

**Deliberations on**

# **The Life Divine**

**(Chapterwise Summary Talks)**

**Volume - Six**

## **Book - II**

**The Knowledge and the Ignorance —**

# **the Spiritual Evolution**

## **Part - I**

**The Infinite Consciousness and the Ignorance V. Ananda Reddy**

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

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Dedicated to

The Lovers of *The Life Divine*

## **Foreword**

Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* presents a new spiritual philosophy for the modern age. While firmly based on the pillars of ancient Indian spiritual thought –

the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita – these pillars are themselves seen and interpreted anew in the light of Sri Aurobindo's own revolutionary vision. According to Sri Aurobindo, the deeper significances of these scriptures have been obscured during the intervening millennia and by Indian philosophers and philosophies that created a schism between the Absolute Reality, the Brahman and the world of ignorance and suffering in which we dwell. That schism is understandable given the overwhelming spiritual experience of absolute bliss and oneness associated with the Absolute, contrasted with the terrible and painful discords that are apparent in our world. But the schism resulted in the embrace of a spirituality that rejected the world. While retaining and affirming throughout long ages the ideal of an absolute spiritual Reality that could be experienced by the human being, the pursuit of this ideal came to be associated with a world-renouncing asceticism. Abandoning the world contributes to its decay.

In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo bridged this schism and reunited life in the world with the pursuit and experience of the ultimate spiritual Reality. The ramifications of this reunification and realignment are profound for the future of humanity on many levels.

Firstly, it reaffirms the truth of the ancient discovery of the Absolute Reality and the possibility of human beings to experience this Reality and unite themselves with it.

This discovery of course has been confirmed by countless

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* spiritual adepts throughout the ages but again, this has been done most often in an inner spiritual realisation that is divorced from the outer life of humanity and therefore by rare individuals. Now, however, it has been upheld that this realisation is possible in the thick of life, in the midst of work and action in the world. Secondly, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy gives a supreme significance to the outer life of humanity and to the earth life in general.

These are not viewed just as impediments to the inner spiritual realisation but rather as the proposed site for the building of a new creation, a divine life. Therefore, it acknowledges the great achievements that have been made in the evolution and growth of consciousness from the first stirring of life in microbes to the greatest achievements of human culture in all its diverse fields. At the same time, it points the direction to their still higher possibilities and future fulfillments. It also shows how the difficulties of life are really opportunities and can be turned into means for both the inner spiritual realisation and its expression in the outer life.

This affirmation of life is crucial for the world not only because it has been largely neglected and rejected in some spiritual traditions but also because the decline of spirituality in the modern world in the face of scientific advances and a materialistic world view is leading to growing cynicism, meaninglessness and chaos.

Materialism in itself does not provide an aim to life nor to values or principles because it views life as emerging out of inconscient matter or energy due to random variations which happen to be favourable for survival. It is only if we find some convincing and effective guiding principles of life that it can become meaningful and find its way out of the confusions of ignorant and selfish activity.

Sri Aurobindo has provided a firm basis for worldly life in

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the spiritual Reality and in its fundamental principles of intelligent world manifestation.

*The Life Divine* covers a vast field of profound thought comprising various branches of philosophy. It deals with the ultimate Reality, the origin of the cosmos, the nature and limitations of mental knowledge, the nature of consciousness, the nature of human life, the nature of matter, freedom and determinism, the nature and reason of pain and suffering, the Indian spiritual tradition and its varied formulations and experiences of spiritual Reality, the existence of God or a supreme Being, scientific discovery and knowledge and their limitations and perhaps most significantly, with the evolution of consciousness on earth and its future possibilities and likely outcome. All of these issues are discussed in some measure in this volume.

Sri Aurobindo was an accomplished Greek and Latin scholar educated at King's College, Cambridge in the UK at the end of the 19th century. English was his first language but he was proficient in several European and Indian languages and their literatures and he also wrote poetry from his childhood up until his last days. His vocabulary was vast and he knew about the origins and historical development of the meanings of words. His main philosophical and spiritual writings were written in the early decades of the 20th century, in a somewhat classical style, that is, expansively and in great detail, often in long sentences subdivided into numerous clauses.

Combined with the deep and difficult subject matter mentioned previously, his writing style often presents special challenges for modern readers and this is doubly the case for readers for whom English is a second or third language.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* For these reasons, Ananda Reddy's series of books *Deliberations on The Life Divine* is a welcome and helpful contribution to the spiritual literature. Based on his lectures, they have been edited to be clear and focused and enjoyable to read. While retaining their conversational style peppered with illustrative examples, they follow closely the text of *The Life Divine*, which is quoted extensively and explain it in a down-to-earth style.

They expand on the text considerably, elaborating on its meaning, often with the help of the Mother's explanations of the same or related issues from *The Collected Works of the Mother*. Having a strong background in Indian Philosophy, Dr. Reddy often connects Sri Aurobindo's ideas to traditional Indian thought, which is familiar to many Indian readers, showing both its similarities and differences. All this provides a wider context in which to better understand the central ideas and their originality.

In this sixth volume of the series, Dr. Reddy covers the first four chapters of Book Two, Part I of *The Life Divine*.

Book Two is subtitled, "The Knowledge and the Ignorance

– The Spiritual Evolution" and Part I is subtitled "The Infinite Consciousness and the Ignorance". As seen by this latter subtitle, this section deals especially with that schism between the absolute Reality and this world of ignorance to which I alluded earlier in this Foreword. It examines that division in great depth, providing not only Sri Aurobindo's explanation of it and solution for it but also analysing alternative philosophical explanations and solutions that have been offered through the ages and pointing out their limitations and inadequacies. It discusses in great depth Sri Shankaracharya's arguments about Maya, in his view the source and nature of the great Illusion of our world existence. This general viewpoint has become widely accepted in Indian Philosophy, so

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Sri Aurobindo took great care to analyse it carefully, perhaps arguing its case more fully and clearly than its proponents, before dissecting its errors and difficulties and offering his own solution. As such, I find this section of *The Life Divine* perhaps the most difficult, as it deals with the fundamental nature of existence from multiple philosophical positions. Dr. Reddy's step-by-step discussion and elaboration of the arguments is particularly welcome here.

Due to the highly integrated nature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, any one aspect that is examined in depth necessarily connects with many other aspects. Therefore, although this volume focuses on a particular, though fundamental part of Sri Aurobindo's teaching, there is also much discussion of his philosophy in general as well as less demanding and more practical aspects of the teaching, including the practice of spirituality and yoga in day-to-day life. This is of course amplified by Dr. Reddy's conscious inclusion of these aspects in his lectures to relieve the high philosophy as well as to bring out the practical ramifications of the philosophical thought.

Dr. Reddy's love for India and Indian spirituality often comes through in his discussions, not the less in his criticisms of some of its outworn or misdirected elements and tendencies. There is much in this book that may challenge us to examine more carefully our own ideas and ways of life and many suggestions to help us on our own journey of self-discovery.

Larry Seidlitz

Puducherry

**Acknowledgements** After years of waiting I here present to my readers with the sixth volume of 'Deliberations on *The Life Divine*'. Like the other volumes this is also a transcribed and edited text of my talks given over a year between 2003 to 2004.

This book would not have seen the light of the day so soon had it not been for Dr. Larry Seidlitz who took up the editing of my talks which was a time taking task and demanded much work as the transcripts were absolutely raw. I extend my thanks to him for this great help and meticulous work. I record my thanks to my wife Deepshikha who took upon herself to get the

transcriptions done from some of the well-wishers. I would also like to thank Indrajit Goswami and Ellora Goswami for carrying out this work of transcription years ago which came of use when we planned for this volume. I am grateful to Shruti Bidwaikar who has done the proofing and gave a few positive suggestions which clarified the text further. I cannot forget to express my loving gratitude to Miresch who preserved the manuscript for years and to Vipul who patiently and meticulously paginated the entire text to give it this shape. He also helped me design the cover of this book.

I feel happy to bring out this volume as an offering to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who have been my inspiration and guiding light during the talks.

V. Ananda Reddy

# **Note on Documentation**

Each chapter contains a series of talks on the text. There could be some repetition of ideas as a summary of the previous class. It has been purposely maintained.

All quotes of *The Life Divine* have been taken from Volume 21 of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) from the respective chapters. Other references have been mentioned with the quote itself.

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### **Chapter – I**

#### **Indeterminates, Cosmic Determinations and the Indeterminable**

The title of this chapter is highly metaphysical.

Sri Aurobindo starts with the most abstract metaphysical thought about Reality that cannot be determined. We cannot know the nature of the supreme Reality. “Determine” means to define the quality or nature of something. We cannot fix the nature of the supreme Reality. Therefore, he says it is ‘indeterminate’ and ‘indeterminable.’ Then we have the term “Cosmic Determinations” in the title. On the supreme transcendental level we do not know what Brahman is but at the same time we do know that there is earth, there are planets, nature, the animal kingdom, human beings, etc. –

these are called “cosmic determinations”. So we have two concepts: a Reality about which we do not know anything and a cosmic Reality about which we have some idea.

Sri Aurobindo begins the chapter, as usual, with a quote and the first one is from the Mandukya Upanishad which tells us something about the “indeterminate”: The unseen with whom there can be no pragmatic relations, unseizable, featureless, unthinkable, undesignable by name, whose substance is the certitude of One Self, in whom world existence, is stilled, who is all peace and bliss – that is the Self, that is what must be known. (Verse 7)

Brahman is normally understood as immutable, Nirguna. He is “unseen”, “unseizable”, “featureless”,

“undefinable.”

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Then there are two quotations from the Bhagavad Gita: One sees it as a mystery or one speaks of it or hears of it as a mystery but none knows it. (II. 29) When men seek after the Immutable, the Indeterminable, the Unmanifest, the All-Pervading, the Unthinkable, the Summit Self, the Immobile, the Permanent, — equal in mind to all, intent on the good of all beings, it is to Me that they come. (XII, 3, 4) We get a new thought here. Beyond immutable, unthinkable, indeterminate, there is “Me” – the Purushottama.

Finally, there is a hymn from the Katha Upanishad: High beyond the Intelligence is the Great Self, beyond the Great Self is the Unmanifest, beyond the Unmanifest is the Conscious Being. There is nothing beyond the Being,—that is the extreme ultimate, that the supreme goal. (III, 10, 11)

This clarifies the status of the Purushottama. Beyond the Mind is the Self, beyond the Self is the Unmanifest and beyond the Unmanifest is the Purushottama. He is beyond the mutable and the immutable, beyond Saguna and Nirguna Brahman.

Now, coming to the main text, it has a beautiful beginning:

A Consciousness-Force, everywhere inherent in Existence, acting even when concealed, is the creator of the worlds, the occult secret of Nature.

This sentence gives us the sum and substance of the entire Book I. Here Sri Aurobindo has established that there is, at the root of the creation, a Consciousness-Force, that is, Chit-Tapas, inherent in Sachchidananda. We have discussed in chapter IV of Book One, the argument that

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this world is a manifestation of Sachchidananda and therefore, it is a Reality. The manifestation of the Supreme Reality must itself be a Reality. If I make a gold ring out of a lump of gold, the ring is as much gold as the lump itself. Having established this idea, Sri Aurobindo gives in a logical manner the steps of the Becoming of the Manifestation. He thus establishes a bridge between the Being and the Becoming.

On the metaphysical level, we are very much convinced that Sri Aurobindo's explanations are logical but if we turn to our day-to-day experience, do we find this world to be a manifestation of Sachchidananda, of Chit-Shakti, of Consciousness-Force? No, on the contrary, we find the world to be quite the opposite of Sachchidananda's nature. What is it that we see here? We have a world full of ignorance, darkness, tamas, avidya! Our experience, the things we see are just the opposite of what has been described. What we experience is that "there is a tardy and difficult evolution, a slowly increasing organisation and ameliorated mechanism of the workings of consciousness, more and more gains are written on the blank slate of the Nescience."

This is the slow process of evolution: from Matter slowly consciousness awakened, life came about and out of life there is a groping of Chit-Shakti, the Consciousness-Force with the double aspect of Knowledge and Ignorance. Out of the Nescience, there seems to be a tardy evolution of consciousness which reveals itself more and more as Knowledge.

What this Knowledge reveals to us is an Infinite which is an "indeterminate determination", a "boundless finite", out of which arise mysteriously infinite "determinants."

This is where we should go a little deeper. What we

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* understand is that there is an Infinite which is to our perception an indeterminate, if not indeterminable.

Evolution has gone from the animal to the human animal to the modern man, the intellectual man. Now, when this intellectual man starts thinking about the source of this universe, what answer does he find? The Vedic rishis have told us that the source is Brahman, whereas others, would say that Nirguna Brahman is the source of an illusory world of Maya. The Buddha would tell that there is at the source the Shunya, the Void. There have been different experiences of the Source, of the Cause of this universe.

Therefore, we can say that this knowledge reveals that there is an indeterminate, if not indeterminable. We call it Brahman but we do not know anything about It. We gave It a name implying that it is Infinite, Universal, “a boundless finite”.

Let us try to understand this phrase: “boundless finite.”

We say there are billions of galaxies, each composed of many millions of stars – there is a boundlessness, an apparent infinity and yet Sri Aurobindo calls it “a boundless finite.” There is a contradiction between the terms “boundless” and “finite”. A “boundless finite” seems infinite but even the scientists tell us that the Universe with Space and Time had a beginning and the Big Bang was its starting point. The beginning of something implies finiteness. This paradoxical term that Sri Aurobindo has given us is an extraordinary description of this universe.

On one side, it is infinite; on the other side, it is finite. So, we can call this universe a boundless finite.

Now what is the process by which things are determined?

We have entered the second argument here. The first one is that we do not know the source of our world; it is indeterminate. The second argument is that from that

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indeterminate, how did the universe or the world manifest?

We have no knowledge of the nature of the ultimate Reality, nor do we know the process of manifestation. This is a strange paradox: there is the Reality and we have the world but both are fundamentally unknown to us. Sri Aurobindo takes a step further and says,

We do not know even the rationale of original cosmic processes, for the results do not present themselves as their necessary but only their pragmatic and actual consequence. In the end we do not know how these determinates came into or out of the original Indeterminate or Indeterminable on which

they stand forth as on a blank and flat background in the riddle of their ordered occurrence. At the origin of things we are faced with an Infinite containing a mass of unexplained finites...

These are the essential arguments that we shall take up.

Sri Aurobindo clarifies that the explanations that we may give for the cosmic processes are only pragmatic and actual facts but they are not, logically the necessary explanations.

For example, Sankhya philosophy elucidates that Purusha leans towards Prakriti creation proceeds through certain given steps but this does not explain anything more than the steps. It does not explain how or why the steps originated. Why does Prakriti create the five elements and how and why do these five elements create further tatvas? This 'how' and 'why' of creation is still a mystery.

Sri Aurobindo would tell us that there is no clarity about this creation, neither its origin nor its results.

The first question that Sri Aurobindo takes up for discussion is whether it is necessary to accept an Infinite?

A gross materialist, a scientist may not agree that there is a Brahman. He would say that for him, there is nothing

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* like Brahman or Sachchidananda or the Indeterminate; it is pure Energy which is continuously taking different forms. The scientist accepts only the finite, whereas

“infinite existence, infinite non-being or boundless finite, all are to us original indeterminate or indeterminables.”

The scientist's view is not to think of the beyond but only to take as reality what is here and now. With all these arguments, where do we stand?

# Theory of Science

We have two main positions here: one of the spiritualist, the other of the materialist. Science conceives of Energy as the origin of the “multitude of infinitesimals.” This energy is “known not by itself but by its works...” Science cannot really disclose the intrinsic ‘how’ or ‘why’ of Nature’s processes. Sri Aurobindo has given examples to explain how Science has not been able to tell us exactly the ‘how’

and ‘why’ of things. For example, it does not explain:

... how a fixed formula for the combination of oxygen and hydrogen comes to determine the appearance of water which is evidently something more than a combination of gases, a new creation, a new form of substance, a material manifestation of a quite new character.

Science says that H (Hydrogen) and O (Oxygen) combined under certain circumstances make H O

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(Water). But it fails to explain how two gases could meet and form a completely new compound with a different character and status!

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo takes up the question of how, from a small seed, a tree should come up. Science does not really explain as it give us only the process of something that happens and is visible to the eyes or

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through a microscope. Another question that remains unanswered is how the physical genes of a child can carry not only the physical characteristics of the parents but also their tendencies and psychological traits? No matter how tall are the claims of Science, it only tells us about external, visible processes. It cannot answer how or why those processes came into being.

This aspect of Science is humorously brought out by Sri Aurobindo in his poem: “A Dream of Surreal Science”.

I quote a few lines:

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink At the Mermaid, capture  
immortality; A committee of hormones on the Aegean’s brink Composed  
the Iliad and the Odyssey. (CWSA 2: 614) If a scientist were asked how  
Shakespeare wrote his great dramas, he may reply that it is because of a  
combination of cells, a queer working of some chemistry that has happened  
in his brain because of which he could write; or because Shakespeare had a  
vast English vocabulary and much knowledge of history. But how is it that  
by knowing history and having vocabulary could he produce a Hamlet or a  
King Lear? Does this logically explain his ability? Science has given quite  
convincingly details of the process of Nature but still no scientist can tell us  
how birds migrate every year hundreds of miles and sit on the same tree and  
the same lake at the end of their journey. What guides them? There is  
something missing which we are unable to understand.

Sri Aurobindo finds out what could be that element which can really tell us  
in detail both the why and how of such phenomenon. He will not give his  
own answers directly but will deal with the available answers from Science  
and Philosophy. After considering some of

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the major arguments, he will deal with  
their merits and demerits. Sri Aurobindo will show us how these disciplines  
and approaches have failed to give us satisfactory answers and only then  
will he drive us towards his solution.

## Theory of Chance

Some philosophies tell us that all this talk of Energy, Consciousness and so on is useless because it is all by chance that this world has come into existence. Why should we give any name to a process or to a being for creating it? It is just by chance that things happened. They happen at random and that things are created by chance-events without any determining principle. Therefore, let's not assume of any underlying Creator or motive or principle for this process. It is simply happening, there is no specific aim. The moment we name an agency –

such as Consciousness or the Supreme Being – then it must have the responsibility for this creation with all its chaos. Why complicate the matter? Let us leave it as it is without giving any kind of motivation or direction to this creation!

This is called the theory of Chance and it satisfies some rationalists. One of its most convincing arguments is how else is it possible that such an infinite variety of creatures is born from the womb of the Inconscient? This argument looks very sane and logically convincing. But Sri Aurobindo observes something which weakens this argument of Chance:

Yet an opposite aspect of the nature of the cosmic phenomenon as we see it appears to forbid the theory of a random action generating a persistent order.

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There is too much of an iron insistence on order, on a law basing the possibilities.

This is the question: if we say that this world is a random creation, how is it that we find order in it? We see the seasons, night and day, the full moon and the new moon, the birds waking up, flying around the whole day and returning to their nests almost the same time every evening. All have a perfect rhythm! We see creatures of the sea come on the shore, lay their

eggs and go back to the sea again with perfect precision. Even human beings do not have that exactitude of time that these creatures possess. It is really a wonder how such an order prevails in Nature! Sri Aurobindo tells us that we cannot therefore accept the theory of Chance because there is so much order in the world which cannot be explained by it.

Obviously, there must be something more.

**Theory of Mechanical Necessity** Next, Sri Aurobindo considers the theory of Mechanical Necessity. If random Chance is not our answer then maybe Necessity could answer our questions. There is an instinct by which the sea turtles feel the necessity to come out from the sea and lay their eggs. It is a process of some Necessity, there is some compulsion in them.

But a theory of Mechanical Necessity by itself does not elucidate the free play of the endless unaccountable variations which are visible in the evolution. It also does not explain how a Mind of order and reason was created out of the Inconscient. This theory of Necessity fails to explain things: how is it possible that there are “endless unaccountable variations.” There has been so much variation – so many new birds have appeared, so many new species of fish and flowers have evolved. If it is a matter of pure mechanical repetition, then how is it that

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* there is so much newness in Nature? How and why do the variations take place? The same applies to human beings. How is it that we have progressed so much? This theory of Necessity, which is a kind of repetition, is not very convincing. It is fine that the seasons and birds and planets work out of Necessity but then how do these variations come about? We find no answers in this theory.

We see how Sri Aurobindo leads us logically from one argument to the other. The theory of Chance is insufficient because it cannot explain the existence of order. Similarly, the theory of Necessity is rigid and cannot give reasons for the infinite variations in nature. It cannot even explain the birth of the Mind out of the Inconscient.

We have seen that in evolution from Matter Life came up and then out of Life Mind evolved. How does the theory of Necessity explain the birth of human beings? Following this theory strictly, animals should have remained animals, apes should have remained the same apes. How is it that suddenly the human being appeared upon the earth? There has been a change, a variation which is inexplicable. Therefore, even this theory cannot be fully accepted. It clarifies a few questions but unfortunately it gets stuck on the major points of variation and evolution.

**Theory of extra-cosmic Divinity** Having dealt with the theories of Science, Chance and Mechanical Necessity Sri Aurobindo moves on to the theory of belief in God. We have read in all the scriptures of the world that God has created this world. According to this theory it is possible that an “extra-cosmic Divinity, a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will” has shaped this universe with all its beauty and harmony with its sameness and variations combining and intermingling while he himself remains invisible. This

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is called the theory of extra-cosmic Divinity. While all the previous theories are not acceptable, what could be perhaps convincing is that God has created this world.

The questions of order, rhythm, variation are answered with the belief that God is the originator of this world.

Voicing this point of view, Sri Aurobindo says, “All those things we see around us are then the thoughts of the extra-cosmic Divinity.” “Extra-cosmic” means beyond or outside the created universe. That means God has created this world and is watching it from above, looking at what’s happening, helping people, etc. It is a common religious belief that an “extra-cosmic Divinity” is looking at this world. We need not accept the theory of Chance or Necessity or Science: God has created the world and he watches over it.

...a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient Mind and Will, who is responsible for the mathematical law of the physical universe, for its artistry

of beauty, for its strange play of samenesses and variations, of concordances and discords, of combining and intermingling opposites, for the drama of consciousness struggling to exist and seeking to affirm itself in an unconscious universal order. The fact that this Divinity is invisible to us, undiscoverable by our mind and senses, offers no difficulty, since self-evidence or direct sign of an extra-cosmic Creator could not be expected in a cosmos which is void of his presence...

There might be people who would ask, "Why should I believe that God has created this universe? I seek a philosophical answer to these questions, not a religious one!" If the theist says that God has created the world, the atheist can ask, how do we know? What is the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* evidence? Can we even know or determine what God is?

