joy in it. But if I were a Yogi, I would feel the vibrations of joy in the same tree. That is what the Mother used to do as a young child of five or six. She would sit under a tree, her back touching the trunk of the tree and feel the vibrations, the consciousness of the tree because her body was able to receive the inner *rasa*. She did not use her mind or her senses; her very body consciousness experienced the *rasa*. On the other hand, if we were to sit under a tree, we would feel the coolness, the breeze around and nothing more. This is why there is a misinterpretation; instead of saying there is joy in the tree, we say "the tree is unresponsive." To understand it rightly would be to feel its *rasa*. The Upanishads also have told us that the very foundation of life is divine Delight but we are unable to contact it.

The next sentence takes this idea further:

We have seen, when we considered the Delight of Existence in its relations to the world, that there is no absoluteness or essential validity in our standards of pleasure and pain and indifference, that they are entirely determined by the

subjectivity of the receiving consciousness and that the degree of either pleasure and pain can be heightened to a maximum or depressed to a minimum or even effaced entirely in its apparent nature. Pleasure can become pain or pain pleasure because in their secret reality they are the same thing differently reproduced in the sensations and emotions. Indifference is either the inattention of the surface desire-soul in its mind, sensations, emotions and cravings to the *rasa* of things, or its incapacity to receive and respond to it, or its refusal to give any surface response or, again, its driving and crushing down of the pleasure or the pain by the will into the neutral tint of unacceptance.¹⁶

Of course, there is a whole chapter on this, "Delight of Existence: The Solution" in which we find the same idea explained in greater detail. To give you just one example:

In the things of the mind this pure habitual relativity of the reactions of pleasure and pain is not difficult to perceive. The nervous being in us, indeed, is accustomed to a certain fixedness, a false impression of absoluteness in these things. To it victory, success, honour, good fortune of all kinds are pleasant things in themselves, absolutely, and must produce joy as sugar must taste sweet; defeat, failure, disappointment, disgrace, evil fortune of all kinds are unpleasant things in themselves, absolutely, and must produce grief as wormwood must taste bitter.¹⁷

In brief, what Sri Aurobindo explains in this chapter is that, from the very beginning of its development, our mind has become used to certain habits, certain primordial habits. For example, the habit of success or failure: it is as if, grooves have been formed in our mind and in the nervous being. All that is pleasant is joyful, all that is unpleasant is sorrowful and "To vary these responses is to it a departure from fact, abnormal and morbid;..."¹⁸ For instance, if someone were to cut his finger and say it gives him joy, it would be

considered morbid. Is it not possible that we are reacting in this way because we are trapped in our nervous being's habitual responses which thus define what is joy and what is pain? Sri Aurobindo explains: "for the nervous being is a thing enslaved to habit and in itself the means devised by Nature for fixing constancy of reaction, sameness of experience, the settled scheme of man's relations to life."¹⁹ Thus, Nature has developed such nervous responses since millennia in order to establish a constant regularity and stability, so that all human beings know, right from their birth, that a cut in the finger or any part of the body causes pain. A common code of responses is established for all human beings.

But Sri Aurobindo argues that this need not be so for ever:

Even here, however, we have glimpses of the truth. We see it in the fact that according to the habit the same physical contact can be either pleasurable or painful, not only to different individuals, but to the same individual under different conditions or at different stages of his development...²⁰

We learnt from the chapter, "Delight of Existence: The Solution", that depending on one's consciousness the same contact or the same blow on one's body can be received differently. In fact, the Mother gave the example of a Yogi. If you give a blow to the Yogi on the arm and the same blow to another ordinary person, the reaction would be completely different. The Yogi will not feel the pain, whereas the ordinary man may writhe in pain. It only goes to show how much we have mentally convinced ourselves that certain actions bring pain and others pleasure. For instance, if someone is hit by a bullet, in normal circumstances, we rush him to the doctor; he undergoes a surgery for the bullet to be removed. But what happens to a soldier who is hit by a bullet? He may not feel the pain; in fact, he may not be even conscious of it. As long as he is on the battlefield he is quite oblivious of the bullet-pain and it is only when he returns to normal activities in his camp, that he begins to feel the pain of the bullet; it is only then that he is taken to the hospital to remove the bullet. Until then he withstood the pain;

not only did he withstand the pain but he was even unaware of the pain for hours together!

Similarly, "Pleasure can become pain or pain pleasure because in their secret reality they are the same thing differently reproduced in the sensations and emotions."²¹ Let us take another simple example: say you are hungry and you have your favourite sweet—the *rasagulla*. You take two or three and you enjoy them but when you take the tenth one the same pleasure turns into pain! Not only will you get a stomach ache but there is a feeling of nausea in your mouth. You no longer enjoy the *rasagulla* because you have crossed the limit of receptivity. So, there are many instances to show that there is a very thin line between pain and pleasure because of the senses' incapacity. What is behind pleasure and pain is the same vibration of Delight. So when you fully receive the Delight you taste the *rasa* but when the same Delight is squeezed through a narrow passage, a resistance or an incapacity of the senses, the Delight turns into pain. So, in order to receive the magnificent universal delight around us, we have to widen the basic consciousness of our mental, vital and physical.

Here is the next idea:

For, as we now know by psychological observation and experiment that the subliminal mind receives and remembers all those touches of things which the surface mind ignores, so also we shall find that the subliminal soul responds to the *rasa*, or essence in experience, of these things which the surface desire-soul rejects by distaste and refusal or ignores by neutral unacceptance.²²

Here we will try to understand the relevance of the external experiences with regard to the soul because many people have asked the question, "What is the relation between the outer experiences and the soul within?" "Can these experiences enter the soul and if so in which way?" Before dealing with this sentence, let me tell you an incident that someone from the Ashram had once told me. A drama was to be enacted in the Ashram theatre

and the Mother herself was to direct it. In some sequence there was something about the soul; somebody brought a big placard on which he drew a diagram of the different parts of the being and in the process he wrote at some place: "the suffering soul". When it was shown to the Mother she asked him to wipe it off. The person took the board and kept it somewhere thinking that the Mother was in a different mood and did not understand what he meant. The Mother happened to see it again and she said that she had asked him to wipe off the board because the truth is that the soul does not suffer. It would be interesting to bring this incident in the light of what Sri Aurobindo writes: "...so also we shall find that the subliminal soul responds to the *rasa*, or essence in experience, of these things which the surface desire-soul rejects by distaste and refusal or ignores by neutral unacceptance."

The surface experiences of pain, pleasure and indifference seem to sink in the different layers of the being and, in the process of passing through the different parts of the subliminal, these experiences seem to become purified. There is a filtering process which takes place similar to the method of purifying water. You must have noted the way our villagers used to purify their drinking water. The water in one pot trickles down to the pot below and then again to the next pot. By the time it goes to the last pot, it is purified. In the case of water purification, there are filters at each level and the dirt gets stuck at each level giving the water a greater purity at each stage. Similarly, all these experiences we call pain, pleasure and indifference are filtered and by the time they come to the psychic level, pain changes into delight or what is called "*rasa*".

Now we understand why the soul does not suffer because all the suffering is filtered by the time it reaches the lower or the inner depths of the psychic being. What happens here is that from all the experiences the soul gets the essence, the *rasa*; there is no suffering, pain or pleasure for it. What we think as pain and suffering is a certain habit of the nervous being. So there seems to be nothing as pain *per se*, there is no entity of pain, there is only the entity of delight. So, obviously what reaches the soul is the original vibration which is behind both pain and pleasure.

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So, the question of pain and pleasure here is based on a simple habit. Take it away and the whole character of pain and pleasure changes. It is not so easy to do so because Mind, Life and Body are victims of the greatest “habit” – death. However, the psychic being is not subjected to any habit. It is therefore deathless, and beyond suffering. Mind, Life and Body have become victims of aeonic habits which have been personalised. What the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have attempted is to change the track of the old habits and to bring in a new habit—that of immortality. It took millennia to form this habit of suffering and death which have now become universal and seemingly eternal. But, what they have attempted is to undo what Nature has done over millennia—to bring the “habit” of immortality in the very cells of the body.

To wrestle with the Shadow she had come
And must confront the riddle of man’s birth
And life’s brief struggle in dumb Matter’s night.
Whether to bear with Ignorance and Death
Or hew the ways of Immortality,
To win or lose the godlike game for man,
Was her soul’s issue thrown with Destiny’s dice.²³

Such a change was impossible until the descent of Supermind. Hence, this yoga of physical transformation has a rational basis and not just a devotional fervor.

Let us now return to our argument of the soul beyond sufferings:

The subliminal soul is conscious inwardly of the *rasa* of things and has an equal delight in all contacts; it is conscious also of the values and standards of the surface desire-soul and receives on its own surface corresponding touches of pleasure, pain and indifference, but takes an equal delight in all.²⁴

This is a very important point. It is not that the soul does not recognise our values. The inner psychic being recognises what the “desire-soul” thinks as good and bad, pleasure and pain but

basically, it is aware of what is true love, it knows what true justice and true compassion are because it is an embodiment of these divine qualities.

Let us now try to understand this argument in the light of the *Bhagavat Gita*. The Gita tells us not only to be desireless but also to remain detached from all attachments. Detachment itself should not become an attachment. So the Gita tells us to go beyond duality: to go beyond good and bad, pleasure and pain because the rationale is that as long as we are attached to right and wrong or pain and pleasure, we are essentially on the same “horizontal” consciousness. We may be sattwic persons but still we are in a mental consciousness. It is only this range of the mental consciousness which has made all the difference—we have moved away, as it were, from a darker colour to a lighter shade! That is the only difference; but we are still in the same mental consciousness. Hence the Gita asks us to raise ourselves beyond the dualities, beyond the mental consciousness and live in the spiritual consciousness.