Sri Aurobindo provides the theist a convincing reply:

...the patent signals everywhere of the works of an Intelligence, of law, design, formula, adaptation of means to end, constant and inexhaustible invention, fantasy even but restrained by an ordering Reason might be considered sufficient proof of this origin of things.

The theist can argue that we observe that the birds fly hundreds of miles and reach the same spot and sea turtles come ashore to lay their eggs. This leads us to understand that there is some deeper Intelligence or intuition guiding them and we call him God. God need not mean a form, a temple or church consecrated to him. The philosopher says that God is that Intelligence which we see behind everything in this world. In the beauty that we see everywhere, in the blossoming of a bud, in the honey-bee building its hive are sufficient to see the hand of God.

If we do not see things in the outer world as forms of God, then there is another place where we can find God and that is within us. That is the immanent Godhead.

God is not only above creation but also within it. In Indian philosophy it is called the true Self or Atman. God is there in each one of us as the soul and in fact, Vedanta has gone to the extent of saying that the soul is there even in the atom. It is present in every particle that exists upon the earth, in Matter, in Life, in human beings, though in different degrees! God is both outside and within.

Therefore, there is this beautiful order and rhythm of the universe in its endless variations. It is God who is consciously bringing out these variations and maintaining the rhythm and order of this world; everything is He.

This is the answer to the question, “Who is the creator

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of this world?” It is God. He is also this world itself. It is God who is the creator of this world and it is completely immersed in God; all is God – he is “both the player and the play, an Infinite casting infinite possibilities into the form of an evolutionary order.”

We seem to have come to the end of these arguments: it seems to be simple logic that God is the Creator. But it is not so easy to accept even this idea. Even though religion has blindly accepted this idea, the philosopher asks the question: you have a beautiful God whom you call Sri Krishna or Christ and you bow down to him but tell me why has God created suffering, violence, bloodshed, strife? Doesn't he have a better way of enjoying himself?

Is your God like a perverted person who enjoys torture of other creatures?” Sri Aurobindo puts the question this way:

One difficulty remains; it is the arbitrary nature of the creation, the incomprehensibility of its purpose, the crude meaninglessness of its law of unnecessary ignorance, strife and suffering, its ending without a denouement or issue. A play? But why this stamp of so many undivine elements and characters in the play of One whose nature must be supposed to be divine?

To the question, “If the Divine is the Creator, then why is there all this evil and suffering?” religion answers that God has not created these evil things, it is the Devil or the Asura who is responsible for it. Religion has given a clean chit to God, saying “God is benevolent, it is Satan who is evil.”

To the suggestion that what we see worked out in the world is the thoughts of God, the retort can be made that God could well have had better thoughts and the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* best thought of all would have been to refrain from the creation of an unhappy and unintelligible universe.

To this strong argument that God should have refrained himself from creating this world of sorrow and suffering, religion defends itself by its simple stand that it is Satan who has created this suffering world and not God! But a philosopher asks the question: if there are both Satan and God, it means that there are two Realities but we said in the beginning that there is only one Reality! Does it mean that we accept two Realities? To this question, Vedanta answers boldly that there are not two Realities – there is only one Brahman, only one Supreme Divine. If there is Satan and the Divine, they are not two separate Realities; even Satan is God himself but in a different role. We know that in Western theology, Satan is called ‘the fallen angel’.

Satan was an angel in the beginning but when he thought himself to be more powerful than God and revolted against him, when the consciousness of separation from God came in, he fell from his high state of consciousness.

The humans too think that they are different from God and have therefore separated from God. But Vedanta holds that it is God who is suffering, it is God who is this evil, it is God who is doing this violence: anything and everything is God and within God. He is “the frontal Energy” creating “out of itself in the boundless finite material universe.”

It may not be convincing to a religious person that God can create this suffering and evil. How and why would God create it? We believe that God is all-loving, forgiving and benevolent; then how can there be any evil created by him? Here Vedanta again comes to our aid. It tells us that it is a misunderstanding that God is giving “you”

suffering. God himself has become this world; hence he

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is doing good or bad to himself, not to some other “you”

and “me”. Basically, all is a process of growth through an apparently opposite consciousness of ignorance. This Vedantic realisation may not be rationally convincing and cannot be logically explained because it is an intuitive truth and can be accepted only when it is realised. The day we realise *tattvamasi* or *aham brahmasmi*, we will clearly see that there is no such thing as God and a separate “I”.

The Consciousness involves itself in the apparent dark consciousness and evolves out of it. This evolution is a constant battle between Light and Darkness. However, here we need to understand that this battle is between equal powers. A national cricket team plays against another nation’s team not with a state level team because then the game would be one-sided, the victory of the national team would be determined from the beginning and there would be no excitement and fun in the game.

That is why God also plays with his equals – the anti-divine forces. Ultimately, it is God who wins because the opposing forces are also Divine, though they have been given a negative role to play. To add thrill to the game, the battle goes on till the last moment and in the nail-biting finish God alone wins. To our eyes the dark forces seem to win the battle at times but they are working for the divine purpose, they still fulfill the divine plan.

Now, what is this Divine plan and why all this play?

Sri Aurobindo suggests a tentative answer: If there is such a creation by the Infinite out of itself, it must be the manifestation, in a material disguise, of

truths or powers of its own being: Further,

...free variation of possibilities natural to an infinite

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Consciousness would be the explanation of the aspect of inconscient Chance of which we are aware in the workings of Nature, — inconscient only in appearance and so appearing because of the complete involution in Matter, because of the veil with which the secret Consciousness has disguised its presence.

"All the unexplained processes of Nature would find their meaning and place if this hypothesis is tenable."

Processes like the arrangement and design of the universe, the growth of the tree out of the seed, the gene and chromosome carrying the information for the millions of processes, which take place within the body, could be explained.

It would then be perfectly intelligible why the Inconscient does its works with a constant principle of mathematical architecture, of design, of effective arrangement of numbers, of adaptation of means to ends, of inexhaustible device and invention, one might almost say, a constant experimental skill and an automatism of purpose.

What is the ultimate source from which this world has been created? Is the source determinable or indeterminable? Philosophies have given us different alternatives. Some say that there is no creation at all; it is all an illusion. Science has explained that this world is only a movement of Energy. Others speak of Chance and yet others of Mechanical Necessity. Then there is the theistic position which says that there is an extra-cosmic God. We have also seen Sri Aurobindo's own tentative answers. We shall first take up from Sri Aurobindo's perspective on the theistic position.

All theistic explanations of existence starting from an extra-cosmic Deity stumble over this difficulty

and can only evade it; it would disappear only if the Creator were, even though exceeding the creation, yet immanent in it, himself in some sort both the player and the play, an Infinite casting infinite possibilities into the form of an evolutionary cosmic order.

This is Sri Aurobindo's hypothesis. It is the solution, of course. But as a philosopher, he would not straightaway mention that it is the solution. The next trend of argument is to see if this hypothesis can be accepted and what are the problems that arise. He next explains: The apparent Inconscient of the material energy would be an indispensable condition for the structure of the material world-substance in which this consciousness intends to involve itself so that it may grow in evolution out of its apparent opposite...

If there is a Creator who exceeds the creation and yet is immanent and follows the evolutionary pattern, then how do we explain this process of evolution? First, there must be something to evolve from the Superconscient, the supreme Divine. The argument becomes difficult here because what can there be to evolve further from the supreme absolute Sachchidananda? Nothing! To evolve means to bring out that which is not there or is hidden but in Sachchidananda everything is already there potentially.

Therefore, he became his apparent opposite, the Inconscience. From the Inconscience, which apparently is unconscious, began evolution; that means the Supreme Consciousness is manifesting itself as one after another various levels. In this manifestation, the "indispensable condition" is the Inconscience that provides "the material world substance" which in turn provides the basis of a complete involution of the Supreme Consciousness.

As Sri Aurobindo says, "if there is such a creation by

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Infinite out of itself, it must be the manifestation, in material disguise, of truths or powers of its own being..."

The important ingredient of this solution is that everything must evolve in this “material disguise”. In this manifestation, we cannot speak of mind and life without the body. Whatever is going to evolve in this evolution on earth must have body as the basis: a substance of Matter as the basis. Here substance is not necessarily Matter as we see it now. Matter itself will undergo transformation but all that evolves must have substance as the basis – that is the principle of this evolution.

We could think of the possibility of an evolutionary pattern in which fire or water were the basis. However, in the present evolutionary pattern, Matter is the basis.

Therefore, everything must have a material envelope.

That is why Sri Aurobindo doesn't speak of the supramental consciousness evolving independently of the body, he speaks of its evolution in a physical body. What the physical body of a supramental being will be, we do not know, though we have been given some descriptions.

Nevertheless, in this evolution everything takes on a material disguise and once we accept the premise that the Infinite takes on material disguises and is evolving higher aspects of itself in form, then many things become easier to understand. Questions, which other theories were unable to answer, find their answers here.

For example, we have discussed that the theory of Chance could not give us an answer to the existence of order and pattern, nor could the theory of Mechanical Necessity explain the infinite variations in Nature.

However, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's theory of the evolution of consciousness and form we could get full

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and satisfactory answers for all the incomplete theories discussed before.

Let us take up the question of variation. Why is there variation in this evolution? The principle of supramental consciousness, at the basis of

evolution, is expressing itself in a particular rhythm. It follows some major determinants – Matter is one such determinant.

Once Matter is established, there is nothing to stop the variation. The next major determinant is Life. In life there could be infinite new forms. Similarly, there can be variations on all levels, there is nothing to stop them.

Thus, he answers the question of the variation by this explanation that as there is the infinite supramental consciousness behind evolution, the infinite variation is not a possibility but almost even a necessity or a natural corollary. “All the unexplained process of Nature would find their meaning and their place of this hypothesis to be tenable!”

The consciousness which evolves follows a rhythm that is set by itself that we see as the rhythms of Nature, of the seasons, of day and night. All this becomes very simple to understand if we accept that there is an infinite consciousness guiding the evolution in the physical Nature. In the other theories – Chance, Mechanical Necessity, Science or Religion – the element of consciousness is missing. It is because of the absence of this concept that we can not answer most of the questions.

The concept of the evolution of consciousness solves these problems.

If this hypothesis is tenable, then how do we explain the creation of Matter out of consciousness?

Sri Aurobindo proposes a solution to the relation between Consciousness and Matter:

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Energy seems to create substance but in reality, as existence is inherent in Consciousness-Force, so also substance would be inherent in Energy, — the Energy a manifestation of the Force, substance a manifestation of the secret Existence. But as it is a spiritual substance, it would not be apprehended by the material sense until it is given by Energy the forms of Matter seizable by that sense.

Sri Aurobindo explains how Energy has come about.

First, we said that it is Consciousness which is the guiding principle of evolution. Now, Science tells us that Energy creates Substance but how does it create? Scientists have said that Matter is nothing but Energy. But how does Energy create Substance? It is because “substance would be inherent in Energy.” That means Substance and Energy are one at the origin. How? The logic is simple. At the highest level, Sat, Chit, Tapas, Ananda are inseparable. If we have any one of them, we have all the others. If we have Consciousness, we automatically have Force, Energy, as well as Sat, Existence or Substance. If we have Substance, we have Energy and Consciousness. Similarly, if we have Energy we have Substance too. All the three are one and the same for they are inherent in one another.

If we have Energy, it means we have the Consciousness behind the Energy – that was the first proposition. Next, he says that out of this Energy we can have Substance because basically Substance and Energy are inseparable.

Let us put it this way: if I have Matter, out of this Substance I can have Energy, or if I have Energy, I can produce Matter. Whichever process I want to begin with I can have the others because Sat, Chit, Tapas are inherently one at their source.

Now the question is, where do we start? When Science

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says that everything is Energy, it does not recognise the mid-point, Chit or Consciousness. That is the missing link in Science, otherwise it has already established Energy and Substance as one. As Sri Aurobindo explains: “One begins to understand also how arrangement of design, quantity and number can be a base for the manifestation of quality and property; for design, quantity and number are powers of self-existence, quality and property are powers of the consciousness...” How beautifully he has linked these together! Quantity and numbers are connected to Sat or existence-substance. And quality and property are powers of Consciousness and force that is an inalienable part of Sat or existence-substance. Sat and Chit-tapas are inseparable at all levels.

For example, when we talk of mass production (quantity) there is not much higher consciousness in it.

In a supermarket we find thousands of products, all made by machines. For example, the ready-made dresses made in masses have hardly any consciousness in them. But if we get them made by a tailor, he puts his consciousness in it. Now we understand why hand-made items are more valuable! It is because there is the consciousness of the maker in it and that is more valuable than the quantity of mass production where a human consciousness and touch is absent.

Taking us further into the concept of consciousness, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Real-Idea, the supramental consciousness which is at the base of evolution and explains many puzzling mysteries. For example, the mystery of the seed and the tree: “The growth of the tree out of the seed would be accounted for, like all other similar phenomena, by the indwelling presence of what we have called the Real-Idea;...” Similarly,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* There would be no difficulty either in understanding on this principle how infinitesimals of a material character like the gene and the chromosome can carry in them psychological elements to be transmitted to the physical form that has to emerge from the human seed.

On this basis, it is easier to understand how the genes and chromosomes can carry psychological characteristics.

...it would be at bottom on the same principle in the objectivity of Matter as that which we find in our subjective experience,—for we see that the subconscious physical carries in it the mental psychological content, impressions of past events, habits, fixed mental and vital formations, fixed forms of character and sends them up by an occult process to the waking consciousness, thus originating or influencing many activities of our nature.

Earlier we discussed that Science could tell us about the genetic inheritance of a few diseases but it has not been able to explain fully the inheritance of

psychological characteristics from parents or ancestors. Sri Aurobindo explains that we have a “subconscient physical carrier”

of our personality that is a storehouse of all our actions, thoughts, feelings, both suppressed or expressed. It also carries “impressions of past events, habits fixed mental and vital formations...” The contents of the subconscient often come back to us in dreams or are sent up into our “waking consciousness” by an “occult process”. It is these impressions that manifest as the temporary or the psychological characteristics in a child. Thus the child inherits many psychological traits and patterns of the parents. When the child grows up, he slowly manifests these psychological as well as physical features of the

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parents. Sometimes we see that children are brought up away from their parents, yet as they grow up, they manifest the traits of their parents.

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In our previous class, we had explained that the

“subconscient physical” carries the impressions of the past events, fixed mental and vital formations, etc. It is due to this that we see the close connection between parents and their children. *The Mother* explains that if a pregnant woman practises certain things, they may sink into her own subconscient and the child may carry those psychological features. Those nine months of carrying the child are very important in the life of a mother and the child because their subconscient and physical layers are very close to each other.

Now coming to the next argument:

On the same basis there would be no difficulty in understanding why the physiological functionings of the body help to determine the mind's psychological actions: for the body is not mere unconscious Matter; it is a structure of a secretly conscious Energy that has taken form in it. Itself occultly conscious, it is, at the same time, the vehicle of expression of an overt Consciousness that has emerged and is self-aware in our physical energy – substance. The body's functionings are a necessary machinery or instrumentation for the movements of this mental Inhabitant...

What is the relation between mind and body? Which dominates the other? Is the mind more influential on the body or is the body more influential on the mind? Sri Aurobinido says that the fact that the body determines

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the mind is a “minor truth” but the “major truth” is that the mind dominates the body. There is an interconnection between the two but the influence of the body on the mind is lesser than the influence of the mind over the body.

This can be seen by considering some examples. If one has a bad liver for purely physical reasons, if this persists it may lead one to mental depression. There is an effect of the body on the mental status such that it causes disharmony in the mind. There are many such cases where we see the effect of the body on the mind.

We have all experienced that when there is fever or a bad cold, the mind seems to get numbed, as if the *tamas* of the body has entered into it and dragged it down from the higher levels of consciousness. Another example is if we start deep breathing exercises or do pranayama, it brings calmness to our mind. The role of asanas and pranayama, apart from their benefits to the body, is that they calm the mind itself. These are effects of the body over the mind.

There are plenty of examples to show the effect of the mind over the body. Consider how our will-power, our decision-making and self-suggestions help us in facing an injury to the body or in dealing with an illness. This is possible because the body also has a “subconscient consciousness” of its

own which can receive and respond to the influences of the mind. Here, we can think of a wounded soldier. Despite being wounded he does not succumb to pain, he continues to fight with his mental will. Similarly, when we make a sincere commitment, no matter how unwell we are, many times we manage to put up even in the sick condition only because of will-power.

There is another example of Mr. Coué about whom the Mother mentions in her conversations. He recommended

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that only through mental suggestion one can impact the physical. A lady who was losing her hair kept on suggesting to herself that her hair is growing longer and it did grow after sometime. So auto-suggestion of the mind does have an effect on the body. This thought or auto-suggestion sinks into the subconscious and then this subconscious of the body can become responsive in the physical and really there can be the growth of the hair.

Sri Aurobindo explains that the mind can alter the body's usual modes of functioning: On the other side, in the opposite order of process,—

that by which the mind can transmit its ideas and commands to the body, can train it to be an instrument for new action, can even so impress it with its habitual demands or orders that the physical instinct carries them out automatically even when the mind is no longer consciously willing them, those also more unusual but well attested by which to an extraordinary and hardly limitable extent the mind can learn to determine the reactions of the body even to the overriding of its normal law or conditions of action...

Sri Aurobindo discusses the effect of the mind's action on the body through the subconscious at length because he is interested in seeing how the body can be trained for a new action. This is how transformation and change can be brought in. For example, by constantly reinforcing the idea and suggestion to the body that I will not suffer, I will not fall ill, or my health will improve, I can have real effects on the body. These effects are not only due to the effects of auto-suggestion on the body but they are also due to the fact that pain and suffering actually come from another level; they enter into our body and then the body

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* suffers. As a first step we can stop this pain and suffering from coming into our nervous envelope. We can safeguard ourselves from diseases and even from accidents coming into our aura before they physically affect us.

Similarly, if we keep reminding ourselves that feelings of anger, passion, depression and jealousy, which affect us on the mental, emotional and physical levels, all come from outside it will help us in gradually rejecting them.

Also, if the body can accept negative things from outside, it can also absorb positive suggestions. Such positive auto-suggestions can give a new action to the body.

Sri Aurobindo explores the possibility of bringing into the body the supramental consciousness and force and a whole new physical instrumentation.

When there was just the animal consciousness, the instrumentation of the physical body itself was limited.

When the mental consciousness came into the body then the instrumentation for self-expression of the psychic being increased. When we say that a person is very much developed, in what sense is he developed? It is not how much money he possesses but how self-expressive he is, how much he can really bring out his inner consciousness.

It is only when one expresses one's deeper truth that there is right living. If there is no expression of the psychic being it leads to psychic sorrow. Our psychic being feels sorrow or sadness if it cannot express itself. Therefore, the more advanced we become in our spiritual life, the more we express our deeper self, not merely in the sense of writing poetry or doing painting but through whatever brings joy and harmony within and in the outer world.

We gain the essential satisfaction of expressing what we are and what we can do.

The next point to discuss is the “understanding of

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the mind”. Till now, Sri Aurobindo has given us the proposition that an infinite consciousness-force is behind the manifestation and that Sat-Chit-Tapas-Ananda are inherent in each other. But is it possible for us to know these things? Are they really knowable by our present instrumentations of mind? We read about these concepts in a book but we ourselves have no experience of them.

Sri Aurobindo, out of his own experience, has written about them in *The Life Divine* and we accept it. Otherwise it is not in our mental ken, it is beyond the reach of our mind.

He says that “to know with greater certitude we must follow the curve of evolving consciousness until it arrives at a height and largeness of self-enlargement”. On the level of matter, the stone cannot understand the working of Truth it is only when evolution comes to the level of the mind that we can even begin to think about the nature of our existence. These questions come to us at the level of the mind. But he adds that there also the ordinary mind does not usually concern itself. Apart from the philosophers, hardly anyone bothers to think about the origin of the universe. How is it that I have come on this earth? What is the goal of my life? Once the Mother spoke in a contemplative mood that hardly any human being asks himself the reason of his birth. In fact, the day we ask this question, it is the first step of awakening to yoga. Till then, people take their birth, circumstances and death for granted. Hardly anyone asks, “who am I?” or “why am I here?”

But in fact our mind can at first only observe facts and processes and for the rest it has to make deductions and inferences, to construct hypotheses, to reason, to speculate. In order to discover the secret

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of Consciousness it would have to know itself and determine the reality of its own being and process...

In the initial stage, nobody understands because nobody asks the question. And then he says:

...mind-consciousness is involved in its own whirl of thoughts, an activity in which it is carried on without rest and in which its very reasonings and speculations are determined in their tendency, trend, conditions by its own temperament, mental turn, past formation and line of energy, inclination, preference, an inborn natural selection...

If I am a scientist or a carpenter or an engineer, I am not bothered about the essential philosophical questions.

I am in my own environment; I have my own problems of carpentry or engineering. The range of my thoughts is limited to my own profession. This is the problem of the mind: it gets stuck to the facts and figures that it sees, it learns what is around it. It is only at a later stage, when one turns to sadhana or when there is something which awakens within, that one begins to ask such essential questions. Such is the nature of the mind; even to ask the pertinent questions requires an evolution of consciousness in the individual. Most of the human beings do not even ask because they are stuck in their world of thinking, in their family issues and surroundings and are content with that. It is when the psychic being begins to open to the Divine that evolution begins and through the process of sadhana we begin to understand the nature of the mind.

Even the scientist cannot tell us what the mind is; they tell only about what the mind does, its observable effects and processes. But if we ask the scientist about the nature of his own mind, he cannot answer. He would

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put so many cables and wires on his head and analyse its different electrical signals and vibrations but what exactly is his own mind, the scientist cannot answer. Only yoga can answer this question. In the yogic process, one of the things we come to know about it is that it is a “subtle substance”. For the scientist, the mind is still the activity of the brain. They say reasoning takes place in this side of the brain, imagination takes place in that side and they are working to locate physically its various characteristics.

But Sri Aurobindo says that mind is made of a mental substance:

...first we discover that mind is a subtle substance, a general determinate—or generic indeterminate—

which mental energy when it operates throws into forms or particular determinations of itself, thoughts, concepts, percepts, mental sentiments, activities of will and reactions of feeling but which, when the energy is quiescent, can live either in an inert torpor or in an immobile silence and peace of self-existence.

There is a substance of the mind, a substance of the vital and a substance of the physical. The substance of the physical is gross matter. The substance of the vital are the emotions, desires, passions and feelings that we experience. Do not think that desires do not have substance; it is desire which gets attached to physical things. An object can be just an object but the moment I want it and desire for it, it becomes a double object, physical and vital. A flower in the garden is an objective thing; one can look at it from afar and say how beautiful is its colour, appreciate it and go away but the moment one desires it for pooja room or drawing room there is a superimposition of desire on the object. One can attach to the same flower a mental substance, what Sri Aurobindo

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* calls “percepts and concepts of mental object.” This is how a single flower can take on a vital and mental substance.

Next we see that the determinations of our mind do not all proceed from itself; for waves and currents of mental energy enter into it from outside.

The nature of the mind is that it does not produce anything by itself. This is something basic that we should understand. All the ideas that we think are really not ours. We take royalties by saying that “I” have invented it, this is “my” idea, “my” poetry but we have to forego this thinking because actually all these things come into the mind as “waves and currents of mental energy”

from outside. Although the waves and currents of the mental energy are come to all of us, why is it that some receive certain ideas and others do not? It is precisely the question of their mental antennas. If we are trained for a particular pattern of thinking our mind gets fine-tuned to receive those waves. There may be some frequencies for philosophy, some for engineering, some others for aesthetics and only those who are attuned receive the corresponding waves. Every one of us turns our mind in a certain pattern through training and practice in attracting particular vibrations or powers.

The Mother gave a wonderful guideline for those who want to write a story or an essay etc. One should sit at the table every day, quietly and try to write something. The first day he/she may write one or two lines only but if he/

she persists in his/her endeavour, this effort itself creates a vibration around him. That vibration gets in touch with a particular world of mental thought and he/she can receive beautiful poems. If one wants to be a writer, one must connect oneself with the world of ideas; if one wants to be an artist, one must connect oneself with the world of

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colours, beauty and form. Without practice we cannot get anything because there is no tuning to that world of ideas or colours.

Whatever our profession, if we do it sincerely and constantly with perseverance, we are bound to create a kind of contact with that subtle world associated with the specific profession. Then at a certain point of time we get a direct link with it. For example, we may experience that after a year or two of practice and tuning that we start writing wonderful articles or become an efficient philosopher. Spiritually, we create this kind of vibration.

That's why the Mother says that a lazy person can never become anything and can never be joyous. When we connect ourselves with one of these subtle worlds, apart from the efficiency that comes into our expression, there is also a deep sense of joy that follows. A lethargic person has neither

the efficiency nor the joy because he has not connected himself with the subtle world. The Mother connects this great truth with the aim of life.

If we have an aim in life, a work to do, we can connect with the deeper and higher energies behind life and become efficient and happy – it is not just a material happiness, it is a joy that comes from the higher levels. This applies both to yoga and ordinary life, people are happier when they have this inner basis of effort. Practice gives both skill and happiness, because it brings a connection with the spiritual reality behind life.

In our analysis of the mind, firstly we have said that it has a substance of its own and secondly, that it is not the originator of thoughts or ideas but it only conveys what it receives. How well it conveys the ideas received without distortion depends on its training. Most people twist what

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* they receive, they add to it a mental and vital passion.

Whatever little they receive from the universal mind, they twist it and make it narrow and limited.

A third thing that we discover is that behind this universal subtle mind there is something called the mental Being. Normally, we call it in our Indian terminology the Manomaya Purusha. This is something which has not been much recognised in psychology. There is a mental being which supports this mental substance and it is that which is actually the true guide. Normally, we are not able to get in contact with the mental Being. At present, our mind is only a window to the ideas that are coming from outside but not a window to the Manomaya Purusha.

Furthermore, we discover that our individual mind is a formation of the universal Mind. Whatever its characteristics and propensities, it is itself a formation of the universal mind. For example, if there is a raincloud, when the raindrops come down they are the formation of the cloud, carrying the characteristics of the cloud.

Similarly, all of our minds are nothing but the “raindrops”

of this universal mind. We are a wave, a portion of the universal mind. So when I have one little thought that I call ‘my idea’, it really does not belong to me. It comes into me from the universal mind.

The mental ego is that aperture through which these ideas come in and it immediately grabs them and calls them its own. I am really not an individual ‘I’, I am only a wave, a formation of the universal consciousness and the sense of ‘I’ is a false sense. All other falsehoods come subsequent to this mental falsehood of the sense of being a separate ‘I’. Once we get rid of that falsehood we get realisation, liberation; mukti is to know that I am that universal consciousness and beyond it I am only a

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formation of His consciousness. The more we say, “it is my being”, “my thought”, the more we love to see our own picture framed on the wall and admire it, the more we are caught up in our ego, the more we “de-frame” ourselves, the more we move towards universality and realisation.

But still, in view of these complexities, the question remains entire whether all this evolution and action is a phenomenal creation by some universal Energy presented to the mental being or an activity imposed by Mind-Energy on the Purusha’s indeterminate, perhaps indeterminable existence, or whether the whole is something predetermined by some dynamic truth of Self within and only manifested on the mind surface. To know that we would have to touch or to enter into a cosmic state of being and consciousness to which the totality of things and their integral principle would be better manifest than to our limited mind experience.

We have seen that with this complex mind we are still unable to understand its whole nature. We do not know if it has a basis of reality in the indeterminate Self behind or if it is simply some activity of the mental energy imposed on the surface of this indeterminate Self. We cannot understand because this mind is of a dividing nature, it gives limited knowledge. Even though it has a whole Being behind it, the mind itself is

limited. With its limited vision it cannot tell what the Absolute is; for that we need a cosmic vision.

Next, Sri Aurobindo discusses what the Overmind which has a cosmic vision, can show us. It, unlike mind, is a cosmic mind. From here we may be able to know the nature of the “Indeterminable”. Sri Aurobindo explains that the Overmind—carries in itself a first direct and

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* masterful cognition of cosmic truth: here then we might hope to understand something of the original working of things, get some insight into the fundamental movements of cosmic Nature. One thing indeed becomes clear; it is self-evident here that both the individual and the cosmos come from a transcendent Reality which takes form in them: the mind and life of the individual being, its self in nature must therefore be a partial self-expression of the cosmic Being...

What is the vision of the cosmic mind? The first immediate vision is that this individual world is not separate from the Transcendent. If from our mental perception we think that the cosmic and transcendent levels do not even exist, it is because mind does not have that vision. However, when one raises oneself to the cosmic mind, one can see this world and individuals in it but not as separate entities. The cosmic mind has this great advantage that it can see on one side the Absolute and on the other side the individuals. It has got the vision where individual is not separate from the Divine. That is one major advantage we get at the level of the cosmic mind: we experience a unity between the transcendent and the individual.

But the original question set out for us by the phenomenon of the universe is not solved by the Overmind knowledge, —the question, in this case, whether the building of thought, experience, world of perceptions of the mental Person, the mind Purusha, is truly a self-expression, a self-determination proceeding from some truth of his own spiritual being, a manifestation of that truth’s dynamic possibilities, or whether it is not rather a creation or construction presented to him by Nature, by Prakriti

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and only in the sense of being individualised in his personal formation of that Nature can it be said to be his own or dependent on him; or, again, it might be a play of a cosmic Imagination, a fantasia of the Infinite imposed on the blank indeterminable of his own eternal pure existence.

Sri Aurobindo explains that the Overmind helps us understand that the Transcendent, Universal and Individual are linked with each other and are one.

However, our essential questions about the origin and source of this world still remain unanswered. He says the Overmind gives us three possibilities – first, that this world is truly the “self-expression” of Truth; second, there is Maya or Prakriti or illusion that has created this world but this Prakriti is dependent on the Absolute; third, this world may be an imagination or fantasy imposed on the Truth. Anyone of these could be the possible explanations of the creation of this world.

It is not capable of giving us a definite answer because it still does not have the unitary, complete vision. It deals with multiplicity and therefore it sees multiple options and is unable to give a precise answer. It gives an authenticity to each possibility. So we are still to find an answer to this question.

If we ask the Overmind what is the nature of the indeterminate Absolute, it answers that there could be two aspects of the Supreme: one “a pure silent self without feature or qualities or relations” and the other, “the mighty dynamis of a determinative knowledge-power of a creative consciousness”. According to Overmind the Supreme is of two natures: the static and the dynamic –

Nirguna and Saguna. Sri Aurobindo says “The Overmind consciousness maintains equally these two truths of

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Eternal which face the mind as mutually exclusive alternatives”.

Overmind “admits both as supreme aspects of one Reality: somewhere, then, behind them there must be a still greater Transcendence which originates them or upholds them both in the supreme Eternity. But what can that be of such opposite equal truths, unless it be an original indeterminate Mystery”. We have found two opposite natures of the Supreme and three alternative possibilities regarding the creation of the world. While the mind could not give us an answer, the Overmind has brought us closer. How then does Sri Aurobindo solve the problem?

This opposition between the world and the Brahman is typical of the overmental consciousness. It is only when one goes beyond into supramental consciousness that one can have the unitary vision of Brahman and the world existing simultaneously. We have no direct understanding of his state of realisation. In his experience, of course, he realised the Nirguna Brahman but in rejecting the reality of the world, he was perhaps acting from the Overmental consciousness.

He had to choose; he could not say both were Realities.

Sri Aurobindo also realised the Nirguna Brahman – early in his practice of yoga while he was in Kashmir – but after that he had an idea of the higher existence, that of the supramental consciousness. It was this consciousness that could synthesise this world with Brahman. However, this opposition between Brahman and the world was a mystery in the spiritual realisation of Adi Shankaracharya.

Sri Aurobindo would not blame Adi Shankaracharya nor find fault with him. Anyone in his position would have said the same thing. The Vedic and Vedantic Rishis

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accepted this world as Reality but perhaps they too were acting from the edges of the supramental consciousness.

They may not have established themselves in Supermind like Sri Aurobindo but they were inspired from the same unitary vision of the supramental consciousness. That’s what is implied, for example, in the Isha Upanishad:

“The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer...” (CWSA 17: 9) It is from that level that they could speak of Nirguna and Saguna Brahman and also of the Purushottama.

A perfect example of the Overmental consciousness maintaining equally the “two truths of the Eternal” – that of Nirguna and Saguna, is the philosophical stand point of Adi Shankaracharya. He maintains that the “Absolute is indeed a pure Indeterminable” and “there is no creation or manifestation, no Universe...” This rejection of the Universe, is, contradicted by the sensorial and mental experience of the world by all of us, even by the Acharya undeniably. How do we explain this contradiction?

Adi Shankaracharya solves the riddle by posing the power of Maya as the creator of this illusion of the world, which she has succeeded to superimpose on Brahman.

But, this reply of the Acharya is not tenable logically.

Firstly, if Maya is a Power, then “since the Absolute is the sole reality,” ... this Power must proceed from it, must have some relation with it, “a connection a dependence.”

For if it is quite other than the supreme Reality, a cosmic Imagination imposing its determinations on the eternal blank of the Indeterminable, then the sole existence of an absolute Parabrahman is no longer admissible; there is then a dualism at the source of things — not substantially different from the Sankhya dualism of Soul and Nature.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Secondly, if Maya is the Power of Brahman, then too it is not a tenable idea:

...we have this logical impossibility that the existence of the Supreme Being and the Power of his existence are entirely opposite to each other, two supreme contradictories; for Brahman is free from all possibility of relations and determinations but Maya is a creative Imagination imposing these very things upon It, an originator of relations and determinations of

which Brahman must necessarily be the supporter and witness, — to the logical reason an inadmissible formula.

Thirdly, even if all things in this world are illusory, maya,

...they must have at least a subjective existence and they can exist nowhere except in the consciousness of the Sole Existence; they are then subjective determinations of the Indeterminable.

Fourthly, if the determinations of the world are real creations, then

...it is not possible that they are made out of a Nothing, a Non-Existence other than the Absolute; for that will erect a new dualism...

So, Sri Aurobindo concludes:

Whatever is created must be of it and in it and what is of the substance of the utterly Real must itself be real: a vast baseless negation of reality purporting to be real cannot be the sole outcome of the eternal Truth, the Infinite Existence.

Further, Sri Aurobindo explains that in one sense it is true that the Absolute is indeterminable because it cannot

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be limited, as held also by the Acharya but it does not mean that Absolute is “incapable of self-determination:”

The Supreme Existence cannot be incapable of creating true self-determinations of its being, incapable of upholding a real self-creation or manifestation in its self-existent infinite.

Now, Sri Aurobindo moves on to explain the higher level of the supramental consciousness. How very logically he takes us through the scales of consciousness!

He starts from Science and theories of Philosophy to see if the mind can give an answer. He concludes that the nature of the mind is such that it

cannot enlighten us much. He moves on to examine the Overmind which is a far greater consciousness but it also gets stuck in a dilemma of seeing different possibilities. He then moves on to the Supermind to see if it can solve our problem.

Overmind, then, gives us no final and positive solution; it is in a supramental cognition beyond it that we are left to seek for an answer. A Supramental Truth-consciousness is at once the self-awareness of the Infinite and Eternal and a power of self-determination inherent in that self-awareness; the first is its foundation and status, the second is its power of being, the dynamis of its self-existence...

To Supermind therefore the Supreme is not a rigid Indeterminable, an all-negating Absolute; an infinite of being complete to itself in its own immutable purity of existence, its sole power a pure consciousness able only to dwell on the being's changeless eternity, on the immobile delight of its sheer self-existence, is not the whole Reality. The Infinite of Being must also be an Infinite of Power; containing in itself an eternal repose

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and quiescence, it must also be capable of an eternal action and creation...

We find our answers in the Supermind. The term

“indeterminable” means that it cannot be limited by any determination. When we say that the Supreme cannot be determined, what do we mean by that? Can we say that the supreme Brahman is compassion, is light, is consciousness, is knowledge, is love? We can go on adding hundreds of adjectives to Brahman. He is all the hundred things we could speak about and yet he is beyond all these. We can speak of Brahman in thousands of adjectives but he will still exceed those descriptions.

Brahman is indeterminable in the sense that he cannot be limited by these thousand determinations but not in the sense that he is incapable of self-determination. The supreme Brahman is beyond all the formations of the universe and yet he is all this universe.

Adi Shankaracharya told us that the supreme Brahman is indeterminable in the sense that he cannot become this finite world because he is that infinite unchangeable consciousness. He asks how can this supreme Nirguna unchangeable consciousness become something which changes every moment? What Supermind tells us is that this supreme consciousness has a power of becoming also.

When it is quiescent, when it is not manifesting itself, the power of self-manifestation is dormant within it. It has both the eternal Repose and the eternal Action. Here lies the whole confusion of many Indian philosophers. We believe that the supreme Brahman is either dynamic or non-active (quiescent), we could never understand that the two co-exist in Brahman: when he is quiescent, not active and non-manifest, then this dynamic power within him is simply withheld. Imagine, in a horse race when

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all the horses are standing on the starting line and the moment the gun is shot, they leap into swift motion. They don't start slowly to pick up the speed – they immediately leap into maximum speed. They can do that because they have withheld their immense power and speed for a while.

Similarly, the silent Brahman has withheld within him all the power of the dynamic Brahman and the moment he releases that power the world comes into manifestation. Quiescence does not mean that there is absence of power, it only means that the power is checked and kept under control. It is simply a question of releasing the control to let the power come out. In other systems of philosophy Brahman is assumed to have either the power of action or inaction; He does not possess both. However, Sri Aurobindo, the Vedas and Vedanta combine the quiescent and active Brahman and say that both aspects are together, only the poise differs.

Hence, this line gathers immense importance: “The Infinite of Being must also be an Infinite of Power.”

We have seen that Chit is always united with Tapas-Consciousness which is quiescent is united with Tapas, the force of consciousness. Previously, Indian philosophers spoke only of Sat-Chit-Ananda, they did not take into

account the aspect of force. It is Sri Aurobindo who has reinforced the idea of the unity of Chit-Tapas and used the term Sat-Chit-Tapas-Ananda. Sri Aurobindo's experience says that Being and Force go together.

Creation would then be a self-manifestation: it would be an ordered deploying of the infinite possibilities of the Infinite. But every possibility implies a truth of being behind it, a reality in the Existent; for without that supporting truth there could not be any possibles.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* We have now understood that the Supreme is both dynamic and quiescent simultaneously. All individuals, all the universes are only manifestations of the supreme Power and each contains, as Vedas have told us beautifully, the whole of the Brahman. Let us take an example of the mirror halls, Sheesh Mahal, in the palaces in Rajasthan.

Those mirror halls have thousands of mirrors and the beauty is that in each small piece, one can see one's image.

Similarly, everything upon earth – right from the atom to the galaxy – carries the whole of Brahman. We are not pieces of Brahman; we are all of us the whole of Brahman.

We carry the entire Brahman within us, however, we express only one aspect of Him. He has infinite aspects and each one of us is one of the aspects that Brahman wants to manifest.

To sum up this argument, Sri Aurobindo reiterates: The Absolute is not limitable or definable by any one determination or by any sum of determinations; on the other side, it is not bound down to an indeterminable vacancy of pure existence. On the contrary, it is the source of all determinations: its indeterminability is the natural, the necessary condition both of its infinity of being and its infinity of power of being; it can be infinitely all things because it is no thing in particular and exceeds any definable totality. It is this essential indeterminability of the Absolute that translates itself into our consciousness through the fundamental negating positives of our spiritual experience, the immobile immutable Self, the

Nirguna Brahman, the Eternal without qualities, the pure featureless One Existence, the Impersonal, the Silence void of activities, the Non-being, the Ineffable and the Unknowable.

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These two aspects are necessary for humanity. Now this is interesting. He brings Supermind as a synthesis but he keeps these two experiences distinct, for they are needed for the human experience. The Nirguna aspect, which is the impersonal aspect of the Divine, is needed in human life. We get lost in our own egoistic person, in our own Prakriti or outer personality. In order to pull us away from our egoistic personality we have to go towards impersonality. So, impersonality is necessary. Sankhya philosophy describes this impersonality as the Witness Purusha. In sadhana we have to achieve this impersonality, otherwise we cannot go too far. On a higher level of consciousness this impersonality is called the Nirguna Brahman but on the individual level it is called the Sakshi or the Witness Self. In sadhana one of the first things we need to realise is the Manomaya Purusha. It is the doorstep of the impersonal witness. To reach this stage the mind has to step back from its association with the outer world, Prakriti, its play and reactions. When the mind can simply observe the outer phenomena without getting involved in them it becomes a witness.

Both the personal and impersonal are equally important in human life and sadhana. This dual aspect does not get merged in the Supermind; they lose their opposition but their distinction is maintained. That is the reason why Sri Aurobindo could have the experience of the impersonal Brahman in Kashmir and the personal Brahman in Alipore jail. Before coming away to Pondicherry, he stayed incognito at Chandernagore. His stay at Chandernagore was also a very big step in his spiritual evolution. What he learnt in the jail immediately started manifesting in Chandernagore itself in some vague form and later on he developed the clarity in Pondicherry. He may have had the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* first notion of the Supermind in his stay in Chandernagore.

Those were his first steps towards Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo explains that “All aspects of the omnipresent Reality have their fundamental truth in the Supreme Existence. Thus even the aspect or power of Inconscience, which seems to be an opposite, a negation of the eternal Reality, yet corresponds to a Truth held in itself by the self-aware and all-conscious Infinite”. Similarly, the Superconscient is the luminous self-awareness of the supreme Being. The transition from this fathomless insensibility in the Inconscience to the supreme sensibility of bliss involves the stages of ignorance. Thus Inconscience or ignorance “is not a denial, it is one term, one formula of the infinite and eternal Existence”.

The Supermind brings about not only a synthesis of the Nirguna and Saguna aspects of Brahman but also a wonderful synthesis between the Inconscient and the Superconscient. With our mental consciousness we say that the Inconscient is darkness, there is no consciousness but the supramental vision understands that this Inconscient is also made of the same consciousness; the difference is that here the consciousness is dormant. That is why the Vedas have spoken about the black sun and the golden sun – one in the Inconscient and the other in the Superconscient. That is only to say that there is a sun above, the supramental sun and down below there is another sun in the Inconscient.

The supramental consciousness brings a vast synthesis and that is why Sri Aurobindo’s yoga is called the synthesis of yoga. It is not just the synthesis of Bhakti, Karma, Jnana, Rajayoga and Hathayoga. It is the yoga of the entire creation which comes together in him because he brings the supramental consciousness. All that the

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Vedas, Vedanta, Gita, Darshanas and Tantra have revealed find their rightful place in Sri Aurobindo’s yoga. He has synthesised all that the great acharyas and all that the ancients have discovered – everything becomes one and harmonious in his consciousness.

Finally, he says, “It might be objected that the supramental cognition is, after all, not the final truth of things”. Now he goes beyond the Supermind:

Beyond the supramental plane of consciousness which is an intermediate step from overmind and mind to the complete experience of Sachchidananda, are the greatest heights of the manifested Spirit: here surely existence would not at all be based on the determination of the One in multiplicity, it would manifest solely and simply a pure identity in oneness.

But the supramental truth-consciousness would not be absent from these planes, for it is an inherent power of Sachchidananda: the difference would be that the determinations would not be demarcations, they would be plastic, interfused, each a boundless finite.

He says it is true that the Supermind is not the last stage of manifestation; beyond Supermind there are still higher regions, higher planes of existence. Nevertheless, he says, “the supramental truth-consciousness would not be absent from these planes, for it is an inherent power of Sachchidananda.” There would be a difference: “the determinations would not be demarcations, they would be plastic, interfused, each a boundless finite”; but there would still be determinations, it would not be “a vacancy of pure existence”.

In the evolution from the Inconscient to the Supermind, we are all individual beings. In the beginning we are

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* egoistic and as we go higher towards the Supermind we lose the ego and gain a sense of oneness. From Supermind onwards, there will still be individuals but individuals will not only feel themselves together but will be identified and become one in the Supreme.

There is an important difference between the phrases

“identity in oneness” and “oneness in multiplicity”. Here in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram we feel that we are all one, this is called “oneness in multiplicity”. I still say I am so and so, you are so and so but because we are all devotees of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, we have a sense of oneness. However, above the Supermind there will be an absolute identity.

As long as we are in ego, there is a sense of separation, as we go to higher consciousness oneness comes in but beyond Supermind we are all united in a complete identity. That is the difference between “the many here and the many” there. And then he says:

For there all is in each and each is in all radically and integrally,—there would be to the utmost a fundamental awareness of identity, a mutual inclusion and interpenetration of consciousness...

It might be said again that, even so, in Sachchidananda itself at least, above all worlds of manifestation, there could be nothing but the self-awareness of pure existence and consciousness and a pure delight of existence. Or, indeed, this triune being itself might well be only a trinity of original spiritual self-determinations of the Infinite; these too, like all determinations, would cease to exist in the ineffable Absolute. But our position is that these must be inherent truths of the supreme being; their utmost reality must be pre-existent in the Absolute even if they are ineffably other there than

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what they are in the spiritual mind’s highest possible experience. The Absolute is not a mystery of infinite blankness nor a supreme sum of negations; nothing can manifest that is not justified by some self-power of the original and omnipresent Reality.