That is the *raison d'être* of going beyond the dualities. To want to be a sattwic man is in itself an attachment because we get pulled into *poojas* and rituals. When I had written to the Mother asking her why there are so many religious festivals, she answered that “men like festivals”. So there is no deeper meaning in them. We like them, we have given them a value and we take pride in them and ultimately we get deeply attached to our pride and turn it into a tradition—what in India we call “the sacred *parampara*”. At the same time, this does not imply that we reject all action; we need to continue to work in the world but based on the inner psychic consciousness, because “...our real soul within takes joy of all its experiences, gathers from them strength, pleasure and knowledge, grows by them in its store and its plenty.”²⁵ This seems to be the true relation between our external acts and our soul. The psychic being in us grows through the experience of the outer and inner worlds: “...our real soul within takes joy of all its experiences,...” and thus, when it returns to its world, it feels enriched and fulfilled. And perhaps there is a wisdom in saying

that all that we do, all we read and work on etc. must be based on some inner experience. No amount of superficial reading can lead automatically to experience. The psychic being may forget all the hours we spent in these classes of *The Life Divine*, but from all that reading if something “percolates”, if something becomes experiential and sinks into the level of the soul, that will have a value. This is why it is said that one drop of experience is better than an ocean of theories. The psychic being grows by these drops of true experience and this is what it gathers and takes with itself when it withdraws from the body.

This is the reason why our ancients had told us to meditate upon what we read or hear — what they called *sraavana* and *manana*. This meditation should be a kind of self-analysis — see what is true, what really strikes an inner chord and try to experience it in life. Then only the experience of reading, hearing, doing any work etc. becomes part of the psychic growth.

Speaking of “reading”, someone asked me: “What have you discovered in Sri Aurobindo? What has appealed to you?” You see a person who has come to Sri Aurobindo after getting acquainted with other philosophers, other psychologists, other gurus etc. may discover in Sri Aurobindo a greater life, a higher truth. But in my own story it is different. Right from the time when my mental understanding opened up, I have seen only one Light: that of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. For me it has not been a “discovery” as such: it has been a part of “my eye-sight”. Therefore, how can I say I have discovered Sri Aurobindo or anything in Sri Aurobindo? If I have to tell you what has struck me in Sri Aurobindo, I would say that that I am struck by each sentence that he has penned! In different moods I am struck by different sentences in different books. For example, in the next chapter, there is a sentence: “In a certain sense Matter is unreal and non-existent...”²⁶ by which I am struck dumb! Does he not sound like Adi Shankaracharya for whom the world was an illusion? So your mind becomes numb and we say we cannot really understand Sri Aurobindo! Secondly, each time we reread a sentence or a paragraph from his writings, a new meaning is revealed. Each time something new pops up, we

become aware of this something new! Well, that is my personal experience which has been told purely as an example to show how the soul takes joy in its outer experience:

In other words, our real soul within takes joy of all its experiences, gathers from them strength, pleasure and knowledge, grows by them in its store and its plenty. It is this real soul in us which compels the shrinking desire-mind to bear and even to seek and find a pleasure in what is painful to it, to reject what is pleasant to it, to modify or even reverse its values, to equalise things in indifference or to equalise them in joy, the joy of the variety of existence. And this it does because it is impelled by the universal to develop itself by all kinds of experience so as to grow in Nature. Otherwise, if we lived only by the surface desire-soul, we could no more change or advance than the plant or stone in whose immobility or in whose routine of existence, because life is not superficially conscious, the secret soul of things has as yet no instrument by which it can rescue the life out of the fixed and narrow gamut into which it is born. The desire-soul left to itself would circle in the same grooves forever.²⁷

I hope you have understood the sentence; this is what we have been discussing all along. Indeed, “The desire-soul left to itself would circle in the same grooves forever” because after all what is the capacity of the mind, life and body? Each part of our being — the mind, the life and the body — has a huge number of subconscious habits which keep rotating in the same groove.

What is the common man’s rhythm of life? Take for example the life of a businessman, a scientist or an artist. The businessman thinks of his business: how to promote it, how to make more money and secure his future. But what happens in an artist’s work? Fortunately, the very nature of art takes one to the inner sources, but the nature of business does not. Unless and until the businessman is a sadhak, doing a conscious sadhana, he doesn’t need the resources of his inner being for doing his business, whereas the artist needs to

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contact his/her inner being, *per se*. However, there is in all a psychic push which "...compels the shrinking desire-mind to bear and even to seek and find a pleasure in what is painful..."

In the view of old philosophies pleasure and pain are inseparable like intellectual truth and falsehood and power and incapacity and birth and death; therefore the only possible escape from them would be a total indifference, a blank response to the excitations of the world-self. But a subtler psychological knowledge shows us that this view which is based on the surface facts of existence only, does not really exhaust the possibilities of the problem. It is possible by bringing the real soul to the surface to replace the egoistic standards of pleasure and pain by an equal, an all-embracing personal-impersonal delight.²⁸

In the old philosophies and yogas, they said pleasure and pain are impossible to separate. Just as there is night and day, birth and death, so there are pleasure and pain. If one does not want pain, one has to reject pleasure also. If one wants to get rid of pleasure and pain, one has to reject life itself because so long as one lives, one cannot escape life and death. Therefore, one must escape from life: such was the negative philosophy. Sri Aurobindo tells us that it need not be so because by bringing the psychic being to the surface, one can replace the egoistic soul and its standards or habits of pleasure and pain.

Let us delve deeper into Sri Aurobindo's wonderful logic here. You must have noted that *The Life Divine* is amazing because of its analysis of each philosophic problem. Sri Aurobindo does not give us readymade ideas; he analyses each problem and puts it in front of us. The results of his experiments and processes are there, right in front of us. This gives us not only a clarity of thought but a self-confidence because we can find the answers by ourselves. This analysis of pleasure and pain is one such argument.

What is pleasure and pain? What is their fundamental basis? If one sees it from a psychological point of view, they are based

on one's ego. When one experiences pain, it is the ego which is hurt because somebody said something unpleasant; if you experience pleasure it is because somebody said something which pleased your ego. So your pleasure and pain depend on your ego's response to circumstances and events: something hurtful or painful or something flattering and pleasurable. Here, we are not talking about the physical and nervous pain and pleasure – our focus is only on the psychological aspect of pleasure and pain. However, if the ego is behind our decision as to what can be pleasure and pain, then Sri Aurobindo suggests “why not replace it with the psychic consciousness?” Then, to the extent one can do so one will experience pleasure and pain losing their intensity. Here is an example:

The artist and the poet do it when they seek the *rasa* of the universal from the aesthetic emotion or from the physical line or from the mental form of beauty or from the inner sense and power alike of that from which the ordinary man turns away and of that to which he is attached by a sense of pleasure. The seeker of knowledge, the God-lover who finds the object of his love everywhere, the spiritual man, the intellectual, the sensuous, the aesthetic all do this in their own fashion and must do it if they would find embracingly the Knowledge, the Beauty, the Joy or the Divinity which they seek.²⁹

Sri Aurobindo gives us examples of ordinary human beings who are able to go beyond pleasure and pain only to some degree and for some time. Speaking of artists who “seek the *rasa* of the universal” I remember the poems of the famous French poet Baudelaire, where he usually describes the painful and ugly in life; but he always goes beyond and sees deeper beauty and great joy in all things. He does not philosophise, that is, he does not mentalise any problem; he is a true poet who rises to greater heights than the mental. It is something that comes out of his heart or from some higher levels of consciousness. This is an example of how a poet has the capacity to see the divinity beyond the external, even in the ugly. So, it is

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possible for the common man also—if he can bring forth the inner sight of the psychic—to see beauty in the ugly, to see harmony in the disharmonious.

Sri Aurobindo gives us all these examples to tell us that he is looking forward to a miracle performed by the common man! What he insists on is that if artists, musicians, poets and god-lovers are already capable of this inner contact, then why can't the common man do the same thing? For instance, the God-lover who finds the object of his love everywhere—like Mirabai who saw divine beauty in all things and did not hate but loved her husband Rana. So, if the God-lover can see divinity in everything, it is possible that common human beings can also become God-lovers and reach God-knowledge or realise God-beauty in everything if only one can help the psychic being to come forward. It is true that such a change of consciousness requires great effort and tapasya:

It is only in the parts where the little ego is usually too strong for us, it is only in our emotional or physical joy and suffering, our pleasure and pain of life, before which the desire-soul in us is utterly weak and cowardly, that the application of the divine principle becomes supremely difficult and seems to many impossible or even monstrous and repellent...In the freer and higher movements there is demanded of us only a limited and specialised equality and impersonality proper to a particular field of consciousness and activity while the egoistic basis of our practical life remains to us; in the lower movements the whole foundation of our life has to be changed in order to make room for impersonality, and this the desire-soul finds impossible.³⁰