This is the acme that Sri Aurobindo takes us to. We must try and see how subtle his arguments are, how he goes from one point to a higher one. We have discussed all the ranges of the Mind, the Overmind, the Supermind and from the Supermind to Sachchidananda. Now when he comes to Sachchidananda he says, there are also determinations. He says one can go further beyond into the Absolute in which there are no demarcations at all.

We cannot name them as Existence and Consciousness-Force and Ananda. The very thought of this trinity does not arise there; it is the Absolute Indeterminate which is oneness complete. The last sentence is a master line summary of the whole chapter. The Absolute is not a mystery of infinite blankness – that is, it is not the

“Indeterminable”. Nor is it a “supreme sum of negations” –

that is, it is all the cosmic determinations and yet beyond them. The supreme is both the consciousness and the manifesting self-power! A wonderful concluding sentence indeed!

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## Lecture Notes

**I. An Infinite Indeterminate is the origin** Although Consciousness–Force, Chit–Shakti, is the creator of the worlds, our experience of the material world has the double aspect of knowledge and ignorance. Out of the Nescience, there seems to be a tardy process of evolution of consciousness which reveals itself more and more as knowledge.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* What this knowledge reveals is an Infinite which is an Indeterminate – ‘a boundless finite’ – out of which arise mysteriously infinite determinants. To this process we give the name ‘Nature’, which in itself does not explain much.

A cosmic paradox seems to be the beginning of all things.

Alternatively, even if we call this beginning of all things as Void or Nihil or Space and Time, there is still no explanation of the strange process by which things are determined or of their powers, qualities and properties, no revelation of their true nature, origin and significance.

## **II. The Rationale of Science**

Science conceives of Energy as the origin of all the multitude of infinitesimals. This Energy is known not by itself but by its works; hence, science cannot really disclose the intrinsic how or why of Nature's processes. Nor can science explain the variations in the different determinants

– what compels or impels the exuberant play of varying possibilities which seem to have no aim or meaning but the beauty and delight of creation.

### **III. Is it Chance or is it Necessity?**

Because of the inevitable order on one side and the unaccountable Chance on the other side of Nature, we may say that Chance or an inconsequent Nature is the determining principle. But this is not possible to be accepted in view of the rigid insistence on order and harmony that is found in the scheme of things. Even if we posit a theory of mechanical Necessity as the explanation, it does not satisfy because it does not elucidate the free play of the endless unaccountable variations that are visible in evolution. This theory also does not explain how a mind of order and reason was created out of Inconscience.

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### **IV. An Extra-Cosmic Divinity**

It could be possible that an extra-cosmic Divinity, a Being with an omnipotent and omniscient mind and will, has shaped this physical universe with all its beauty and harmony, with its sameness and vacations, combining and intermingling opposites while he himself remains invisible.

This creator need not be entirely supracosmic; he may be immanent in his works. Still this theory, though it is more comprehensive than the others, cannot explain the arbitrary nature of the creation and the crude meaninglessness of its law of unnecessary ignorance, strife and suffering.

## V. A Tentative Solution

All these problems and paradoxes can be solved only if we posit that an infinite Consciousness is building up through the action of a frontal Energy and through the means of evolution a creation out of itself in the boundless finite. This Consciousness must be involved in the inconscience and it must be the powers of its own being which are being manifested in a material disguise.

All the unexplained processes of Nature will find their meaning and their place if this hypothesis proves to be tenable. Processes like the arrangement of design, quantity and number being the base of manifestation, the problem of the growth of the tree out of the seed, the problem of how gene and chromosome carry psychological characteristics can all be easily explained.

Similarly, there will be no difficulty in understanding how the physiological functioning of the body can help to determine the mind's psychological actions.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* **VI. Understanding with the Mind** By following the curve of the evolving Consciousness in the Inconscience, we can find out the hidden origin of what is manifested.

We cannot seek this secret in Matter or in Life as the consciousness is still submental and therefore, to us as mental beings, it may seem as inconscience. It is only in the human mind that we can go closer to the hidden Source.

But it cannot be done by the mind as it is in the normal human state. By the yogic process of quietening the mind, we first find that mind is in itself a subtle substance.

Next, we see that the determinations of mind do not at all proceed from it; they come from other planes of consciousness. Lastly, we discover the

Mental Purusha who is the real upholder of all the actions of the mind as well as the source of all mental determinations.

Still, these revelations about the mind and its determinants are not sufficient to understand the totality of things or find the integral principle.

**VII. Understanding of Overmind Consciousness** It is only the Overmind consciousness which can give us a first direct cognition of cosmic truth and the original working of things. Here we understand that both the individual and the cosmos come from a transcendent Reality which takes form in them.

The Overmind too does not solve the problem of whether the world of perceptions of the mental Person is a true self-expression or whether it is a creation presented by Nature, or whether it is all a play of a cosmic Imagination.

As the Overmind allows each of these three possibilities

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to formulate itself, we cannot get a clear and final answer to our problem. Further, the Overmind admits equally the two apparently mutually exclusive experiences of the pure silent Self, the Nirguna, the Impersonal and the mighty dynamis, the Saguna and the Personal. These opposites seem to be aspects of some indeterminable Mystery about which even the Overmind is not able to give us a clear understanding.

This leaves us with two supreme contradictions. If the Supreme Absolute is Indeterminable, then no creation, no manifestation, no universe is possible. And yet the universe exists! Then how did this universe come about?

If this universe has its origin in another Reality like a Cosmic Imagination or Illusion or Maya, then there is a dualism at the source of things and this is not admissible.

Secondly, how can this Power of creation, which has created this Universe, be completely opposite to that of the Supreme Being? One is free of all

determinations while the other is full of determinations? We end up in a suprarational mystery, anirvacaniya.

**VIII. Understanding of the Supermind Consciousness** To the Supermind the Absolute is indeterminable in the sense that it cannot be limited by any determination or any sum of possible determinations but not in the sense that it is incapable of self-determination.

To the Supermind, the Supreme is not a rigid Indeterminable: an infinite Power cannot be solely a Force resting in a pure inactive sameness, an immutable quiescence; it must have in it endless powers of its being and energy. Thus creation would be a self-manifestation: it would be an ordered deploying of the infinite possibilities of the Infinite.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* For the supramental vision, the imperatives, the nexus of possibilities, the resultant actualities will carry in themselves the inevitability of their originating imperative.

At the same time, indeterminability is also a necessary element of the Absolute. That is because the Absolute is not limitable or definable by any one determination or by the sum of determinations. It is this aspect of the Absolute which gets translated into our consciousness as Nirguna Brahman, immutable Self, the Impersonal, the Silence, the Void, the Unknowable, etc. On the other side, as the Absolute is the source of all determinants, it gets translated as Saguna Brahman, the Personal, etc. This unifying vision is the essence of the supramental vision.

## **IX. Beyond Supermind**

Thus all aspects of Reality have their existence in the Supreme Existence. Inconscience is nothing but the Infinite's power of plunging its consciousness into a trance of self-involution. Similarly, the Superconscience is the luminous self-awareness of the Supreme Being. The span from this fathomless swoon of insensibility of Inconscience to the supreme sensibility of Bliss involves the stage of Ignorance. Thus Inconscience or Ignorance is not a denial; it is one term, one formula of the infinite and eternal Existence.

Beyond this supramental cognition are the greatest heights of the manifested Spirit – yet those heights wherein there is a pure identity in oneness would not be bereft of the Supermind, for it is the inherent power of Sachchidananda.

There all is each and each in all radically and integrally having all the relations with the delight of existence.

### **Chapter – II**

**Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara,**

**Maya, Prakriti, Shakti**

This is one of the most fascinating chapters in *The Life Divine* for it is inspiring for both the philosopher and the sadhak of the Integral Yoga. We have heard about Brahman, Purusha and Ishwara in the Puranas and other scriptural writings and mythology in India but here we have a new arrangement, understanding and relation of the three divinities.

In the previous chapter we read about the Absolute but that was more as a conceptual possibility. In this chapter we come to know the plan of actual creation and the roles of Brahman, Ishwara, Purusha and then respectively of Maya, Shakti, Prakriti. These are important concepts to know – both philosophically and from the point of view of yoga.

The main idea of the previous chapter is: There is then a supreme Reality eternal, absolute and infinite. Because it is absolute and infinite, it is in its essence indeterminable. It is indefinable and inconceivable by finite and defining Mind; it is ineffable by a mind-created speech; it is describable neither by our negations, *neti neti*,— for we cannot limit it by saying it is not this, it is not that, — nor by our affirmations, for we cannot fix it by saying it is this, it is that, *iti iti*.

Our premise in the previous chapter has been that this indeterminate supreme Absolute cannot be determined

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* but it determines everything. It means that we cannot describe It by any positive or negative adjectives saying that the Supreme is this or that. We cannot say that the Supreme is not this – *neti neti* – we cannot say he is not the world, nor can we say that the Supreme is this – *iti iti*. We cannot exhaust his description by any positive or negative adjectives. He is not the sum total of all the qualities; he is all and yet is beyond all.

One of the reasons that we are not able to describe him is the incapability of our own language. Sri Aurobindo tells us that one cannot describe this indefinable reality in words but It can be experienced. This intuitive thought is caught beautifully in the Chandogya Upanishad: “Thou art that – *tat tvam asi*”. We cannot define the Supreme but it can be caught by “a spiritual intuition”. These are the intuitive truths given by Vedanta to humanity. One can comprehend the supreme Brahman by intuition or through some inner experience. He may be approached by “a large and plastic idea.”

These truths present themselves to our conceptual cognition as the fundamental aspects in which we see and experience the omnipresent Reality. In themselves they are seized directly, not by intellectual understanding but by a spiritual intuition, a spiritual experience in the very substance of our consciousness; but they can also be caught at in conception by a large and plastic idea and can be expressed in some sort by a plastic speech which does not insist too much on rigid definition or limit the wideness and subtlety of the idea.

He says that we need to use some sort of speech which

Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti 55

is subtle, plastic and without rigidity if we aim to express the Supreme. Further he writes:

In order to express this experience or this idea with any nearness a language has to be created which is at once intuitively metaphysical and revealingly poetic, admitting significant and living images as the vehicle of a close, suggestive and vivid indication—

a language such as we find hammered out into a subtle and pregnant massiveness in the Veda and the Upanishads.

Such is the nature of the language required if we want to describe the supreme divinity, a language that is suggestive, full of living images and vivid indications, revealing and poetic. Such a language is exemplified in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and *Savitri*. However, this “pregnant massiveness” and intuitively metaphysical language we get here in *The Life Divine* and the aspect of

“revealingly poetic and admitting significant and living images” is found in *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that the Upanishads have come closest to this kind of language. Such language is best to capture the truths of the spiritual reality. In his commentaries on the Isha Upanishad, he highlights the magnificence of its language, subtlety of thought, expression and pregnant massiveness. Without that massiveness, one cannot capture the truth of the Absolute.

It is because of its massiveness that many people complain that they do not understand *The Life Divine*; it has massiveness in thought, concept and structure.

We find these long, winding sentences difficult to comprehend and tend to lose the idea. But that is the requirement, for metaphysical ideas cannot be expressed

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* in short sentences. If there are brief sentences, they have to be complemented with living imagery, what he would call poetic or suggestive and vivid indications through language. If there is brevity, the language must be suggestive; if there is clarity, there must be massiveness of language. We have these two types in *Savitri* and in *The Life Divine*, respectively.

In the ordinary tongue of metaphysical thought we have to be content with a distant indication, an approximation by abstractions, which may still be of some service to our intellect, for it is this kind of speech which suits our method of logical and rational understanding; but if it is to be of real service, the intellect must consent to pass out of the bounds of a finite logic and accustom itself to the logic of the Infinite...

Here he begins to explain the “logic of the infinite”.

However, let us remember that the mind-born language cannot capture the higher truths because it is based on a divisive consciousness. In ancient times Sanskrit was born out of a synthetic consciousness. We observe that Sanskrit is much more plastic, adaptable, comprehensive and flexible because the consciousness behind this language is that of synthesis. Whereas the very consciousness of our present language is one which wants to demarcate and divide for it is born out of our rational mind. There is a vast difference between Sanskrit and English. It is not simply a difference of language. This synthetic consciousness is the characteristic of our national and cultural character; whereas analysis and division are characteristics of the Western culture. Everything born out of Western culture has this stamp, including language.

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English is not just another language; it is a language of a divisive consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo wrote *Savitri* in English rather than in Sanskrit not because he wanted to reach out to the maximum number of people but because he

wanted to bring to this rationalistic language, English, a synthetic aspect. He wanted to mould this divisive language into a synthetic language. He brought rhythm and consciousness of the Sanskrit language to English. He has refashioned it.

In *The Future Poetry* he explained that some Irish poets have attempted to bring a synthetic vision to the English language verging on mysticism and occultism.

Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is that climatic work where the whole language gets remoulded. When we read *Savitri* we feel the pulse of a synthetic consciousness. One has to try to catch that extra synthetic dimension that is put into the language; understanding the of the vision and the symbolism can come later. The feel for language has to be something synthetic and not analytic. If we try to analyse *Savitri* by bringing in reason and grammatical rules, that will be a limited approach. For *Savitri* the approach has to be one of synthesis, then only can we get some revelation of its supreme and magnificent truths. Sri Aurobindo clearly explains that our intellect is accustomed to understand the logic of the finite. In order to understand the logic of the Infinite we have to upgrade our faculties.

Our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known; otherwise we achieve only a distant speculation, a figure of knowledge and not veritable knowledge.

If we want to know that which is beyond the mind, then our way of knowing also has to go beyond logic. If

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* we want to know the infinite, we have to apply something which has the characteristic of the infinite. What is there within us that can know the Infinite? It is not the mind, not the vital, not the body; there is only one being that is eternal within us – it is the psychic being. We have to contact the psychic consciousness to know the Divine consciousness. This is what Sri Aurobindo suggests when he says, “Our way of knowing must be appropriate to that which is to be known.” This understanding of the psychic being is on the level of yoga but Sri

Aurobindo will also show us its impact on philosophical thought and expression.

In a similar “subtle and pregnant massiveness”

Sri Aurobindo wrote *The Life Divine*. In his intuitively

“metaphysical thought” he took up a comprehensive deliberation on the concept of Brahman. Before we can understand this concept, we have to understand that at first “there is the Absolute, unconditioned, unmanifested, unimaginable, of Whom nothing can be predicated except negatives. But as the first step towards manifestation the Absolute “...produces in Itself a luminous Shadow of Its infinite inconceivable Being, which is Parabrahman...”

(CWSA 18: 365-366) The Vedanta speaks of him as Brahman or Sachchidananda.

Seen from an impersonal aspect, Brahman

...is Pure Being, Absolute Existence, SAT. He is Existence because He alone Is, there being nothing else which has any ultimate reality or any being independent of His self-manifestation. And He is Absolute Existence because since He alone is and nothing else exists in reality, He must necessarily exist by Himself, in Himself and to Himself. There

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can be no cause for His existence, nor object to His existence; nor can there be any increase or diminution in Him, since increase can only come by addition from something external and diminution by loss to something external and there is nothing external to Brahman. He cannot change in any way, for then He would be subject to Time and Causality; nor have parts, for then He would be subject to the law of Space. He is beyond the conceptions of Space, Time and Causality which He creates phenomenally

as the conditions of manifestation but which cannot condition their Source (Ibid).

To describe the Brahman's aspect of Existence:

...all this is the Brahman; Mind is Brahman, Life is Brahman, Matter is Brahman; addressing Vayu, the Lord of Air, of Life, it is said "O Vayu, thou art manifest Brahman"; and, pointing to man and beast and bird and insect... (Ibid).

These descriptions of Brahman emphasise the fact that "He alone is" and that there is "nothing external" to him. From this description itself we have the oft quoted Vedantic trilogy, "Brahman is All", "All is in Brahman",

"All is Brahman."

The second impersonal aspect of Brahman is that He is

"consciousness that knows itself in all that exists": His Consciousness is from itself and of itself like His existence, because there is nothing separate and other than Him; not only so but it does not consist in the knowledge of one part of Himself by another, or of His parts by His whole, since His transcendental existence is one and simple, without parts. His consciousness

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* therefore does not proceed by the same laws as our consciousness, does not proceed by differentiating subject from object, knower from known but simply is, by its own right of pure and unqualified existence, eternally and illimitably, in a way impure and qualified existences cannot conceive. (Ibid., 368-69) Finally, the third impersonal aspect of Brahman is: Pure Ecstasy, Absolute Bliss, Ananada. Now just as Sat and Chit are the same, so are Sat and Chit not different from Ananda; just as Existence is Consciousness and cannot be separated from Consciousness, so Conscious Existence is Bliss and cannot be separated from Bliss. (Ibid., 369)

In his manifestation, we discover that Brahman has a triple poise:

Brahman is the Absolute, the Transcendent and incommunicable, the Supracosmic Existence that sustains the cosmos, the Cosmic Self that upholds all beings but It is too the self of each individual: the soul or psychic entity is an eternal portion of the Ishwara; it is his supreme Nature or Consciousness-Force that has become the living being in a world of living beings.

Now that the impersonal aspect of Brahman has been dealt with and we know the triple status of Brahman, it is at this point that Sri Aurobindo introduces the three terms “of its essential nature” which are “self, conscious being or spirit and God or the Divine being.

The Indian terms are more satisfactory, — Brahman the Reality is Atman, Purusha, Ishwara; for these terms grew from a root of Intuition and, while they

Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti 61

have a comprehensive preciseness, are capable of a plastic application which avoids both vagueness in the use and the rigid snare of a too limiting intellectual concept.

While the aspect of Existence, *sat* (Sachchidananda) manifests the impersonal aspect of Self, Conscious Being or Spirit and God, the Divine Being, its power of consciousness appears as the personal aspects of Maya, Prakriti and Shakti.

Now we have to find out further differences between Maya, Prakriti and Shakti. Maya is conceptively creative; she is the Ideatrix. Next is Prakriti, “Nature or force made dynamically executive”; she is the Executrix. Third is Shakti, “a conscious power of the Divine Being”. Shakti is

“both conceptively creative and dynamically executive of all the divine workings”; she is the Creatrix.

These three aspects and their powers base and comprise the whole of existence and all Nature and, taken together as a single whole, they reconcile the apparent disparateness and incompatibility of the supracosmic

Transcendence, the cosmic universality and the separateness of our individual existence; the Absolute, cosmic Nature and ourselves are linked in oneness by this triune aspect of the one Reality.

For taken by itself the existence of the Absolute, the Supreme Brahman, would be a contradiction of the relative universe and our own real existence would be incompatible with its sole incommunicable Reality.

But the Brahman is at the same time omnipresent in all relativities...

Here Sri Aurobindo brings us back to the apparently confusing relation between the transcendental

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness and the individual soul. Although we have been told that Brahman is all, it seems paradoxical in relation to the world and the status of the individual.

Sri Aurobindo clarifies this apparent disconnect between the two. Shakti is the one who connects the two aspects of Brahman. We have read already that Shakti has both the characteristics of Maya and Prakriti – she is “conceptively creative” and “dynamically executive”. So now the scheme is such that Maya conceives and Shakti delivers; Shakti conceives and Prakriti delivers. Therefore, Shakti becomes for this universe, for us, the most intimate aspect of the Divine. The most necessary aspect for yoga is Shakti, not Maya or Prakriti. Shakti is the one who is holding both the transcendent and the individual together – she is “the bridge”, “the wonderful fire”.

Now we understand from where this “bridge” has come! This is why there is so much emphasis on the Mother, why Sri Aurobindo wrote the book *The Mother* and why *Savitri* is called the golden bridge. It is because she is the bridge between the transcendent Brahman and the individual Purusha. The Mother helps us to go to the psychic being, the chaitya purusha. It is quite clear that the Shakti is in the greatest position to help in yoga because she is the passage to the transcendental world and she is the transformative force of Prakriti. Once we get this clarity we can understand why the Mother is said to have the transformative power. It is because Shakti or the Mother

works on Prakriti. Prakriti is the outer nature and in order to change it we have to appeal to Shakti.

Shakti alone can do the wonder of transformation for us.

This Shakti has come to us this time as the supramental Shakti with a specific role to transform the physical itself.

Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti 63

The term Shakti suddenly opens up a new expression, a new interpretation. Sri Aurobindo will give us further details later; here he just introduces us to the idea and the importance of the impersonal and personal aspects of the supreme Brahman.

This reminds us of the symbol of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, the Ashram School: it is a combination of the symbols of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Explaining its meaning the Mother writes:

“The effective manifestation of Ishwara and Ishwari in union” (Champaklal’s Treasures: 108). When Ishwara and Ishwari unite it results in absolute transformation.

Now, let us read a letter from the Mother which explains the concepts and relations of Brahman–Maya and Ishwara-Shakti. A disciple wrote to her: Sri Aurobindo has first spoken of the duality Brahman-Maya [eternal Existence and the existence of the world] and now he speaks of the duality Ishwara-Shakti [the Divine in his Being and the Divine in his Force of cosmic realisation]. This duality Ishwara-Shakti, it isn’t very clear, is it?

The other one is simpler, isn’t it? For it is cut into two, distinct: one is Reality and the other illusion; one is Light and the other darkness; one is Consciousness, the other inconscience; one is Truth, the other falsehood. That is very convenient.

Here, it is much more difficult: it is the same thing which exists in itself, unmanifest and then, suddenly, it does this (gesture of projection). And it is

exactly the same thing but it is a movement which puts forth what was within. And that's what makes the world. It

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is the same thing in a double movement: as when you sleep and when you wake up, or when you remain still and when you begin to move, or when you are silent and then begin to make a noise, it is like that. One movement is within, containing everything in itself, without any expression of what is there; and the other movement is just this (same gesture of projection) and all that is within oneself comes out. (CWM 8: 109-110)

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In our previous class we had discussed about the two fundamental aspects of Brahman: the impersonal and the personal. In analysing these aspects, we had discovered that on the impersonal side there are three aspects –

Self-existence (*sat*), Self-awareness (*cit*), Self-delight (*Ananda*). On the personal side are *Atman/Brahman*, *Purusha*, *Ishwara* which on the Consciousness level appears as *Maya*, *Prakriti* and *Shakti* respectively.

However, we need to focus on the idea that these two sides of Consciousness – *Atman*, *Purusha* and *Ishwara* and the related Powers *Maya*, *Prakriti* and *Ishwari* are not separate realities, independent of each other. Self-existence and Self-awareness, *sat* and *cit* are inseparable and one at all levels. They form “a unitary unlimited whole of vision” which, for the logical intellect becomes

“logically untenable.” It cannot comprehend how “the Indeterminable determines itself as infinite and finite, the Immutable admits a constant mutability and endless differences, the One becomes an innumerable multitude, the Impersonal creates or supports personality, is itself a Person; the Self has a nature and is yet other than its nature; Being turns into becoming and yet it is always itself

*Brahman*, *Purusha*, *Ishwara*, *Maya*, *Prakriti*, *Shakti* 65

and other than its becoming; the Universal individualises itself and the Individual universalises himself; Brahman is at once void of qualities and capable of infinite qualities, the Lord and Doer of works, yet a non-doer and a silent witness of the workings of Nature”. Because of its innate incapacity to comprehend “self-existence and the world that has appeared in it”, Reason submits to “unthinking acquiescence” and accepts all as “some incomprehensible magic” or “a suprarational mystery.”

The cause of such an impression, such as “a suprarational mystery” is not to be sought in the “illusory or fantastic in the Supreme.” The real cause of such an impression is on human level because “it is irrational to suppose that a finite consciousness and reason can be a measure of the Infinite; this smallness cannot judge that Immensity; this poverty bound to a limited use of its scanty means cannot conceive the opulent management of those riches; an ignorant half-knowledge cannot follow the motions of an All-Knowledge”.

Here, what we need to understand and accept is “there are different orders of the reality and the conceptions, measures, standards suitable to one need not be applicable to another order”. For example, our intellect, founding itself on reason cannot deal with what is infrarational or suprarational or even what is occult to it. An intuition from a higher level of consciousness must come to its aid for otherwise it has no clue of these levels and anything happening on these levels is turned conveniently as magic or mystery.

With our finite and limited consciousness we cannot hope to measure the Infinite. We have to accept that there

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* are different levels of logic needed to understand this multi-tiered universe. Further,

Our reasoning is based upon our experience of the finite operations of physical nature, on an incomplete observation and uncertain understanding of something that acts within limits; it has organized on that basis certain conceptions which it seeks to make general and universal and whatever

contradicts or departs from these conceptions it regards as irrational, false or inexplicable.

Whatever contradicts or departs from our conceptions we regard as irrational. What is sometimes taken as granted in one place may be shocking in another.

Whatever does not fall in our parameters, which are fixed, we say is false. Similarly, with our little logic, with our limited knowledge and our finite consciousness we cannot judge the Infinite. If we see a huge calamity somewhere in which thousands of people die, we ask: how could God do this? Is that fair? We use our human logic, human emotions, human morality to understand God's ways. We may say that God is immoral, unfair, cruel, etc.; we use our moral labels to judge the ways of God.

The real solution lies in "a spiritual and supramental reason" in which "what is magic to our finite reason is the logic of the Infinite:"

It is a greater reason, a greater logic because it is more vast, subtle, complex in its operations: it comprehends all the data which our observation fails to seize, it deduces from them results which neither our deduction nor induction can anticipate, because our conclusions and inferences have a meagre foundation and are fallible and brittle. If we observe a happening, we judge

Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti 67

and explain it from the result and from a glimpse of its most external constituents, circumstances or causes; but each happening is the outcome of a complex nexus of forces which we do not and cannot observe, because all forces are to us invisible, — but they are not invisible to the spiritual vision of the Infinite...

The essential idea here is that the logic of the infinite does not draw conclusions by seeing the results of an action. For the supramental reason these invisible forces are visible. The supramental reason has the full view of the forces going into action, the action itself and the results of the action. It can also foresee other forces which may come in at the last minute and

change the action. It is obvious that the nature of this logic of the infinite is completely different from our mental logic.

All this our reason cannot grasp because it is an instrument of ignorance with a very limited vision and a small stock of accumulated and not always very certain and reliable knowledge and because too it has no means of direct awareness; for this is the difference between intuition and intellect that intuition is born of a direct awareness while intellect is an indirect action of a knowledge which constructs itself with difficulty out of the unknown from signs and indications and gathered data.

Here he clarifies that the supramental reason works basically by intuition, which is direct knowledge by identity; it does not follow a process like our mental logic, it sees the truth directly. It is a direct and comprehensive knowledge, for it has the knowledge of the all forces that are involved in any action and it has the knowledge of the results. It is a direct knowledge in the sense that

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* it is not gathered through observation or a scientific methodology; it has nothing that is dependent on the external world.

It is evident that such a Consciousness and Will need not act in harmony with the conclusions of our limited reason or according to a procedure familiar to it and approved of by our constructed notions or in subjection to an ethical reason working for a limited and fragmentary good; it might and does admit things deemed by our reason irrational and unethical because that was necessary for the final and total Good and for the working out of a cosmic purpose.

We see how the logic of the Infinite brushes aside the so-called unethical or moral reasoning and thinking!

Sri Aurobindo says, “what seems to us as irrational or reprehensible in relation to a partial set of facts, motives, desiderata might be perfectly rational and approvable in relation to a much vaster motive, totality of data

and desiderata.” What seems to us as irrational and reprehensible may very well be acceptable to it – how? It is because it has a totality of vision. Perhaps, this is how Sri Krishna acted in the Kurukshetra war – his actions and responses were based not on moral and ethical grounds but on the totality of a spiritual vision.

Sri Aurobindo continues to explain: “Reason with its partial vision sets up constructed conclusions which it strives to turn into general rules of knowledge and action and it compels into its rules by some mental device or gets rid of what does not suit with it”. We, the mental beings, are narrow and limited.

In the same way, we cannot judge of the principle and dynamic operation of infinite being by the standards

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of finite existence,—what might be impossible for the one would be normal and self-evidently natural states and motives for the greater freer Reality. It is this that makes the difference between our fragmentary mind consciousness constructing integers out of its fractions and an essential and total consciousness, vision and knowledge.

Here is the same idea that our finite mind cannot judge something that is infinite. Only the supramental reason, which is basically infinite can judge the finite. Our reason takes one aspect of a thing and makes it into a general principle. That is how our mind functions. We may see one aspect or one action of a person and judge based only on that. We immediately jump to conclusions.

Just as the blind men have to touch the different parts of the elephant in order to conceive that it is an elephant, similarly we have to experience the different aspects of the infinite Sachchidananda to know Its truth.

To see the parts alone and the totality not at all or only as a sum of the parts is a knowledge but also at the same time an ignorance; to see the totality alone and ignore the parts is also a knowledge and at the same time an ignorance, for a part may be greater than the whole because it belongs to the

transcendence; to see the essence alone because it takes us back straight towards the transcendence and negate the totality and the parts is a penultimate knowledge but here too there is a capital ignorance. A whole knowledge must be there and the reason must become plastic enough to look at all sides, all aspects and seek through them for that in which they are one.

In the Isha Upanishad it was said that having knowledge

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of the parts while neglecting the totality is an ignorance but that having knowledge of the totality while neglecting the parts is a greater ignorance. These are called Avidya and Vidya. It says that for the true knowledge both must be known.

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Let's recapitulate what we did in our previous class.

Sri Aurobindo tells us that we need to have knowledge of the finite determinations of existence as well as the totality – that is true knowledge. The Upanishads have suggested that knowing only the totality as the Reality and rejecting the world is an even greater ignorance than knowing just the diversified world and not the totality.

In the latter case at least there would be a chance that in this ignorant world one day we would evolve and find out the supreme Reality. If we are lost in the superconscious, like it happened with Adi Shankaracharya and completely reject the earth, reject the multiplicity of existence, that is much more difficult to reconcile with.

The logic of the infinite has the knowledge of both – the totality and the parts together. As Sri Aurobindo says, “if we see only the aspect of Self, we may concentrate on its static silence and miss the dynamic truth of the Infinite; if we see only the Ishwara, we may seize the dynamic truth but miss the eternal status and the infinite silence...”.

This tendency to see one or the other is due to the nature of our mind that divides. We either accept the dynamic Brahman or the static Brahman, we have difficulty accepting both simultaneously.

That is a defect of our logic but this defect is not there in the logic of the Infinite. We need to understand the

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difference between the logic of the finite and that of the Infinite. The logic of the finite sees aspects of only one side of the truth, whereas the logic of the Infinite is just the opposite, it sees the totality, different sides together with the sense of their identity and oneness. The logic of the mind is narrow and limited, whereas the logic of the Infinite, because it belongs to the Supermind, is just the opposite.

Sri Aurobindo now takes up in detail the different narrow approaches of human mind and the vision of the logic of the Infinite. For example, rational mind cannot bridge the concept of One and Many. Normally, the logic of the finite would say that one is something less than two; that is our concept of one. How can one become two? If there is a big circle and we divide it, then it can become two or if we add another circle, then we will have two. This is our idea of a finite unit. We take it as a mathematical formula. If I say one is equal to five you will say it is a mistake because we have the concept of one as a mathematical unit; it cannot be a multiplicity. It goes against our logic. But for logic of the Infinite, Oneness has other connotations. As he puts it here, Oneness “does not mean that the One is plural or can be limited or can be described as the sum of the Many: on the contrary, it can be the infinite Many because it exceeds all limitation or description by multiplicity...” It is the essential Oneness that contains the hundred, the million and the trillion.

For the logic of the Infinite, we can put any astronomical figure, it is always beyond it.

It can be said of it that it would not be the infinite Oneness if it were not capable of an infinite multiplicity; but that does not mean that the One is

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* plural or can be limited or described as the sum of the many...

The One is not a sum of any totality. Even when there was no manifestation at all the One existed. The One is beyond the Many because it is prior to the Many. Many have come into existence out of the One. This means that the Many were inherent in the One or they all were part of the One. Here we are referring to beyond the manifestation. In the manifestation the Many come out but what is the meaning of “come out”? They do not really come out from the One to somewhere else because everything is the One. What happens is that remaining in the same Oneness, the Oneness of consciousness, there is the demarcation of many individuals. Beyond manifestation these differences are merged together and become imperceptible but in the manifestation the Many are differentiated –this multiplicity exists within this Oneness. One could compare the One beyond the manifestation with a woman who has the potentiality of giving birth to children and the One in the manifestation with a woman who is pregnant and carrying a child made of her own substance within her.

In the logic of the Infinite one will exceed all the astronomical figures put together but still the One will exceed it. As Sri Aurobindo says: Pluralism is an error because, though there is the spiritual plurality, the many souls are dependent and interdependent existences; their sum also is not the One nor is it the cosmic totality; they depend on the One and exist by its Oneness: yet the plurality is not unreal, it is the One Soul that dwells as the individual

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in these many souls and they are eternal in the One and by the one Eternal.

The multiplicity that has come in manifestation is real. There has been a personal argument whether this many-ness is real or an illusion. Like the child in the womb, within the supreme Oneness are all these many individuals. To say they are unreal is like saying of a pregnant woman that the child within her is not real.

Another factor we have to see is that the baby in the womb is carrying the characteristics of the mother, it is made of her substance. The Many are real because they are made of the One Reality itself.

Next Sri Aurobindo contrasts the logic of the Infinite with mental logic in understanding the immobile silence and the dynamic movement of the Spirit. He explains: But the silence, the status are the basis of the movement, an eternal immobility is the necessary condition, field, essence even, of the infinite mobility, a stable being is the condition and foundation of the vast action of the Force of being. It is when we arrive at something of this silence, stability, immobility that we can base on it a force and energy which in our superficial restless state would be inconceivable. The opposition we make is mental and conceptual; in reality, the silence of the Spirit and the dynamis of the Spirit are complementary truths and inseparable.

The silence and the dynamis of the Spirit cannot be separated because each requires the other. If I say I have taken a step forward, that means I have moved. Otherwise, taking a step forward has no meaning. If I say I am moving, the movement is in relation to something which is not moving. If I see a person moving, it is in relation to

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the things around the person. One thing that can be said, like with other qualities, is that the basic quality seems to be that of silence and from silence begins the movement.

We say this because it is the unmanifest that is static and the manifest that is dynamic. But he says here that “The opposition we make is mental and conceptual in reality, the silence of the spirit and the dynamis of the spirit are complementary truths and inseparable”.

Now we come to the question of form and formlessness: Our conception of the Infinite is formlessness, but everywhere we see form and forms surrounding us and it can be and is affirmed of the Divine Being that he is at once Form and the Formless. For here too the apparent contradiction does not correspond to a real opposition; the formless is not a negation of the

power of formation but the condition for the Infinite's free formation: for otherwise there would be a single form or only a fixity or sum of possible forms in a finite universe...

Form may be said to be the innate body, the inevitable self-revelation of the formless and this is true not only of external shapes but of the unseen formations of the mind and life which we seize only by our thought and those sensible forms of which only the subtle grasp of the inner consciousness can become aware.

He has given a beautiful analysis. Our common mind or our finite logic sees all around forms of different colours and shapes and therefore says the Supreme must be formless; it must be more or less the opposite of what we see. This is the type of division that we make with our mind. However, logic of the Infinite would not look at

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them as oppositions. As he puts it, "formlessness is the character of the spiritual essence" and it is the basis, the condition, for infinite formations. A simple example is, if I draw a few lines on the board, something happens in your mind and you see some form which it depicts or symbolizes and which may bring to your mind the idea of a lotus. I am able to bring to your mind many different ideas just by drawing a few lines. Every culture and civilisation has some symbols which help us to bring out the forms of the formless. So, formlessness has the possibility of expressing itself in myriad forms. Forms are multiple expression of the formless, just like dynamism is an expression of silence or staticity. All forms are innate possibilities of the formless.

This concept is again logical. Once we give a form to something, we cannot make another form out of that, unless, of course, it is dismantled and we start over again.

If I have a form, say a triangle, it is impossible or very difficult to make it into a square. So, from one form, making another form is difficult but out of the formless one can make innumerable forms.

Similarly, “Name in its deeper sense is not the word by which we describe the object but the total of power, quality character of the reality which a form of things embodies and which we try to sum up by a designating sound, a knowable name, *Nomen*”. The name is just not a sound, there is a whole consciousness behind it. “The Infinite is nameless but in that namelessness all possible names, Numens of the Gods, the names and forms of all realities, are already envisaged and prefigured, because they are there latent and inherent in the All-Existence”.

That is why oftentimes it is said that the names of God are

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* very powerful; it is the rationale for the practice of japa –

the repetition of a name of the Divine. We take the name of God because it captures the Divine’s consciousness and power, just as when our own name is announced our consciousness leaps out. When someone is in coma, doctors call him by his name because something deep within the consciousness of the person may recognise the name and wake up. Similarly, repeating the name of God captures the consciousness of the Divine. Moreover, it will contact the particular consciousness of that particular form of the Divine; so, the name chanted during japa – is quite significant – for we invoke that particular God in a particular aspect.

Coming to the next argument of the finite versus the Infinite, Sri Aurobindo writes: “The finite is a frontal aspect and a self-determination of the Infinite; no finite can exist in itself and by itself, it exists by the Infinite and because it is of one essence with the Infinite”. Normally, our logic tells us that the finite and the Infinite are two opposites. But he says, there is nothing, no so-called finite, which is really separate from the Infinite; on the contrary. Sri Aurobindo himself gives an apt example: When we see with the inner vision and sense and not with the physical eye a tree or other object, what we become aware of is an infinite one Reality constituting the tree or object, pervading its every atom and molecule, forming them out of itself, building the whole nature, process of becoming, operation of indwelling energy; all of these are itself, are this infinite, this Reality: we

see it extending indivisibly and uniting all objects so that none is really separate from it or quite separate from other objects of the

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Infinite. “It stands” says the Gita “undivided in beings and yet as if divided.” Thus each object is that Infinite and one in essential being with all other objects that are also forms and names — powers, numens — of the Infinite.

Sri Aurobindo explains this idea through a verse of Upanishads: “‘This is the complete and that is the complete; subtract the complete from the complete, the complete is the remainder’. For so too it may be said of the infinite self-multiplication of the Reality that all things are that self-multiplication...” There is no division of the one by the appearance of the finite, for it is the one Infinite that appears to us as the finite many. The Infinite remains after creation what it was before. The Infinite is not a sum of things, it is all things and more. If this logic of the Infinite contradicts the conceptions of our finite reason, it is because it exceeds it and does not base itself on the data of the limited phenomena.

For example, if there are a million finite things, it doesn't mean that the Infinite had become lesser by that quantity of million forms because all these finite forms are only an appearance. It is not a big lump of clay from which a piece has been taken out and made into a vase and then another piece is taken out and made into another vase and you continue making vases while the main lump of clay keeps reducing. The Infinite is not like that for, there is no question of taking something out to make something else. The Infinite has got an infinite number of demarcations which we call by different names but they are only demarcations; there is nothing being chipped off the one Infinite to make these. All finites are demarcations only.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* These demarcations are important to the extent that the featureless white Infinite suddenly becomes colourful.

In what we call Sachchidananda, that Ananda is a self-bliss – bliss lost in itself. In the manifestation it becomes a colourful Ananda because it takes many shapes that are demarcated. This adding of colour is in the sense of experience, not in the sense of quality. Through manifestation the supreme Sachchidananda has become richer in its experience.

Why did Sri Aurobindo bring in this notion of the logic of the Infinite? It is precisely to explain what Brahman is. At the beginning we started with a discussion of what Brahman is and out of that description he led us to the logic of the Infinite – why? It was to tell us that it is only by this logic of the Infinite that we can understand the apparent paradoxes of Brahman. He defines Brahman as transcendental, universal and individual simultaneously.

Then my mind may ask how can that be possible? It's not logical. Sri Aurobindo tells us reason cannot understand the logic of the Infinite – but the supramental reasoning, a spiritual consciousness can understand the simultaneity of different aspects of Brahman and the apparent opposite qualities of the One and the Many, the silence and dynamism, the finite and the Infinite. In order to tell us more about Brahman he brought in the concept of the logic of the Infinite. This is the link and without it we may not be able to comprehend the complex nature of Brahman.

Now having explained Brahman, he goes on to explain Maya. As is the case with Brahman, so it is with Maya:

...it is not bound to a finite restriction of itself or to one state or law of its action; it can be many things

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simultaneously, have many co-ordinated movements which to the finite reason may seem contradictory; it is one but innumerably manifold, infinitely plastic, inexhaustibly adaptable.

This aspect tells us that Maya has a free power of self-variation “which is but natural to a consciousness of that is infinite.” Our logic has to admit the possibility of this manifold status of consciousness. Secondly, the mind has

also to admit the power of self-limitation of the illimitable consciousness, a consciousness limiting its action with full knowledge, not a movement of ignorance. The third possibility that needs to be admitted is the capacity of the infinite consciousness of Maya to plunge into self-absorption – this trance of Maya is the Inconscient. This allows for a double status of ‘Nirguna and Saguna’, One and the Many. If these three possibilities can be accepted, then we can get an account of the working of Maya.

The next paragraph further describes Maya: Maya is the supreme and universal consciousness and force of the Eternal and Infinite and, being by its very nature unbound and illimitable, it can put forth many states of consciousness at a time, many dispositions of its force, without ceasing to be the same consciousness force for ever.

If we have basically understood that Brahman can be in multiple states simultaneously, if Brahman can be transcendental, universal and individual simultaneously, so can we regarding Maya. What is Maya? It is the consciousness of Brahman; it is not different from Brahman. In fact, when we say that Brahman has become multiple levels of consciousness, the truth of the matter is that what has become these multiple levels of

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness is Maya itself. So, instead of saying Maya can also have these multiple levels like Brahman, it is better to say that Maya itself is all this becoming. In fact, it is Maya which has become many states of consciousness at a time.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

It is at once transcendental, universal and individual; it is the supreme supracosmic being that is aware of itself as All-Being, as the Cosmic Self, as the Consciousness-force of cosmic Nature and at the same time experiences itself as the individual being and consciousness in all existences. The individual consciousness can see itself as limited and separate but can also put off its limitations and know itself as universal and again as transcendent of the universe; this is because there is in all these

states or positions or underlying them the same triune consciousness in a triple status.

This is again an important statement: that we individuals can realise the Brahman because the Brahman is behind the individual consciousness; the finite is nothing but a frontal face of the Infinite. This finite can realise the transcendent Infinite because the entire Infinite is at its back. If the finite was something separate and the transcendent something up there, with nothing in between, then the finite could never become the Infinite and the finite could never realise Brahman or Atman. In fact, the finite is only a demarcation in the Infinite.

How do we understand or accept that the Supreme can become the individual? He tells us that if we agree that the Supreme Brahman is absolutely free, then it must have a power of self-variation. Therefore, because we accept

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that Brahman is free, we have to accept that it has the possibility of self-determinism:

All that is necessary for this to be accepted as natural and logical is to admit that there can be different real statuses of consciousness of the One Being and that cannot be impossible for an Existence which is free and infinite and cannot be tied to a single condition; a free power of self-variation must be natural to a consciousness that is infinite.

Next, he says that a second possibility of the Infinite Consciousness which must be admitted is the “power of self-limitation, or secondary self-formation into a subordinate movement within the integral illimitable consciousness and knowledge...”

For example,

Each being in a world will see the same world but see it from its own self-being according to its own way of self-nature... This self-limitation would be, not fundamental but an individual specialisation of a common

universality or totality; the spiritual individual would act from his own centre of the one truth and according to his self-nature but on a common basis and not with any blindness to other-self and other-nature.

Once we accept the possibility of self-limitation of the Infinite, does it mean that the individual acts independently of the Infinite? No, we have already seen that the finite is only a demarcation of the Infinite, not a separation. Similarly, this self-limitation is, as he puts it, “an individual specialisation of a common universality or totality”. Sri Aurobindo says that we have

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a common universality, that we are all human beings; that is the commonness amongst us but each one has a specialisation, each has a special quality. If I say I am an individual, that means I have a certain specialisation, a special quality that is different from other individuals.

It is the same logic that we discussed earlier about the medicinal property of a certain type of plant.

Unless and until we manifest our special quality, we are not really true individuals. The Mother once told me sadly about the common state of men – you are born, you grow up, you have children, you educate them, you get them married, you retire and then you say, I’ll go to spiritual retreats. That is the common pattern of living for the common mass of people in India. But each individual in this common mass is potentially a specialisation.

Unfortunately, human beings often do not manifest their uniqueness. Unless we express our specialisation, we are not individuals but only lumps of clay with some consciousness.

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Next, Sri Aurobindo explains that the supreme Maya can be in a concentrated condition in a self-absorbed state.

This is a very interesting and important argument vis-à-vis Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. He tells us that this gives Maya the possibility of a double status. What is this double status? We have seen that in the Superconscious there is absolute self-awareness. Maya can also become self-absorbed and remain in a kind of "a trance of infinity"

in which self-awareness is held in abeyance. This is what is called Inconscient, it is absolute non-self-awareness. So Maya, the consciousness of Brahman, can simultaneously be in these two positions that are absolutely opposite of

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each other. If this idea is understood, we can go further to think of

...a fundamental double status such as that of the Nirguna standing back from the Saguna and absorbed in its own purity and immobility, while the rest is held back behind a veil and not admitted within that special status. In the same way we could account for the status of consciousness aware of one field of being or one movement of it, while the awareness of all the rest would be held behind and veiled or, as it were, cut off by a waking trance of dynamic concentration from the specialised or limited awareness occupied only with its own field or movement.