Here, Sri Aurobindo brings in another idea: the principle of impersonality which “the desire-soul finds impossible” to accept. However, in some way, this principle is practiced in Science and Art and “even in certain kind of spiritual living”. They are able to practice this principle in whatever measure because it does not demand any change in the desires cherished by the “surface

soul". This explanation gives us a clear guidance as to how we can transcend the "values of desire fixed by the surface mind": it is by bringing into life the impersonal consciousness! What it implies is that one should not expect personal profit or benefit from one's action when helping an institution, or the poor, etc. All these come under philanthropic activities. If one helps others only for the sake of one's own name and fame, then one may not feel the inner joy nor be able to go beyond the desires "fixed by the surface mind". Such an inner delight is obtained not only by the impersonal consciousness but also by the psychic touch. Take for example the Romantic poet Wordsworth. In him it was not the psychic touch as much as the impersonality which gave him the deeper dimensions of beauty which always comes with joy and peace. Such poets have reached the "extra-dimension" of impersonality. If one reads a very personal poem, describing the poet's mundane experiences, his surface sorrows, his transient joys, his egocentric reactions to a thing, it may not be considered high poetry. Perhaps the greatest example of a poet being supremely personal and supremely impersonal is Sri Aurobindo in his *Savitri*. It seems as if this epic is written not by a person called Sri Aurobindo but by a Godhead Consciousness impersonal, vast, pervading and yet all too intimate with details of earth-life. We can feel Sri Aurobindo's universality of experience symbolised in the intense imagery of the poetic style. One's consciousness widens when one reads *Savitri*, one loses sight of the poet's physical dimension. Then one suddenly leaps into a universal consciousness and exclaims, "Surely, it is a Godhead who has written *Savitri*!" Thus, there is Sri Aurobindo the person in *Savitri* and at the same time there is in this epic the great supramental incarnation. There is an overwhelming experience of divine magnitude throughout the reading of this impersonal-personal epic *Savitri*. So, on this high note, we come to the end of this argument on pain, pleasure and indifference and their relation to the subliminal soul.

Sri Aurobindo brings in next, a closer view of the definition of the "true soul".

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The true soul secret in us — subliminal, we have said, but the word is misleading, for this presence is not situated below the threshold of waking mind, but rather burns in the temple of the inmost heart behind the thick screen of an ignorant mind, life and body, not subliminal but behind the veil,...³¹

So, we see that the word “sub” is misleading when we say it is the subliminal “true soul”; it only means that the psychic being is not below but behind the heart centre:

This veiled psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always alight within us, inextinguishable even by that dense unconsciousness of any spiritual self within which obscures our outward nature. It is a flame born out of the Divine and, luminous inhabitant of the Ignorance, grows in it till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge.³²

Firstly, it is said that the psychic being is “the flame of the Godhead always alight within us”. It is also a “luminous inhabitant”; that is to say, for now it seems only a tenant in this human body. But the day it becomes the owner of the body, the house, the human outer personality is radically changed. But what is its mission as inhabitant? “To grow in the outer being till it is able to turn it towards the Knowledge.” Of course, it does not grow within a single life; it comes repeatedly into a body, into the physical, with the sole purpose or perhaps a dual purpose: one of gathering its own experience and self-growth and the other of transforming Ignorance into Knowledge. So there is a kind of a twofold action taking place: while it is gathering experience from the world, it is also bringing its light and consciousness in the world—beginning with the individual mind, life and body complex. So it gives to earth and life and simultaneously receives from it: such is the purpose of the soul’s birth. Its growth is important for the growth of the earth herself because she becomes enriched and transformed by the consciousness and delight through the psychic being. This is

what we mean by a “developed soul—it is a soul able to transmit its light and knowledge to earth.

Thus, when the soul—as a delegate of the Jivatman – accomplishes its mission on earth, it may not choose to be reborn. Till then it was natural for it to take multiple births because it is only on this evolutionary earth that it is able to grow and transmit at the same time to this world, the Jivatman’s divine Consciousness of Oneness. But once the soul returns as a fully mature being to the Jivatman and when it no longer has the need to come again on earth—then it can decide whether to participate or not in a particular evolutionary period of the world. These are the souls who choose to incarnate for a specific mission – they are called “liberated souls”. For example, the Mother once revealed that, during India’s freedom movement, when Sri Aurobindo was working in the political field, many such souls descended in order to carry out his work. They are like Vibhutis who come down to participate in a movement that hastens human evolution. That is why, so it is reported, that when some of the co-prisoners of Sri Aurobindo were told that they were going to be hanged, they experienced no sorrow in their being. They were full of joy because they were these special souls beyond pain and pleasure. They were probably not worried about dying because, having fulfilled their mission they were happy to return to their original “home”. Even in the Ashram established by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, there were some souls who had come specifically to carry out their work. It seems it is necessary for such helping souls to come on earth to bridge the gap between the Avatar and the humanity. Of course, after a while, out of this common humanity itself, some people may realise the new Consciousness, but with the descent of the Avatar, the “newness” of the consciousness is often so high beyond human reach that there arises the need of such “bridging souls”. It has been said that Swami Vivekananda was one such soul who was brought down by Sri Ramakrishna to do his work. Then Sri Aurobindo describes further the psychic being:

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It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth, untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine. Not the unborn Self or Atman, for the Self even in presiding over the existence of the individual is aware always of its universality and transcendence, it is yet its deputy in the forms of Nature, the individual soul, *caitya purusha*, supporting mind, life and body, standing behind the mental, the vital, the subtle-physical being in us and watching and profiting by their development and experience.³³

It is very interesting to see that, just as each one of us has an outer personality we have also “a psychic personality”. What we understand here is that, the soul, “the Self or Atman”, the “spark of the Divine”, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, is in all of us. But in each of us this true soul “puts forward a psychic personality” thus developing its own character. They are not one and the same although all born of the same divine Spirit. In some the psychic personality is that of love, in others it is that of justice, yet in others that of sweetness or kindness etc. The psychic being has many facets to it and in each one of us it puts forward one specific personality according to its previous experience and present need. Perhaps in this life it does bring forth the personality of sweetness and in its next life it will carry another “individuality” let us say that of justice. So there could be a change of personality in each birth. So, it is this personality Sri Aurobindo is talking about here, which changes, grows or develops from life to life “...for this is the traveller between birth and death and between death and birth, our nature parts are only its manifold and changing vesture.”

However, this growth of the psychic personality is slow and gradual:

The psychic being can at first exercise only a concealed and partial and indirect action through the mind, the life and the

body, since it is these parts of Nature that have to be developed as its instruments of self-expression, and it is long confined by their evolution. Missioned to lead man in the Ignorance towards the light of the Divine Consciousness, it takes the essence of all experience in the Ignorance to form a nucleus of soul-growth in the nature; the rest it turns into material for the future growth of the instruments which it has to use until they are ready to be a luminous instrumentation of the Divine.³⁴

This is rather crucial: "...it takes the essence of all experience in the Ignorance to form a nucleus of soul-growth in the nature..." This is what we have been discussing until now "that all these experiences of pain, pleasure "form a nucleus of soul-growth in the nature". So it gathers the essence little by little. For instance, just as when you eat a mango—you do not eat the whole fruit at one go. You take a bite, take its *rasa*, taste the joy of that fruit. So this is what happens with each experience. The soul takes the taste, the *rasa*, the beauty, the joy, the knowledge of each experience and the rest that is not transformed "... it turns into material for the future growth of the instruments which it has to use until they are ready to be a luminous instrumentation of the Divine." Well, the egoistic nature of the physical, vital and the mental cannot be transformed: they are too imperfect and the psychic being turns them into "material for future growth of the instruments". It guides the instruments towards spiritual aspiration, purification and willing surrender, for the psychic being alone knows the divine Truth, it being —

...the true original Conscience in us deeper than the constructed and conventional conscience of the moralist, for it is this which points always towards Truth and Right and Beauty, towards Love and Harmony and all that is a divine possibility in us, and persists till these things become the major need of our nature.³⁵

We have seen before, in one of the previous chapters, that the psychic being is an embodiment of Truth, Light, Beauty, Harmony.

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It is like someone who is always working for harmony, truth, love, beauty and justice. In fact, it is this psychic quality which brings into our minds the concept of justice, of correctness, of perfection. It is not just a mere moral attitude that one must be a good or sattwic person. Morality is after all more or less mental but what we are talking about is the psychic influence on our being:

It is the psychic personality in us that flowers as the saint, the sage, the seer; when it reaches its full strength, it turns the being towards the Knowledge of Self and the Divine, towards the supreme Truth, the supreme Good, the supreme Beauty, Love and Bliss, the divine heights and largenesses, and opens us to the touch of spiritual sympathy, universality, oneness.³⁶

So when the psychic being influences our mind sufficiently, then the latter begins to grow “towards the Knowledge”, towards oneness. As such, the mind seeks only division, but under a strong psychic influence, it may start to seek unity and universality, at least to the extent that it is possible for it to do so. It is because of such a change in the outer being through its influence that the Mother insisted on the psychic contact in integral education.

This is the secret of integral education in the Ashram. Often many people question the rationale of psychic education. On the outer level, some of the schools in the West have much more to offer than the Ashram school. I have seen in America how incredible are the opportunities provided by the schools to a child. For instance, for self-expression, there are all kinds of drama, dance, music and art. It is like the child wants it and he gets it! Of course, here also we are fortunate and blessed with such wonderful facilities but in the West hardly any one puts an emphasis on the inner being, on the inner growth. The Mother’s emphasis was on this inner growth of the child and she also envisioned the Ashram school as the school of the Future. She also said that Sri Aurobindo thought this was the best way to prepare for the New Creation—by establishing a centre of

education. He believed that the best way to cultivate, to invite, to start the New Race is by such a centre of education. He did not envisage one more school for brilliant minds, brilliant artists and brilliant athletes because now we understand that the Person belonging to the New Race is the one in whom the psychic being governs the whole being of man. Thus this new man will be a living soul in whom the “whole nature” is turned toward “the ascent into spiritual existence”:

It is then the outer desire-soul, the pseudo-psychic entity, that reigns and we mistake its misinterpretations of psychic suggestion and aspiration, its ideas and ideals, its desires and yearnings for true soul-stuff and wealth of spiritual experience. If the secret psychic Person can come forward into the front and, replacing the desire-soul, govern overtly and entirely and not only partially and from behind the veil this outer nature of mind, life and body, then these can be cast into soul images of what is true, right and beautiful and in the end the whole nature can be turned towards the real aim of life, the supreme victory, the ascent into spiritual existence.³⁷

So here we have a description of the soul, of the psychic personality and how it can come forward, into the front, replacing the “desire-soul”. This is what we said is the process of psychicisation. But that is only the first step—it is not the end result in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga. After, there is the need for a larger spiritual change—a spiritual transformation:

Yet, although the psychic transformation is one necessary condition of the total transformation of our existence, it is not all that is needed for the largest spiritual change. In the first place, since this is the individual soul in Nature, it can open to the hidden diviner ranges of our being and receive and reflect their light and power and experience, but another, a spiritual transformation from above is needed for us to possess our self in its universality and transcendence.³⁸

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Let us understand that the psychic growth is essentially the growth of the individual. The psychic within us is after all the centre of the individual being. Hence, the influence of psychicisation is only to the extent of the individual level. It does not go beyond. So, one may have a wonderful personality, fully guided by the psychic: all one's actions may be correct, full of light, one's mind under the influence of Knowledge etc. but psychicisation is only one poise of the triple aspect of the Divine. In manifestation we have three different levels: the transcendental, the universal and the individual. In this way one is able to connect with others which may result in bringing a sense of unity, a human unity. The psychic realisation will be the basis of human unity, but it cannot be the basis of a universal consciousness. Universality is not an aggregation of individuals. It is a Soul in itself; it is an Entity in itself; it is a Consciousness in itself. For example, my body is not just a totality of all the nerves, muscles and bones. All this put together makes up my body, but I am not just this body: I have also a mental consciousness, I have also a subliminal which is neither a conglomeration nor an aggregate of the parts of the physical. Moreover, I have the inner Purusha which is different from another's.

Similarly, the universal being, or universality, is not an aggregate of all the individuals in it put together. It is formed by these individuals but it exceeds them just as my being exceeds its physical body. Taking into account all the myriad multiplicity on the physical level it still exceeds them, because there are other worlds beyond the earth. The individual needs to widen into the universal consciousness and this process is called spiritualisation. This is the difference between a so-called saint and a true spiritual man or, in our words, a Yogi. A saint or a *sadhu*, in the true sense, is "based" primarily on the inner psychic realisation. But a true yogi or a spiritual man is the one who is not only based on the psychic but has the additional dimension of spiritualisation. The psychic being (of a saint or a realised individual):

...might be content to create a formation of truth, good and beauty and make that its station; at a farther stage it might

become passively subject to the world-self, a mirror of the universal existence, consciousness, power, delight, but not their full participant or possessor.³⁹

This seems to be a danger of halting one's progress at the level of psychicismation.

Although more nearly and thrillingly united to the cosmic consciousness in knowledge, emotion and even appreciation through the senses, it might become purely recipient and passive, remote from mastery and action in the world;...⁴⁰

Thus, the psychic individual may first enjoy all the bliss but may later passively withdraw and live in its own inner peace. Secondly, one will not connect with the world and work for the world; thirdly, he/she may be "passive, remote from mastery and action in the world". It will not have the influence over others or over the world circumstances; it will not be able to change the course of events. In fact, we have had many a Kabirdas, many a Mirabai, who were inspiring psychic beings but could not change human nature as a whole. The reason for this kind of ineffective work of the saints and spiritual gurus is that the psychic being —

...one with the static self behind the cosmos, but separate inwardly from the world-movement, losing its individuality in its Source, it might return to that Source and have neither the will nor the power any further for that which was its ultimate mission here, to lead the nature also towards its divine realisation.⁴¹

And again:

For the psychic being came into Nature from the Self, the Divine, and it can turn back from Nature to the silent Divine through the silence of the Self and a supreme spiritual immobility.⁴²

This, perhaps, fully explains why India, supposedly a spiritual country from times immemorial, has today debased herself in her social and individual life. Something seems to be missing in her social life which is the aspect of spiritualisation. The saints realised their psychic being which comes from the Divine and goes back to the Divine, almost not fulfilling its "ultimate mission here".

Open the television on Sunday mornings and most of the speakers, even today talk of the world being an illusion. Lakhs of people attend these lectures and what is the crux of the lectures: the same philosophy of *mukti*. The need of the hour is that one has to reach the stage of spiritualisation in which the world-consciousness comes into the picture and one begins to live for the world and not for one's liberation.