This double status means the parallel simultaneous existence of Nirguna and Saguna is a logical possibility.

We have discussed that the Mind's approach is that there might be either Saguna or Nirguna but not both simultaneously. This argument says that consciousness can simultaneously have both the status of absorption and awareness: a kind of self-absorption or concentration in a movement that is devoid of awareness or has a limited awareness and a state of complete awareness.

Let us bring it down to the human level of experience.

What is this self-absorption? Self-absorption is another word for absolute concentration or focus. If I am focussing on a certain thing – on reading a

chapter of a book, on a poem, on an object – I am deeply self-absorbed in it. I focus my attention on a point while keeping the rest of my consciousness in abeyance. So even ‘I’, the individual, has the same experience, that while I am concentrating on one thing I have forgotten the other thing; forgotten in the sense that I have kept it in abeyance. The rest of

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* my awareness is suspended and only one point of my awareness is active. We also have this double status of absorption and self-awareness. We become self-lost at a point of concentration and there is also self-awareness but this self-awareness is kept in abeyance. We do not have this double status simultaneously; that is the only difference. Otherwise, we too can have this kind of an experience of self-loss and self-awareness.

In conclusion, about the nature of Maya: Yet it is now evident that to the Infinite Consciousness both the static and the dynamic are possible; these are two of its statuses and both can be present simultaneously in the universal awareness, the one witnessing the other and supporting it or not looking at it and yet automatically supporting it; or the silence and status may be there, penetrating the activity or throwing it up like an ocean immobile below throwing up a mobility of waves on its surface.

A beautiful image is that of the ocean. Ocean depths are quiet, almost immobile and the surface is full of dynamic, multitudinous waves. This image shows us exactly the nature of the Supreme. On one level he is a witness, he is silent, he is withdrawn and on the other level he is dynamic.

Having established this point, Sri Aurobindo shifts to the parallel position in an individual – the silent witness and the dynamic nature, Purusha and Prakriti.

At the level of Maya or Atma-Shakti Sri Aurobindo has established the possibility of a double status and now he says that this double status is also there in the human being and is called Purusha and Prakriti which is realised in the process of yoga.

The point that he makes about yoga is very important and practical – the simultaneous awareness of the double status of Purusha and Prakriti. In fact, somebody asked him the question that on one side you tell us to remember and offer to the Mother but when I am really concentrating on my work, how can I concentrate on the Mother? Practically, we are not able to pull together this dynamism and offering. Sri Aurobindo replies that in the beginning we have to consciously offer whenever we can, whenever there is a stop-gap in our dynamic consciousness but after sometime there is a parallel consciousness that gets established. This is the parallel consciousness that we are speaking of, one of which is quiet, calm and can continue to dedicate and offer the action while on the surface level there is another consciousness which is doing the action.

There is an inner being, the subliminal being, which can be constantly offering to the Mother what is being done by the outer being. It is as if whatever is done on the external level, it absorbs and gives it to the psychic being.

Such is the parallel consciousness that develops after some time of practice of conscious offering.

In the same way we can become aware of... the Purusha, separate from Prakriti, the conscious being standing back from the activities of Nature... Prakriti is the working of the Purusha, Conscious Being active by its own Nature: the duality then of Soul and World-Energy, silent Self and the creative Power of the Spirit, is not really something dual and separate, it is biune.

As we cannot separate Fire and the power of Fire, it has been said, so we cannot separate the Divine Reality and its Consciousness-Force, Chit-Shakti.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* We come to realise from these lines quoted above, that Purusha and Prakriti are not two different realities; they

are one and the same consciousness. One is in the poise of staticity, the other of movement and dynamism.

Sri Aurobindo uses the word “biune”: they are not two; they are parallelly one but at the same time biune. For example, just as “we cannot separate Fire and the power of Fire”, we cannot separate Purusha and Prakriti. They are together, playing different roles.

Defining Purusha and Prakriti Sri Aurobindo writes: The Conscious Being, Purusha, is the Self as originator, witness, support and lord and enjoyer of the forms and works of Nature. As the aspect of Self is in its essential character transcendental even when involved and identified with its universal and individual becomings, so the Purusha aspect is characteristically universal-individual and intimately connected with Nature even when separated from her. For this conscious Spirit while retaining its impersonality and eternity, its universality, puts on at the same time a more personal aspect; it is the impersonal-personal being in Nature from whom it is not altogether detached, for it is always coupled with her: Nature acts for the Purusha and by its sanction, for its will and pleasure; the Conscious Being imparts its consciousness to the Energy we call Nature, receives in that consciousness her workings as in a mirror, accepts the forms which she, the executive cosmic Force, creates and imposes on it, gives or withdraws its sanction from her movements.

For those in yoga-sadhana,

The experience of Purusha-Prakriti, the Spirit or

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Conscious Being in its relations to Nature, is of immense pragmatic importance; for on these relations the whole play of the consciousness depends in the embodied being. If the Purusha in us is passive and allows Nature to act, accepting all she imposes on him, giving a constant automatic sanction, then the soul in mind, life, body, the mental, vital, physical being in us, becomes subject to our nature, ruled by its formation, driven by its activities; that is the normal state of our ignorance.

In the life of common human beings, our mental, vital and physical are under the control of Nature. The Purusha does not dominate over them; he lets Prakriti act as she pleases. This is important because as long as Prakriti dominates the Purusha, we are in ignorance.

That is the common state of human beings in which their mental, vital and the physical nature act exactly as they would like to act. All our angers and passions and lusts and desires and competitions, all the killing and violence, the mental perversions and the physical weaknesses are purely the domination of Nature as if it has gone haywire. There is nobody to control it, nobody to check it. This is what normal human ignorance is all about, the external Nature completely dominates. If the Purusha in us becomes aware of itself as a “Witness and stands back from Nature, that is the first step to the Soul’s freedom”. In this whirlpool activity of Nature, if for a while I can stand back and say, ‘No I am not this Nature, I am not just this mind-vital-body alone, I am something more’, it would be the very first step of freedom or mukti. As Sri Aurobindo says,

If the Purusha in us becomes aware of itself as

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Witness and stands back from Nature, that is the first step to the soul’s freedom; for it becomes detached and it is possible then to know Nature and her processes and in all independence, since we are no longer involved in her works, to accept or not to accept, to make the sanction no longer automatic but free and effective; we can choose what she shall do or not do in us, or we can stand back altogether from her works and withdraw into the Self’s spiritual silence, or we can reject her present formations and rise to a spiritual level of existence and from there re-create our existence. The Purusha can cease to be subject, anīśa and become lord of its nature, īśvara.

Sri Aurobindo explains step by step. In the first phase of our life Nature is the lord and the inner Purusha keeps silent, does not interfere, does not dominate. He is himself lost in this Nature, it is like somebody looking at his reflection in the water and thinking that it is him/

her. That means Purusha is involved in Prakriti, this is the trouble – he is supposed to be the Witness but he is not so in the initial stage. He identifies with the mind, emotions and body. But as Nature or life brings circumstances with a big jolt sometimes and suddenly, we wake up and say, Hey, we have been looking at our own reflection! That’s not us. We are something more. The day that realisation comes that we are something more, that is the beginning of the separation of Purusha from Prakriti and that is the beginning of our salvation.

There is a second explanation here. While talking about the Sankhya system of Purusha and Prakriti, Sri Aurobindo gives a Vedantic explanation: Moreover, the experience of soul and Nature as dual

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is true but the experience of their unity has also its validity. If Nature or Energy is able to impose its forms and workings on Being, it can only be because it is Nature or Energy of Being and so the Being can accept them as its own; if the Being can become lord of Nature, it must be because it is its own Nature which it had passively watched doing its work but can control and master; even in its passivity its consent is necessary to the action of Prakriti and this relation shows sufficiently that the two are not alien to each other.

This is a new angle that Sri Aurobindo has added: they are not two separate entities, one witnessing the other. When we say Nature, what is this Nature, what is Prakriti? When we asked the question, “what is Maya?”

we got the answer that Maya is the consciousness of Brahman. This ‘of’ is what is important. Prakriti is the consciousness of Purusha. In the book *The Mother* Sri Aurobindo says, “The Mother is the consciousness and Force of the Supreme.” (CWSA 32: 2) So, consciousness is always ‘of the Being’, whether we call the being Brahman, Purusha or Ishwara. Consciousness always ‘belongs’ to some being, to some entity. Now, if we re-read this we understand: “If Nature or Energy is able to impose its forms and workings on Being, it can only be because it is Nature or Energy of Being.”

In each one of us there is a Purusha and it is he who brings forth its own Prakriti. How can my nature be different from my being? It is always the Purusha's consciousness which is the Prakriti, she is his extension.

Therefore, he says, it is because of this that Prakriti in

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the beginning over-rides Purusha, who, in fact accepts it, because it is his own consciousness.

How is it that the Purusha can be so violent, ugly and bad? Well, that is the question! How can the Purusha have such a low nature? The Purusha says, I have brought forth anger and passion and lust and violence not because I enjoy it but because I want my consciousness to evolve and to grow beyond that and to change and transform itself. We have seen the entire *raison d'être* of Purusha is to change Nature. So for this changing of Nature, it puts on a Nature which is sometimes terrible, sometimes passive, sometimes good, sometimes beautiful! But the only motivation behind this is to expose Nature to all these changes so that they may evolve. Now we understand why the Mother tells us that our so-called misfortunes come only to change our Nature. The Purusha has brought all these sad incidents so that Nature will open to the realisation that there is a Supreme Lord to whom it has to surrender.

The psychic being, Chaitya Purusha, the central Purusha in us, is constantly looking at Prakriti and hoping that very soon Prakriti learns its lessons and turns to its own deeper self. We should not think that the Chaitya Purusha is only a passive witness and is withdrawn. Even in the withdrawn status it is closely watching, closely guiding. We have seen how the psychic being constantly guides us to help us keep on the track of evolution. At a point when the outer nature has learnt sufficiently to surrender and to realise, then the Purusha takes over and there is a reversal as the Purusha starts dominating and that is the beginning of psychicisation. The psychic realisation is that in which the Purusha dominates the whole Nature.

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...if the Being can become lord of Nature, it must be because it is its own Nature which it had passively watched doing its work but can control and master; even in its passivity its consent is necessary to the action of Prakriti and this relation shows sufficiently that the two are not alien to each other. The duality is a position taken up, a double status accepted for the operations of the self-manifestation of the being; but there is no eternal and fundamental separateness and dualism of Being and its Consciousness-Force, of the Soul and Nature.

This is the argument that Sri Aurobindo puts forward against Sankhya. Sankhya philosophy has given us two realities: Purusha and Prakriti. For Sri Aurobindo there is no 'and': Purusha-Prakriti is a biune reality. There is a fundamental oneness; they are two only in the sense that Prakriti is an extension of the Purusha but they are not separate.

Let me bring here a significant passage from *Savitri* which describes brilliantly the play of Purusha – Prakriti: He too wears a diminished godhead here; He has forsaken his omnipotence,

His calm he has foregone and infinity.

He knows her only, he has forgotten himself; To her he abandons all to make her great.

He hopes in her to find himself anew, Incarnate, wedding his infinity's peace To her creative passion's ecstasy.

Although possessor of the earth and heavens, He leaves to her the cosmic management And watches all, the Witness of her scene.

(CWSA 33: 62)

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Or, a courtier in her countless retinue, Content to be with her and feel her near He makes the most of the little that she gives And all she does drapes with his own delight.

A glance can make his whole day wonderful, A word from her lips with happiness wings the hours.

He leans on her for all he does and is: He builds on her largesses his proud fortunate days And trails his peacock-plumaged joy of life And suns in the glory of her passing smile.

In a thousand ways he serves her royal needs; He makes the hours pivot around her will, Makes all reflect her whims; all is their play: This whole wide world is only he and she. (Ibid., 62-63) Having said that, Sri Aurobindo explains the levels of Purusha and Prakriti, Consciousness and Force: The Purusha aspect and the Prakriti aspect go always together and whatever status Nature or Consciousness-force in action assumes, manifests or develops, there is a corresponding status of the Spirit. In its supreme status the Spirit is the supreme Conscious Being, Purushottama and the Consciousness-Force is his supreme Nature, Para-Prakriti. In each status of the gradations of Nature, the Spirit takes a poise of its being proper to that gradation; in Mind-Nature it becomes the mental being, in Life-Nature it becomes the vital being, in nature of Matter it becomes the physical being, in supermind it becomes the Being of Knowledge; in the supreme spiritual status it becomes the Being of Bliss and pure Existence. In us, in the embodied individual, it stands behind all as the psychic Entity, the inner Self supporting the other formulations of our consciousness and spiritual

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existence. The Purusha, individual in us, is cosmic in the cosmos, transcendent in the transcendence: the identity with the Self is apparent but it is the Self in its pure impersonal-personal status of a Spirit in things and beings...

There are multiple status of Purusha and Prakriti.

There is not only chaitya-purusha within us but there are other Purushas. We have a mental being, the manomaya purusha, a vital being, the pranamaya purusha and a physical being, the annamaya purusha. There are two other Purushas: the vijnanamaya purusha (at the level of Supermind)

and the anandamaya purusha (at the level of divine Bliss) about which he mentions in the above paragraph.

When Sri Aurobindo speaks about the relation between Purusha and Prakriti, chaitya-purusha is not directly acting upon the mind, he acts through the manomaya purusha. The manomaya purusha is a kind of minister for the psychic being. We can say that the psychic being is the Prime Minister and the mental being is one of his cabinet ministers. Through this minister he acts on the mind and similarly through the pranamaya purusha he acts on the vital nature and through annamaya purusha he acts on the body. So, there is a kind of an intermediate agency.

For a long time, the psychic being uses these three intermediate Purushas to act on the three respective parts of our nature. Of course, the Upanishads speak of two higher Purushas but Sri Aurobindo would say that these do not have as yet any *locus standii* in our subliminal being, because evolution itself has not come to the level of Supermind.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo has taken away at one stroke the duality of Purusha and Prakriti and established their oneness.

The Prakriti aspect is only an extension of Purusha. In manifestation, Prakriti is allowed to do what it wants so that through its own action it can grow. We are actually given a very long rope. Purusha took thousands of human lives, because we never attempted to transform Nature.

Now Sri Aurobindo has made us aware that this long rope that Purusha has given us is meant not for our pleasure, not for our physical and vital and sensual enjoyment but to make us realise that Prakriti has to turn towards Purusha.

Now we come to the third aspect: Ishwara-Shakti is the most interesting. In the next paragraph Sri Aurobindo says:

This comes out in its fullest revelation in the third aspect of the Reality, the Divine Being who is the master and creator of the universe. Here the

supreme Person, the Being in its transcendental and cosmic consciousness and force, comes to the front, omnipotent, omniscient, the controller of all energies, the Conscious in all that is conscient or inconscient, the Inhabitant of all souls and minds and hearts and bodies... In a certain sense, so seen and understood, this becomes the most comprehensive of the aspects of the Reality, since here all are united in a single formulation; for the Ishwara is supracosmic as well as intracosmic; He is that which exceeds and inhabits and supports all individuality; He is the supreme and universal Brahman, the Absolute, the supreme Self, the supreme Purusha.

Ishwara is the link, the bridge between the transcendent

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and the individual. He is the supracosmic as well as the intracosmic and therefore the link between them. Being the link, he is more available to us than any other aspect.

But, very clearly, this is not the personal God of popular religions, being limited by his qualities, individual and separate from all others.

We cannot say that the Ishwara is Agni or Varuna or Ganesha or Shiva. All these gods have one specific personality and individual qualities. Each godhead represents a particular psychological quality. However, Ishwara is not a godhead like that. He is the Lord who is not delimited by any one particular quality. Personal godheads are limited representations or names and divine personalities of the one Ishwara.

Neither is this the Saguna Brahman active and possessed of qualities, for that is only one side of the being of the Ishwara; the Nirguna immobile and without qualities is another aspect of His existence.

Ishwara is Brahman the Reality, Self, Spirit, revealed as possessor, enjoyer of his own self-existence, creator of the universe and one with it, Pantheos and yet superior to it, the Eternal, the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Divine Transcendence.

There is one problem: when we say Ishwara is the ruler, the enjoyer, the creator, immediately we think of the concept of the Godhead in Judaism and Christianity who is the ruler and the judge of human beings. This Ishwara is not a judge as human mind imagines him to be. He is not the one who sets rules and tells the humans to follow them

– following them they will be rewarded and not following them they will be punished.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The Supreme Divine, this Ishwara, is beyond law and yet he keeps to the universal laws made by himself. So, it would be wrong to say that he is not a law-maker or that he has no set of laws. There may even be a kind of reward and punishment but they are not something from outside imposed on people, “they are the expression of the truth of things,—not their mechanical, mathematical or other outward truth alone but the spiritual reality of what they are.” That means that if we have acted in such a way that our own consciousness becomes low, we suffer the natural consequences of dullness or a darkening of our consciousness right here in our life. Similarly, if we strive to live in accordance with our higher possibilities and the deeper truth of our being, then we will naturally grow in light and strength and delight of being. This is the law of karma, the law of the consequences of our thoughts and actions.

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In his book *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo writes: If you open yourself on one side or in one part to the Truth and on another side are constantly opening the gates to hostile forces, it is vain to expect that the divine Grace will abide with you. You must keep the temple clean if you wish to instal there the living Presence.

If each time the Power intervenes and brings in the Truth, you turn your back on it and call in again the falsehood that has been expelled, it is not the divine Grace that you must blame for failing you but the falsity of your own will and the imperfection of your own surrender.

If you call for the Truth and yet something in you

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chooses what is false, ignorant and undivine or even simply is unwilling to reject it altogether, then always you will be open to attack and the Grace will recede from you. Detect first what is false or obscure in you and persistently reject it, then alone can you rightly call for the divine Power to transform you. (CWSA 32: 4) This idea implies that the Divine does not punish us for our wrong actions but we are lead away from our own psychic being and that itself can be called a kind of punishment, since that is the true *raison d'être* of our living. Especially for a sadhak, who has awakened or is wanting to awaken to the Divine, for him the worst punishment is going away from his psychic being.

Sri Aurobindo also writes that the psychic being can withdraw from the person if the outer nature is so recalcitrant, so very resistant, that it will not collaborate with the soul on any level. If it withdraws, that vacuum may be filled up by an anti-divine force. These forces are precisely looking for this kind of an instrument. We have many cases in history of such possessions by vital beings, one of which was Hitler. The Mother told us how the Asura possessed him. This withdrawal of the psychic being from an earthly life is the ultimate hell. Going into the Swarga or Naraka beyond life is a reality because that is something where the vital part of our being may go; whereas if our psychic being withdraws from the mind, life and body, then our entire being suffers.

In our own physical lives we suffer when we go away from our inner or psychic being. We may not even be aware of it! We may say, no we are quite happy, we have money, we have my comforts, we have success, we have name and business is going on well". In business one may

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* be indulging all the corruption possible, all the twists possible and because in the bank balance is increasing, he thinks he is doing good. But what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo tell us is that he suffers the spiritual consequences of his actions, he separates

himself more and more from the psychic being which would otherwise bring peace, harmony and spiritual progress.

Long back in my younger days in the Ashram, I remember a small incident about someone from the Ashram selling eggs that they received from the Ashram.

He was selling them in the market because he or she was not eating them and wanted to earn some money out of it. Then the Mother responded by saying that the person would suffer the spiritual consequences. If one behaves wrongly, even if nobody knows about it, he can hide it from the boss, from the friends but cannot hide it from his own psychic being.

That is what we are reading here, about the divine law: The mechanical, mathematical, automatic law of things is a fact but within it there is a spiritual law of consciousness at work which gives to the mechanical steps of Nature's forces an inner turn and value, a significant rightness and a secretly conscious necessity and above it there is a spiritual freedom that knows and acts in the supreme and universal truth of the Spirit.

This is what we have been discussing, that we think that God is the chief justice and a lawmaker! But all this is our human way of looking at God and especially at Ishwara.

However, we have seen, there is no such thing, all acts have their own immediate reward and punishment, in the sense of taking one towards God or away from him.

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Now we come to description of Shakti or Ishwari:

... there becomes apparent to us the mystery of the masculine and feminine cosmic Principles whose play and interaction are necessary for all creation.

In the superconscient truth of the Self-Existence these two are fused and implied in each other, one and indistinguishable but in the spiritual-pragmatic truth of the dynamism of the universe, they emerge and become

active; the Divine Mother-Energy as the universal creatrix, Maya, Para-Prakriti, Chit-Shakti, manifests the cosmic Self and Ishwara and her own self-power as a dual principle...

This is an intriguing sentence; the Divine Mother, whom he has called by different names – universal creatrix, Maya, Para-Prakriti, Chit-Shakti and who is otherwise known as Aditi – has manifested both the Ishwara and herself, her own self-power. How is it that this Mother, the Divine Mother, the Creatrix has created Ishwara? Sri Aurobindo speaks about the Mother as the Transcendental Mother here. In our present terminology

– this is Divine Maya. It is the Transcendental Divine Mother who brings into the manifestation from the transcendent Ishwara. She is both the conceptual Creatrix and the Dynamic Creatrix. She is the Consciousness-Force of the Supreme.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

... it is through her that the Being, the Self, the Ishwara, acts and he does nothing except by her; though his Will is implicit in her, it is she who works out all as the supreme Consciousness-Force who holds all souls and beings within her and as executive Nature; all exists and acts according to Nature, all is the Consciousness-

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Force manifesting and playing with the Being in millions of forms and movements into which she casts his existence.

This paragraph should be read along with the book *The Mother*. There he says that the Divine Mother has a triple poise: the transcendental poise, that of the Divine Maya; then the universal aspect of Shakti, who manifests all beings and things in the universe; and then in the individual aspect she comes down to our own human levels through the psychic being, the Chaitya Purusha.

Her contact point in each one of us is through Chaitya Purusha. That is why the psychic being is the child of the Mother. Whatever we are, wherever we are, whoever we are, we are literally her children as the psychic being is her child! And apart from that, Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Mother*, in order to meet us on the physical level, the Divine Mother comes as an Avatar, as an incarnation. All this is the doing of the Divine Mother; from the very first step of creation, the whole thing is taken over by Her. This aspect of the Divine, the Divine Shakti, is the greatest of all. She is close to our human adoration, she is within us as the intimate, intrinsic divinity, the psychic being and she comes down as an Avatar.

If we would affirm our independence of Nature, she reveals to us the supreme and omnipresent power of the Ishwara and ourselves as beings of his being but that power is herself and we are that in her supernature. If we would realise a higher formation or status of being, then it is still through her, through the Divine Shakti, the Consciousness-Force of the Spirit that it has to be done; our surrender must be to the Divine Being through the Divine Mother...

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Note the last sentence here. Even in the realisation of the Atman it is She who lets it happen! It is also why Sri Aurobindo has told us that we can come close to him only through the Mother. It is that Divine Shakti alone who can open the doors for the psychic being. She has given us many methods to go deeper but ultimately there has to be the Grace of the Mother. Due to our persistent banging on the doors to the Divine, suddenly the Grace will act and the doors will open. This was beautifully illustrated on the 29th of February 1956 when the Mother gave one blow with a huge hammer on the door to the supramental consciousness and it was shattered.

Sri Aurobindo brought it down into himself, into his own body but it is the Mother who opened it up for the world.

It is she who gave it to the universe. Therefore, we have this beautiful sentence: "Our surrender must be to the Divine Being through the Divine Mother..."

He concludes the paragraph with two beautiful sentences which summarise the relations between the three aspects of existence and its consciousness and power:

Thus we see that there is no contradiction or incompatibility between these three aspects of Existence or between them in their eternal status and the three modes of its Dynamis working in the universe. One Being, one Reality as Self bases, supports, informs, as Purusha or Conscious Being experiences, as Ishwara wills, governs and possesses its world of manifestation created and kept in motion and action by its own Consciousness-Force or Self-Power—Maya, Prakriti, Shakti.

This is the wonderful structure of the universe: Maya

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* on the transcendental, supports and plans; the one on the Universal level, Ishwari, governs; on the individual level, Prakriti experiences. Sri Aurobindo has wonderfully analysed and shown us how the same Divine Being acts in different poises for its manifestation in this world.

In the next paragraph he says:

A certain difficulty arises for our mind in reconciling these different faces or fronts of the One Self and Spirit, because we are obliged to use abstract conceptions and defining words and ideas for something that is not abstract, something that is spiritually living and intensely real. Our abstractions get fixed into differentiating concepts with sharp lines between them: but the Reality is not of that nature; its aspects are many but shade off into each other.

That is the problem with our mind, that in trying to define things, we make them rigid and limited. But these definitions are not completely cut off from each other, as he says, they shade off into each other. It is like an individual who is a manager at an office, when he comes home he becomes a father. One cannot say exactly at which point on the road he becomes a father.

There is a shading off. In that way there is always a flexibility in these definitions.

Further down the paragraph, he writes: It is necessary in a philosophic inquiry to confine oneself mostly to this intellectual presentation but it is as well to remember that this is only the abstraction of the Truth and to seize it completely or express it completely there is needed a concrete experience and a more living and full-bodied language.

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We have to understand that we may be dealing with philosophical terms, abstractions, definitions but the real definition would be based on a concrete experience. No amount of philosophising can give us the experience.

That is why he says it needs “a more living and full-bodied language” to express it. It cannot be done solely with mental logic; it needs something vaster, more plastic, more mystical, more pictorial, more symbolic, more powerful, as we find in the Upanishads, in the Veda, in *Savitri* and in *The Life Divine*.

We get confused with terms like Maya, Prakriti, Shakti because we do not have any experience of them. We might take hours on end to explain *The Life Divine* but if there is not a point of experience, it will still remain abstract and confusing. This is where philosophy ends and experience has to take over. This philosophy is meant to lead us towards direct experience.

Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo has said that this mental clarification is necessary in yoga. For, as one progresses in yoga, one may assume the smallest of lights to be the supramental light. That is how sadhaks may get trapped.

They see a little golden light and go into great ego trips but it might be just a neon light flashing around the corner of the road! That is why Sri Aurobindo has given us these mental clarifications, so that the moment we have an experience, we have enough knowledge to say, that this is an experience in our subtle physical, subtle mind or subtle vital, it is nothing beyond that. We should be honest enough to see that this is nothing deep,

probably only something in the subliminal nature, so let us keep quiet.  
Clarification is needed but experience is essential.

For getting the experience

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...it is through self-giving or surrender of soul and nature to the Divine Being that we can attain to our highest self and supreme Reality, for it is the Divine Being who is that highest self and that supreme Reality.

We read an important line in an earlier paragraph in which Sri Aurobindo said, “Our surrender must be to the Divine Being through the Divine Mother”. Why must we surrender to the Divine being through the Mother? Here we have the explanation. Behind this ego – which is our centre at present – there is a deeper reality, what we have expressed as the psychic being whose natural instinct is to surrender. It is through self-giving or surrender of both the soul and nature to the Divine Being that we can go beyond the ego and unite with our universal and transcendent Reality. To go beyond ego we must surrender. There is no other possibility of going to this Source. This is the secret. We have to be independent of the ego but how to do that? Not by mental resolutions, nor by meditations, nor by pujas that we get rid of our ego. They may all be helpful but the main process is to surrender. The more we surrender to the Divine, the more we become independent of ego.

Whereas at present our situation is completely the opposite. We are completely dependent on the ego to guide us, to give us motivation, etc. But Sri Aurobindo says that it is only by dependence on a higher Reality that we can go to the Supreme Reality, which is called the Divine Mother or the Divine Being. These two words are crucial in our Yoga: dependence and independence.

Sometimes the use of this phrase – dependence on the Mother – creates a reaction in materialists because their

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present ideal is that we should not be dependent, but be independent. We should stand on our own feet and use our own mind. Why should I depend on God? The normal notion is that dependency, even on God, is a kind of weakness; we should neither depend on other human beings nor on God. But that's where the whole mistake lies: dependence on God is not a weakness; it gives more strength. But this modern view, which is prevalent in Western Psychology, does not give sufficient consideration to the idea of dependency. They say, you are on your own and you can be your own. We are not separate from the All of which our individuality is merely a small part and it does not suit yoga. We reverse the order and say on the contrary, the more we depend on the Divine, the stronger we become.

There is one more argument to be covered in this chapter, that of Space and Time:

One problem still remains to be solved and it can be solved on the same basis; it is the problem of the opposition between the Non-Manifest and the manifestation. For it might be said that all that has been advanced hitherto may be true of the manifestation but the manifestation is a reality of an inferior order, a partial movement derived from the Non-Manifest Reality and, when we enter into that which is supremely Real, these truths of the universe cease to have any validity.

So, we are coming back to that famous argument of the illusionist who says, all this question of Atman and Maya, Purusha and Prakriti, Ishwara and Shakti is related to the manifestation but it has no foundation the moment we go beyond manifestation.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The Non-Manifest is the timeless, the utterly eternal, an irreducible absolute self-existence to which the manifestation and its limitations can give no clue or only a clue that by its insufficiency is illusory and deceptive. This raises the problem of the relation of Time to the timeless Spirit...

But it is not necessarily so – that manifestation gives

“no clue” of the Eternal. On the contrary,

...if the temporal is an expression of the Eternal, then however different the conditions, however partial the expression, yet what is fundamental in the Time-expression must be in some way pre-existent in the Transcendence and drawn from the timeless Reality.

Now, Sri Aurobindo has upheld the view that manifestation is not a ‘creation’ but only a ‘becoming’

of the Supreme Eternal. Hence, what is in the Being,

“becomes” in manifestation, though there is a diminishing and self-limitation of Consciousness. That’s why there cannot be anything in manifestation that was not there potentially in the unmanifest. Even this world that we know, this physical world that we see around, is only a manifestation, is only the frontal face of something that already exists in the womb of the Unmanifest. The timeless Eternal brings out its own possibilities into the eternity of time and space. Then in time and space we have these universes, these worlds, including our own physical world. In these universes we have all these individual things and beings. This is the order of creation.

The Mother has several times spoken of going beyond time. Now, going beyond time may mean two things. It may mean to go into the unmanifest but that would mean one loses there one’s existence and yet she says we can go

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beyond time. There is a second meaning and that is to go beyond time psychologically: that is to say, we no longer have a sense of past-present-future. This can happen in spiritual experiences. For example, we may have a small experience of this when we meditate we have no sense of time. At least for some time we may not know where we are or what is happening, we are kind of lost. That could be a small experience of what it means to go beyond time.

A yogi can remain in this consciousness of timelessness for a long period. Perhaps, that must have been Sri Aurobindo's own position because after the experience of Nirvana he said that at all times he was in the Brahmic consciousness which is beyond time. He did not live in the divided past, present and future like us but that does not mean that he was not aware of it. Sri Aurobindo knew very well what was happening in the Second World War, what the Germans were planning for the next day and what was necessary to do to defeat them. 'Tomorrow' did exist in his consciousness but he was not confined to it like us. For us, yesterday is in the past and tomorrow is in the future and has not happened but for him, yesterday, today and tomorrow were a living continuous reality.

In his vision all the three times were simultaneously visible – that is what is called *trikaladrishti*, vision of the three times simultaneously. People have spoken about *trikaladrishti* since ancient times and some yogis have even attained it.

We get an explanation of this *trikaladrishti* here.

... what we mean by the timeless is a spiritual status of existence not subject to the time movement, or to the successive or to the relative experience of the past-present-future. The timeless Spirit is not necessarily a

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* blank; it may hold all in itself but in essence, without reference to time or form or relation or circumstance, perhaps in an eternal unity. Eternity is the common term between Time and the Timeless Spirit. What is in the Timeless unmanifested, implied, essential, appears in Time in movement, or at least in design and relation, in result and circumstance. These two then are the same Eternity or the same Eternal in a double status; they are a two-fold status of being and consciousness, one an eternity of immobile status, the other an eternity of motion in status.

In the next paragraph, we come to another problem.

Eternity in time manifests in two forms: Time and Space. We may be familiar with these terms but from the philosophic angle Sri Aurobindo says that “Space and Time are names for this self-extension of the one Reality”.

He continues:

We are apt to see Space as a static extension in which all things stand or move together in a fixed order; we see Time as a mobile extension which is measured by movement and event...

The first thing that we need to understand is that Space and Time are the self-extension of Reality.

Sri Aurobindo uses the term ‘extension’ for both Time and Space. We have discussed before that when explaining the Supermind, the term we get in the Vedas is Satyam Ritam Brihat: “which means the consciousness of essential truth of being (satyam), of ordered truth of active being (rtam) and the vast self-awareness (brhat)...” (CWSA 21: 125) So, when Truth extends itself according to its own law and rhythm, that is manifestation. Another word for ‘vast’ is extension; vastness or extension are interchangeable. That

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is how we can say that this world is a manifestation or an extension of the Truth according to the right rhythm. Is there a right rhythm or a right regulating activity in this universe? Yes. It is not a haphazard extension, there is a particular law and right regulating rhythm. And what is that particular rhythm? For example, it is the gradations of the planes of Supermind, Overmind, the different levels of spiritual mind, Mind, Life, Body and the Inconscient.

According to this ‘regulating right activity’ Truth extends itself. And Time and Space are a framework in which this whole manifestation has taken place.

The Truth-Consciousness is extended in Space and Time according to a particular law and rhythm from Supermind to the Inconscient. This is the law and rhythm that has been selected by Sachchidananda in this manifestation. As Sri Aurobindo would tell us, the manifestation could have stopped at the level of the mind and not reached the level of matter at all. That would have been a possibility. But the Supermind reached the level of matter to get concrete form so that the division would be complete. The atomic finite is there at the level of matter.

One may ask what was the necessity of division to the extent of giving form in matter? It is to enable multiplicity to reach its maximum. But why should multiplicity be at its maximum? Because this multiplicity is the absolute opposite of the One. The story of creation started with One. The whole *raison d'être* of this manifestation, creation, is that it had to start from the absolute opposite.

And this absolute opposite of the One is absolute multiplicity which means absolute division and this division in form can be had only in matter. Such is the story of involution.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo continues:

...we see Time as a mobile extension which is measured by movement and event: Space then would be Brahman in self-extended status; Time would be Brahman in self-extended movement. But this may be only a first view and inaccurate: Space may be really a constant mobile, the constancy and the persistent time-relation of things in it creating the sense of stability of Space, the mobility creating the sense of time-movement in stable Space. Or, again, Space would be Brahman extended for the holding together of forms and objects; Time would be Brahman self-extended for the deployment of the movement of self-power carrying forms and objects; the two would then be a dual aspect of one and the same self-extension of the cosmic Eternal.

Please note the interesting definition here: “Space would be Brahman extended for the holding together of forms and objects”. It is an apt

definition, because the moment we think of objects and individual forms, space is holding together these forms. Can we imagine a form without space? It is not possible. The very concept of form means it has dimensions and the moment we talk of dimensions, we talk of space.

Then he says, “Time would be Brahman self-extended for the deployment of the movement of self-power carrying forms and objects”. What is time? It is the movement for carrying forms. We can conceive of form as static and unmoving. But then, can an object remain static? Can space exist without time? That is interesting.

Even if an object in space is standing still, time is there.

Time and space are a frame in which manifestation takes

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place and manifestation means form. If this is the frame, then manifestation cannot be without time and space and time and space cannot exist without manifestation.

Wherever there is time, there is bound to be space because that is the definition of manifestation. The manifestation of form takes place only in space and time because beyond space and time there is no form; form itself does not exist. If form does not exist, then space and time too are cancelled – it is simple mathematics. Metaphysically, form implies time and space.

The Mother sheds some light on this question from another angle. She says:

Imagine the world as a single whole and, in a certain sense, finite, limited but containing potentially innumerable possibilities of which the combinations are so numerous that they are equivalent to an infinite... So, the universe is objectified by the Divine Consciousness, by the Supreme, according to certain determined laws of which we shall speak later. (CWM

4:160)

We had said that Truth extends itself according to a particular law and rhythm. That's what the Mother is explaining here, that the Supreme objectifies the universe. The word 'manifestation' has a parallel word in

'objectification'. Instead of saying that the Supreme has created the world, it would be more accurate to say that the Supreme objectified himself because it means bringing out whatever is there within himself. She continues: The universe is a single whole and in a sense it is the Divine in objective form. It does not contain the whole of the Divine but it is as though the Divine deployed himself or objectified himself. That is the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* raison d'être of the manifestation of the Universe. It is as if the divine Consciousness wandered into all divine possibilities following a path it had chosen. The Divine Consciousness is essentially free—It wanders therein and objectivises Itself. (Ibid.,160-161) The Mother explains it so beautifully and in simple terms. In philosophical terms, Sri Aurobindo tells us that out of all the infinite possibilities of Self-manifestation, it chooses, it selects one path, one possibility. And that choice is made by the Supermind. Imagine a multitude of possibilities in which all the possible combinations are equal to the Infinite. For the Supreme Sachchidananda, all possibilities are the same; there is no preference because they are all his own possibilities and they are equal. The Mother continues:

The path traversed is free in the midst of an infinite multiplicity which is at the same time pre-existent and absolutely undetermined according to the action of the free divine Will. It may be conceived that this Will, being free, is able to change the course of the deployment, change the path and, although everything is pre-existent and consequently inevitable, the road, the path is free and absolutely unexpected.

These changes of the route, if one may say so, can therefore change the relations between things and circumstances and consequently the determinism is changed. This change of the circuit is called 'the effect of the Grace'; well, through the aid of the Grace, if the Grace decides it, things can change, the course can be different. (Ibid., 161)

It is a very beautiful phrase: “everything is pre-existent”.

It would be better perhaps to avoid using the term ‘pre-

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determinism’ because now we have this wonderful word

‘pre-existent’. It means that it is already there, whereas

‘determined’ has the sense of an imposition that one cannot change. ‘Pre-determinism’ has the sense of some unchangeability and oppression. It tends to lead to a negative atmosphere in which we say, oh, everything is determined, so nothing can be changed. But the use of the term ‘pre-existent’ brings a psychological change: that all is pre-existent in the Divine Consciousness. ‘Predeterminism’ can come as an impersonal force, whereas

‘pre-existence’ suggests that it exists in the Divine Consciousness.

Therefore, in ‘pre-existence’ things can change. For example, if there is a particular thing that is supposed to happen in your life when you reach the age of 62, then that is already pre-existing, that some change of course will happen. But this change can be altered. What is pre-existing can be taken off the shelf and removed.

It pre-exists in the Divine Consciousness and he/she can change the course of the path for you. You see, how wonderfully, psychologically, these things differ?

Following the same example, suppose the Divine Consciousness has said that at the age of 62 something would happen to you. But at the age of 62, because you have a new attitude, a development, an aspiration, a sadhana that you have done, the same Divine Consciousness changes that possibility and says, “No, I gave this possibility to you but it is again I who am taking it away, because of your evolution of consciousness I am changing it.” That “I am changing it” the Mother calls a “change of circuit”, “the effect of the Grace.” The Divine Grace intervenes and changes what pre-existed.

The previous law is superseded by Grace. The Divine

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Grace is higher than Divine Law. Her law can be broken by Her own Grace. But then even beyond Grace, the Mother says there is Divine Love. She says there are actually three categories: Divine Love, Divine Grace and Divine Compassion. These are the three levels which can intersect the Divine Law. Continuing the passage here the Mother says,

Things can change their places and instead of following a certain circuit follow another. A circumstance which, according to a particular determinism, should occur at a certain place ahead, for instance, would instead occur behind and so on. The relations between things consequently change. (Ibid.) At the time of publishing this talk, the Mother wanted to add a clarification which was put as a footnote. She said:

Sat, that is, absolute Existence, is not in the Manifestation; it exists without being manifested; it is the non-manifest state of existence. There is Tat which is the state of non-existence and Sat which is the state of existence; and Tat naturally is not manifested but Sat also is not manifested: it is only when Chit-Tapas comes, the Consciousness-Energy, the Consciousness which realises, that Sat manifests itself. (Ibid.) Following this explanation, the Mother answers some questions. Let us read this exchange.

*At what moment does Time begin? The Consciousness that chooses — is it in Time as soon as the unrolling begins?*

No, Time is a succession; you must be able to conceive that the Supreme Consciousness, before objectifying

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itself, becomes aware of Itself in Itself. There is a global, total and simultaneous perception and there, there is no Time. Likewise one cannot speak of “Space”, for the same reason, because all is simultaneous.

It is something more; it corresponds to a state of consciousness subjective rather than objective, for the aim, the motive of creation is objectivisation;

but there is a first step in this objectivisation in which there is a plenary consciousness, total and simultaneous, beyond Time and Space, of what will constitute the content of this universe; and there, the universe is pre-existent but not manifested and Time begins with objectivisation.

(Ibid.,161-162)

This is simply marvelous and very clear. I will take it now step by step.

There is Tat and then there is Sat or Sachchidananda because Sat, Chit and Ananda are united into one and then there is the Supermind. With the Supermind there is the creation of Time and Space. Tat is the non-existence which of course is unmanifest.

Then there is Sat which is also unmanifested and we can also say that it is purely subjective. Does Sachchidananda consciousness exist on the level? On this level consciousness is self-awareness. It exists but it is still subjective. It is an inalienable part of Sat like what Sri Aurobindo says of fire and the power of fire, that they cannot be separated. Similarly, at this level consciousness is one and the same with Truth, it is inconceivable that they are separate. So, we can call it a subjective state.

Now, at the Sachchidananda level, what the Mother says is that “there is a first step in this objectivisation in which there is a plenary consciousness, total and simultaneous.”

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* There is still not a manifestation in forms. So, to put it back in a single formula, there is Tat, the non-existent; there is Sat or Sachchidananda, the unmanifested existence and in this unmanifested existence there is the very first step of objectivisation: “a plenary consciousness”, a global or total consciousness that is still beyond time and space. Then, on the next level there is the Supermind and a further objectivisation which provides the frame of time and space for the manifestation and the beginning of creation. Next comes the Overmind which brings further differentiation and division into the manifestation. And then it comes further down as to Mind and Life and Matter. Once there is

this frame of time and space, it can be filled up with forms. Such is the process of creation.

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Here is the Mother's answer to a related question on Time and Timelessness:

*Can it be said that Time begins with the supramental plane?*

It is not the same kind of Time. There is only a beginning of Time and a beginning of form. Time there is of a very different quality. There is a global, static consciousness before arriving at the supramental level, in which everything appears simultaneously—

Time is a result of the fact that there is a succession in the organisation of the whole. While the totality you perceive all at once, on the supramental level, is not a static totality—the static totality gives place to another totality which gives the impression of Time. These are inner relations within the Supermind, in the sense that one is not aware of something which happens outside oneself; one is conscious only of something

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within oneself, internal but the internal relations vary and this gives a first impression of Time. (Ibid.,162) The Mother touches upon the borderline of the Timeless Eternal and the Eternal in Time. She says that in the Supermind things do not happen outside oneself; everything happens internally, subjectively, in a kind of “totality which gives the impression of Time”. In the Supermind there is still no separation of Time into past, present and future; all is viewed in a totality but a totality in which there are varying internal relations which give the impression of Time.

Now, coming back to *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo says:

In any case, if Spirit is the fundamental reality, Time and Space must either be conceptive conditions under which the Spirit sees its own movement of energy or else they must be fundamental conditions of the Spirit itself

which assume a different appearance or status according to the status of consciousness in which they manifest.

Sri Aurobindo goes back to his position that Spirit, not Matter, is the origin of Time and Space. He again gives two different possibilities, one is that Time and Space could be conditions or ways in which the Spirit views its own movement of energy, or they could be “fundamental conditions of the Spirit itself” which take on different appearances depending on the level of consciousness in which the Spirit manifests. Elaborating on this second possibility, Sri Aurobindo says:

In other words there is a different Time and Space for each status of our consciousness and even different

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* movements of Time and Space within each status; but all would be renderings of a fundamental spiritual reality of Time-Space. In fact, when we go behind physical Space, we become aware of an extension on which all this movement is based and this extension is spiritual and not material; it is Self or Spirit containing all action of its own Energy.

He has also discussed Time and Space in relation to Supermind in the earlier chapter called “The Supreme Truth-Consciousness”. The paragraphs in this chapter are deeply psychological. Here Sri Aurobindo touches on the possibilities that we can go behind the physical space into a mental space or even deeper into a purely spiritual space. When I close my eyes for meditation or concentration, my mind can leave this physical space and enter into a mental space. In this mental space I can go to Los Angeles or to Budapest or to Bangkok, wherever my mind moves to. Although I may be sitting here physically in Pondicherry, in my mental space I can be in Delhi with my friends and family. Moreover, he says that although these are two different layers of Space-Time, “there is an interpenetration” of them such that if my mind and will are strong enough, acting in and from my mental space, I can make my actions effective in the layer of physical Space.