Psychicisation is an intense and marvellous experience of "beauty and rapture" and not many can come out of it, neither would many like to come out of it, except heroes like Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, who in spite of having had the intense experience of psychicisation went beyond it because of their deep love for this world. They truly believed that "All these are great and splendid achievements of our spiritual self-finding, but they are not necessarily the last end and entire consummation; more is possible."⁴³

The "more" is nothing of supramentalisation, for:

Only the descent of the Supermind with its perfect unity of Truth-Knowledge and Truth-Will can establish in the outer as in the inner existence the harmony of the Spirit; for it alone can turn the values of the Ignorance entirely into the values of the Knowledge.⁴⁴

Well, this concept of supramentalisation is not further developed in this chapter, but it ends with a beautiful summary:

In the fulfilment of our psychic being as in the consummation of our parts of mind and life, it is the relating of it to its divine

source, to its correspondent truth in the Supreme Reality, that is the indispensable movement; and, here too as there, it is by the power of the Supermind that it can be done with an integral completeness, an intimacy that becomes an authentic identity; for it is the Supermind which links the higher and the lower hemispheres of the One Existence. In Supermind is the integrating Light, the consummating Force, the wide entry into the supreme Ananda: the psychic being uplifted by that Light and Force can unite itself with the original Delight of existence from which it came: overcoming the dualities of pain and pleasure, delivering from all fear and shrinking the mind, life and body, it can recast the contacts of existence in the world into terms of the Divine Ananda.⁴⁴

Beyond the individual and the universal is the last step, that of supramentalisation which alone can fulfill spiritualisation and psychicisation. We have studied here a beautiful chapter telling us about the inner true soul and the absolute need of realising it. It is also an insistence on the idea that our realisation should not stop short with the psychicisation because there are innate dangers in psychicisation! So right from the beginning, one has to move towards a universal consciousness. There have been Yogis who were spiritual, there have been saints who were psychic, but neither the saint nor the Yogi has been able to transform this world because until now the Supermind was lacking as an effective force in evolution. We owe to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother this truth-consciousness-force which has been made available now; and mankind together with the earth's evolution may benefit from it, if it wants to exceed itself and move towards a universal consciousness and become the New Race.

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Lecture Notes

I. The Principle of Delight:

- a) The four stages of life – the dumb inconscient drive or urge, desire, Love, the original will – are actually the stages of the souls seeking for the individual and universal delight of things.
- b) The principle of Delight in us is the Psychic Being corresponding to the principle of Bliss in the fourfold principle of Sachchidananda.

II. The Double Terms in Man:

- a) Every cosmic principle in us has a double term – one on the outer level and the other on the subliminal level.
- b) Similarly, there is the Desire soul and the Psychic Entity. Desire soul works in our vital cravings, emotions and aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness. Psychic entity is a pure power of light, love,

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- joy and refined essence of being which is our true soul.
- c) The subliminal is open to the universal, where as the external forms are those of our small egoistic existence so too the subliminal soul is open to universal delight whereas the surface soul is shut off from this delight by the thick walls of egoism.
- III. a) The desire–soul is a psychic deformation. And the individual always takes this as the true soul and tries to find it in the outer world.
- b) If the individual can find the true soul, he can find also the one universal being, power, conscious existence and delight.
- c) The desire-soul becomes the cause of a triple misinterpretation of the delight in things which effectuates itself as Pleasure, Pain and Indifference.
- IV. a) The subliminal soul responds to the rasa of the experiences of desire-soul.
- b) Our life moves between the superconscious, the subconscious and the subliminal. The superconscious is not governed by the phenomenon; the subconscious is the true instrument of experience and open to the subliminal world-experience. The subliminal soul is conscious inwardly of the rasa and has an equal delight in all contacts.
- c) This inner soul compels the outer being often to experience things which are apparently not pleasant so that it can grow in Nature.
- V. a) The old schools of philosophy pleasure and pain are inseparable and therefore the only escape is indifference.
- b) But by the inner soul pleasure and pain could be replaced by an all-embracing personal impersonal delight. Example of the artist and the poet and the spiritualist.
- c) It is only in the parts where ego is too strong for us, that the application of the desire principle becomes difficult. That is why the egoistic basis of our practice life remains in us

while we can enjoy a proper impersonality in a particular field of consciousness.

- VI. a) The subliminal soul is not below but behind the thick screen of mind, body, life. The psychic entity is the flame of the Godhead always a light within us.
- b) Psychic transformation is one thing needed in the total transformation, but it is not all that is needed for the largest spiritual change. These achievements are those of the spiritual mind.
- c) Our aim is the consummation of our existence here by an ascent to the supramental Truth-Consciousness.