This is something that Indian yogis have much practiced. They have gone into the mental space and acted on the physical world. It is said that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa could be simultaneously in two places and the Mother is also known to have been in Algeria while she signed her name in a register in Paris for a group where she attended group-readings. So there are different

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Spaces and Times, they are not just physical. In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo continues: If we go behind Time by a similar inward motion, drawing back from the physical and seeing it without being involved in it, we discover that Time observation and Time movement are relative but Time itself is real and eternal. Time observation depends not only on the measures used but on the consciousness and the position of the observer: moreover, each state of consciousness has a different Time relation; Time in Mind consciousness and Mind Space has not the same sense and measure of its movements as in physical Space...

Time and even Space change with our consciousness.

Depending on our mood, whether we are depressed or anxious or we are relaxed or happy, our experience of Time differs. In meditation we may even begin to get a sense of eternity. The Mother has said that one of the very first signs of the psychic realisation is that we have a sense of eternity and immortality. Perhaps this is because our sense of Time is related to disturbances in our consciousness and if our consciousness is calm we get the sense of eternity.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo says: The Being can have three different states of its consciousness with regard to its own eternity. The first is that in which there is the immobile status of the Self in its essential existence, self-absorbed or self-conscious but in either case without development of consciousness in movement or happening; this is what we distinguish as its timeless eternity. The second is its whole-consciousness of the successive relations

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of all things belonging to a destined or an actually proceeding manifestation, in which what we call past, present and future stand together as if in a map or settled design or very much as an artist or painter or architect might hold all the detail of his work viewed as a whole, intended or reviewed in his mind or arranged in a plan for execution; this is the stable status or simultaneous integrality of Time.

What we have here is the plenary, total, global consciousness where there is no division of Time.

There is a simultaneous integrality of past, present and future where everything is seen in the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo calls this the apprehending consciousness of the Supermind. This is the second level of the Supermind in which the whole concept, the blueprint for the manifestation is ready but it is seen as a whole; nothing is yet divided.

Let's go on to the third state of consciousness regarding eternity.

The third status is that of a processive movement of Consciousness-Force and its successive working out of what has been seen by it in the static vision of the Eternal; this is the Time movement.

So we have three phrases to describe these three states of consciousness: "Timeless Eternity", "integrality of Time" and "the Time movement", the last of which we have been calling Time Eternity. We have now got a mixed stage, "the simultaneous integrality of Time". In this state of consciousness there is Time but it is not in movement.

There is only a first step of objectivisation – the one Self as subject viewing itself as object – which sets the stage for the Time movement.

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But it is in one and the same Eternity that this triple status exists and the movement takes place; there are not really two eternities, one an eternity of

status, another an eternity of movement but there are different statuses or positions taken by Consciousness with regard to the one Eternity.

Sri Aurobindo cautions that although there are three statuses, let us not think that they come one after another.

They are 'simultaneous' states of consciousness. The Timeless Eternal, the Stable Time and the Time Eternity are really the same Eternity; not only are they the same one Eternity, they are simultaneous! One and simultaneous means that they are the same One Consciousness!

Because we are analysing this process with the dividing mind, we are in danger of applying our mental divisions to the indivisible One. These distinctions are made for an intellectual understanding of the process; Reality is not divided into three, it is One. It is simultaneous because everything is happening within the single consciousness of the Supreme and is seen in a single view. For example, if I go from here to the gate of this building, then it is a successive movement in Time and Space, because for me the gate is outside of me. For the Supreme, there is no 'outside of Him'. Moreover, he sees the entire episode at once, nothing is happening in succession. For the Supreme, all Time and all Space are simultaneous because all Space and all Time are simply demarcations in its single Consciousness, Sachchidananda.

Now we come to the last passage of this chapter: If there can be this simultaneous multiplicity of self-presentation of one Reality, we see that there is no impossibility in the co-existence of a Timeless

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Eternal and a Time Eternity. It would be the same Eternity viewed by a dual self-awareness and there could be no opposition between them; it would be a correlation of two powers of the self-awareness of the infinite and eternal Reality,—a power of status and non-manifestation, a power of self-effecting action and movement and manifestation. Their simultaneity, however contradictory and difficult to reconcile it might seem to our finite surface seeing, would be intrinsic and normal to the Maya or eternal self-knowledge and all-knowledge of

Brahman, the eternal and infinite knowledge and wisdom-power of the Ishwara, the consciousness-force of the self-existent Sachchidananda.

Here, Sri Aurobindo, brings the issue of Space-Time back into relation with the issue of manifestation and non-manifestation. In the unmanifest, there is Timeless Eternity and in the manifestation there is Time-Eternity. As manifestation is a bringing out of the infinite possibilities of static Being into action through the Consciousness-Force of the Being, so the eternity of Time is a bringing out into successive movement what is inherent in the Timeless Eternity of the One Being by the same power of Consciousness-Force. As the Consciousness-Force is infinite, it can take multiple standpoints simultaneously, it is not confined to one standpoint at a time. There are two primary statuses of the Supreme which are not independent of each other: a power of status and non-manifestation and a power of self-effecting action and movement and manifestation. This “simultaneity”

is normal for Brahman or eternal self-knowledge and Ishwara, the wisdom power of Sachchidananda.

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**Lecture Notes**

# I. Introduction

The Supreme Reality, being indeterminable and yet being the source of all determinations, is describable neither by our negations, *neti neti*, nor by our affirmations, *iti iti*. But its fundamental truths, open to a spiritual intuition and experience, could be caught by a language that is “intuitively metaphysical”, “revealingly poetic”, subtle and is based more on the logic of the infinite than on the logic of the finite.

## II. The Triple Aspects

Brahman is the supreme Absolute, the Consciousness that knows itself in all that exists and the Ananda, the secret Bliss of Existence. Brahman has an aspect of Being and an aspect of its Consciousness and Force. The aspects of its Being is revealed in three poises: Atman, Purusha, Ishwara, that is, as Self, as Conscious Being or Spirit and as God or Divine Being. Brahman's aspect of Consciousness-Force appears as three corresponding poises: Maya, conceptively creative of all things; Prakriti, Nature or Force, dynamically executive, working out all things under the witnessing eye of the Conscious Being or Purusha; and Shakti, the conscious power of the Divine Being or Ishwara. Together, these represent the triune aspect of the Parabrahman or supracosmic Transcendence, the cosmic universality and the separative individuality.

**III. The Limitation of The Mind** It is difficult for our mind to accept this unitary unlimited whole of vision because of the logical intellect and its consistent and determined laws. We see that the 124

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* immutable admits mutability, the One becomes many, the Universal individualises as the Individual, the Being turns into Becoming. All this looks to reason like a magician with a power of Maya or creative magic.

But what our reasoning needs to apprehend is that there are different orders of the reality. Our physical being is built of infinitesimals but their laws of action do not explain all the workings even of the human body.

Similar is the case with life and mind. There is always the unseen occult within or behind the finite and without understanding that the finite cannot be understood correctly fully. For dealing with the suprarational, which is basically the realm of the Spirit, intuition and inner experience are the guides.

## **IV. Logic of the Infinite**

Beyond the logic of the finite, beyond the intellect, there is a spiritual and supramental reason with its own logic. What may seem like magic to our finite reason may correspond to the logic of the Infinite. It is a greater reason, a greater logic because it is more vast, subtle and complex in its operations. What is not evident to our reason and senses, is self evident to this infinite Consciousness.

The intellect typically concentrates on one aspect and treats it as the whole – this is ignorance. However, it may also err in seeing the part as less than the whole; the part may be greater than the whole because it belongs to the Transcendent. The logic of the Infinite sees at all sides, all aspects of things and sees through them to their underlying unity.

It is because of its unitarian vision that the logic of the Brahman, Purusha, Ishwara, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti 125

Infinite can see all things as complementary to each other.

There is no mutual cancellation and no incompatibility.

It is in this conciliatory spirit that it looks at the Nirguna and Saguna, the One and the Many, the Silent and the Dynamic, the Formless and Form, the Infinite and the finite aspects of the Brahman.

## V. Maya

Maya is the supreme and universal consciousness and force of the Eternal and Infinite — it is at once transcendental, universal and individual. Our mind has to admit the possibility of a manifold status of consciousness, then it can understand the multiple and simultaneous status of Maya.

Secondly, the mind has to admit the power of self-limitation of the illimitable Consciousness: that would be a Consciousness limiting its action with full knowledge, not a movement of ignorance.

The third possibility that needs to be admitted is the capacity of the infinite Consciousness, Maya, to plunge into self-absorption. This trance of infinity is the Inconscient. This allows for a double status of the Nirguna and Saguna, the One and the Many.

If these three principles can be accepted, then we can get a clue to the workings of Maya.

## VI. Purusha

Purusha is the Self as the originator, witness, support and lord and enjoyer of individual form and the works of Nature. Its experience is of great pragmatic value.

Normally it is passive and accepts all that Nature imposes on it. But when Purusha in us becomes aware of itself as the witness, that is the first step to the soul's freedom. The 126

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Purusha can cease to be subject, *aniśa* and become lord of its nature, Ishwara.

If Prakriti can dominate Purusha, it is because Prakriti is the Energy of the Being, so the Being can accept it as its own. Such a relation shows that the two are not alien to each other. This duality is taken for the sake of the self-manifestation of the Being.

## **VII. Ishwara**

Here the supreme Person comes to the front – the omnipresent and omniscient, the master and creator of the universe. He is supracosmic as well as intracosmic.

He is neither the personal God of religion nor the Saguna Brahman: He is Brahman, the enjoyer of his own self-existence and the creator of all that is.

The Ishwara creates all with his Consciousness-Force, the Shakti, the Divine Mother, Para-Prakriti; the Ishwara's will is implicit in her. It is She who works out all as the supreme Chit-Shakti who holds all souls and beings within her and as executive Nature.

Thus we see that there is no contradiction between the three aspects of Being or their three dynamic modes of Consciousness-Force working in the universe.

## VIII. A new understanding

In the light of this understanding, we may review the relation between the One and the Many, Non-Manifest and Manifestation, Space and Time. The One is the fundamental truth of existence; the Many exist by the One and depend entirely on the Ishwara. Because of our ego we do not experience this dependence but by surrender one can realise our highest Self.

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The Non-manifest is the Timeless, the Eternal and this Timeless Eternal is manifested in Time-Eternity. What is in Timelessness unmanifested, implied and essential appears in Time as movement. These two then are the same Eternity in a double status.

Space is Brahman in a self-extended status; Time is Brahman in self-extended movement. The two are a dual aspect of one and the same self extension of the cosmic Eternal.

**IX. The Three States of the Eternal Being** a) The Self in its self-absorbed and immobile status is the Timeless Eternity.

b) There is a stable status where the manifestation is viewed as a whole; there is no Time Movement; all motion is held in one Eternal Moment.

c) There is a status of Time movement when all is viewed in manifestation.

All these positions are taken by the Infinite Being in an integral simultaneous vision – something that is illogical to reason but is consistent with the logic of the Infinite.

**Chapter – III The Eternal and the Individual** In the previous chapter Sri Aurobindo explained in detail the meaning and nature of Brahman, Ishwara and Purusha. Now he takes us a little deeper into the subject of the individual. He has given us a description of the supreme Reality in its triple aspect and in the present chapter he examines the relation of the individual to the supreme Reality.

Let us look at the first quotation at the beginning of this chapter which is from the Isha Upanishad: “He am I” ( *So ham*). This is one of the Mahavakyas, the great mantra of the Upanishads, which is similar to others like “Thou art That” ( *Tat tvam asi*) and “I am Brahman” ( *Aham Brahmasmi*). These Mahavakyas equate the supreme Reality with the individual Reality. But when I say the individual Reality, the question is who is this individual?

Is the individual the soul? Is it the Purusha, the Chaitya Purusha? Is it the ego? Is it the body? There could be many levels of individuality and it is this that we are going to clarify as we go along.

The second quote given is from the Gita: “It is an eternal portion of Me that has become the living being in a world of living beings... The eye of knowledge sees the Lord abiding in the body and enjoying and going forth from it”. Lord Sri Krishna says that the individual is “an eternal portion of Me”. The word ‘portion’ suggests that it is something that separated from the Supreme. Is there such a division in the supreme Reality?

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The third quotation is from the Rig Veda – “Two birds beautiful of wing, friends and comrades, cling to a common tree and one eats the sweet fruit, the other regards him and eats not”. Sri Aurobindo is only giving us hints of what the Eternal and the individual mean and what is their relation. Leaving aside the hints, let us come to the main text.

The first paragraph is a review, giving us the essence of the main idea of the previous chapter. “There is a fundamental truth of existence, an Omnipresent Reality...

There is also a dynamic power of this Omnipresence”.

This is Chit-Shakti. He also says that all this has come into the Inconscient through the process of involution and from there the process of evolution has started.

Although this paragraph looks simple and does not add any new idea, it is very basic to our understanding of the divine life. All along Sri Aurobindo maintains that *The Life Divine* is a possibility, the transformation of the physical is a possibility. This is the central idea behind his vision. It is the Divine himself who has descended into the Inconscient and it is the Divine himself who is ascending as Matter, Life, Mind and beyond. The possibility of a divine life is embedded in the Inconscient and it is only coming out through the process of evolution. One of the possibilities embedded in the Inconscient is the supramental consciousness. Therefore, through the process of evolution, it is but natural and as inevitable as tomorrow's sunrise that the Supermind will come forth.

Now having said this, Sri Aurobindo says: There our chief need is to discover the origin and nature of the Ignorance which we see emerging out of the inconscience of matter or disclosing itself within

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a body of matter... For in fact the knowledge is there concealed in the Ignorance itself; it has rather to be unveiled than acquired; it reveals itself rather than is learned, by an inward and upward self-unfolding.

Evolution is a process of self-revelation; involution is a process of self-concealment. There is a self-concealment and a self-revelation, two opposite movements. This self-revealing is what happens for us also. We are all in ignorance but that does not mean that we have no knowledge; knowledge is already hidden within us, it is there deep within and it has only to be brought forth.

But first it will be convenient to meet and get out of the way one difficulty that inevitably arises, the difficulty of admitting that, even given the immanence of the Divine in us, even given our individual consciousness as a vehicle of progressive evolutionary manifestation, the individual is in any sense eternal or that there can be any persistence of individuality after liberation has been attained by unity and self-knowledge.

This is a central problem. When we say that through evolution or tapasya or yoga the individual gets merged in the Divine, what do we understand? What does merging mean from the point of view of the old yogas and in the light of Sri Aurobindo? Once there is a merger, does the person lose his individuality? This point has always been debated. Is the individual eternal or can there be any persistence of individuality? This is an important question. Once I realise the Atman, what happens to this so-called “me”? This is what needs to be clarified.

In any yoga we are required to become egoless. If one becomes egoless, does one cease to exist as “me” and

“myself”? It depends on what we mean by “me”. We are

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taught that “I am a soul, I am not the ego.” There are then two possibilities to consider. Those, who are not adept in philosophy, will say “I am” means “my ego” and those who have read philosophy will say, “I am a soul”. If I am ego, when I realise the Atman, does this ego get dissolved or does it evaporate? Does it cease to exist? And if I am a soul that has realised, we say that it is merged with the universal or the transcendental consciousness. Now we need to understand the meaning of ‘merged’. Does it mean that the individual ceases to exist? This is a question of realisation; more than philosophy and metaphysics, it is a question of spiritual experience. On one side we say the individual soul is eternal and immortal and on the other side we say it gets merged in the universal and transcendental consciousness. How do we solve this paradox?

This paradox is caused because of the limitations of human logic. There is surely a need of logical reasoning, even though it often lands us in confusion or misunderstanding. It is useful for the mind to bring about a clarity, “precision and subtlety” in dealing with the plethora of ideas that cross the human mind from different directions, from different observations based on the physical, psychological and spiritual experiences.

It guards us from falling prey to sensory appearances or partial truths or false conclusion or “emotional and intellectual prejudices.” “It is more

efficiently a guardian against error than a discoverer of truth”, concludes Sri Aurobindo.

It is because of this limitation that reason is always accustomed to identify the individual with the ego. But, is there only one ego or several egos within us? Where is

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* it centred? Ego is on various levels. When we are aware of our own self, we may be aware of our mental ego. Mental ego is on the level of thoughts, vital ego is on the level of emotions. There is also a physical ego associated with an identification with our own body and its needs and concerns. There is this sense of ‘I’ on all these planes of our being. It is wrong to think that only the body is the seat of the ego and that only when the body dies we can get mukti or Nirvana or liberation. All this needs to be corrected by understanding the fundamental purpose of ego:

...what is this strongly separative self-experience that we call ego? It is nothing fundamentally real in itself but only a practical construction of our consciousness devised to centralise the activities of Nature in us.

We perceive a formation of mental, physical, vital experience which distinguishes itself from the rest of being and that is what we think of as ourselves in nature—this individualisation of being in becoming.

The basic idea is that the ego is one of Nature’s practical devices. Sri Aurobindo says that it is not fundamentally real and yet our entire existence is woven around this unreality. We can imagine what a great ignorance we live in! Our whole life is spent only to solidify and consolidate this ego, something that is not a reality. What do we understand by “nothing fundamentally real”? The ego is only a practical device of Nature to keep our sense of separateness from the real Self, from the supreme Reality. Ego is the full-focused, and hardened sense of separateness from the real Self. When one dies, the ego dissolves but the real entity called the soul goes out of the body. The soul, together with the psychic being that is developing around it, is a divine entity that has a

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fundamental reality. It is this “device” to centralise the activities of Nature”, that is division between ignorance and knowledge.

Ego is a kind of illusion, a sense of separative consciousness. How do we get rid of the ego? Yoga is basically a turning of the consciousness to the sense of oneness. The more the sense of oneness grows, the lesser becomes the sense of ego. Yoga is not done in the morning while the rest of the time is spent by remaining concerned with one’s separative ego. Integral Yoga is not a part-time job; it is a full-time work. How do we get this united consciousness? Integral Yoga aims at integral union with the Divine in all the parts of the being on multiple levels.

There are methods of advancing towards this unity. The best method is that of surrender to the Divine: surrender of the mind, vital and physical. Surrender is another name for self-transference of the lower consciousness to the higher. Nobody imposes or forces one to surrender.

It has to be a self-willed and spontaneous act. We have come back to the simple theory that whatever we do, big or small, we must try to surrender all the three main parts of our being to the Lord.

After defining the purpose of the ego, Sri Aurobindo writes about its relation to the Divine: Behind it there is a consciousness, a Purusha, who is not determined or limited by his individualisation or by this synthesis but on the contrary determines, supports and yet exceeds it.

Behind this ego formation on the surface of our being, we have a Purusha, a conscious Being, which is not limited by its individualisation but “determines, supports and yet exceeds it” the concept of Purusha is

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* complex because it exists on all the different planes of consciousness supporting the nature on those different levels. For example, there are mental, vital and physical Purushas, there is the psychic being, the Chaitya Purusha and there are also Purushas on the

supramental and Ananda planes of existence. Here, the term Purusha is used in a general sense which takes all these different statuses on the various levels of being. Moreover, Sri Aurobindo is not confining the concept of Purusha here to the status of a pure and disinterested witness consciousness, for he says that it “determines” the nature of the being’s individualisation.

Sri Aurobindo next explains that in determining the individualisation, the Purusha draws on or selects elements from the world-existence as a whole even while the Purusha exceeds that world existence and uses both the world existence and the individual formation to express itself:

Therefore our individualisation exists by virtue of the world-being but also by virtue of a consciousness which uses the world-being for experience of its possibilities of individuality. These two powers, Person and his world-material, are both necessary for our present experience of individuality.

Both the Purusha, behind the individual formation on the surface of our being, and the world-existence of which our individuality is a part, determine our individuality and if either of them ceases to exist, then our sense of individuality will also cease to exist.

Here I would like to read something from *The Synthesis of Yoga* that throws greater light on the relation between the Purusha and the individual.

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Brahman always reveals himself to us in three ways, within ourselves, above our plane, around us in the universe. Within us, there are two centres of the Purusha, the inner Soul through which he touches us to our awakening; there is the Purusha in the lotus of the heart which opens upward all our powers and the Purusha in the thousand-petalled lotus whence descend through the thought and will, opening the third eye in us, the lightnings of vision and the fire of the divine energy. The bliss existence may come to us through either one of these centres. (CWSA 23-24:596)

We are told that the Purusha has two centres in us: the heart centre and the thousand-petalled lotus above the head and is called sahasrara. Chaitya

Purusha, the psychic being, has its centre in the lotus chakra, the heart centre.

When the lotus of the heart breaks open we feel a divine joy, love and peace expanding in us like a flower of light which irradiates the whole being. They can then unite themselves with the secret source, the Divine in our heart and adore him as in a temple; they can flow upwards to take possession of the thought and will and break out upward towards the Transcendent; they stream out in thought and feeling and act towards all that is around us...

When the other upper lotus opens, the whole mind becomes full of a divine light, joy and power, behind which is the Divine, the Lord of our being on his throne with our soul beside him or drawn inward into his rays; all the thought and will become then a luminosity, power and ecstasy; in communication with the Transcendent, this can pour down towards

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* our mortal members and flow by them outwards on the world. (Ibid., 596)

I brought in this quotation not only to relate the Purusha with our own centres but also to point out that there are two kinds of aspiration that are needed in this Yoga – one in the heart centre to feel the Divine Presence there and the other in the mind centre that aspires towards the Transcendent above. These two types of aspiration lead respectively to the two transformations called psychicisation and spiritualisation.

If we can link up ego with Prakriti we can in a way link up these ideas. What we call Prakriti is the outer nature – the mind, the vital and the physical parts of our being which we use as instruments for our expression in the world. These are usually under the rule of the ego.

Correspondingly, we have three Purushas – Manomaya Purusha, Pranamaya Purusha and Annamaya Purusha.

The mind is under the control of the mental ego but behind this mind there is a Purusha, a mental being, the Manomaya Purusha. So, the whole effort of sadhana is to get the mind, vital and physical parts of our being under the control of the purushas rather than the ego.

Someone, who is more intellectual, may be more open to the Manomaya Purusha. Somebody, who is emotional, not in the superficial sentiments but in emotions of bhakti and devotion, may be more under the influence of the Pranamaya Purusha. Someone who is more physical, for example involved in sports or athletics, may be more under the influence of the Annamaya Purusha. Any perfection on the outer level usually is due to an influence and touch from one of the inner purushas. We can start doing yoga on the level to which one is most open. If we

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can open ourselves to any one of these three Purushas, from these we can more easily contact directly the central Chaitya Purusha, the psychic being.

What happens to the individual person when he has realisation? Who realises whom? Sri Aurobindo explains thus:

But we see farther that in the end this Purusha, this cause and self of our individuality, comes to embrace the whole world and all other beings in a sort of conscious extension of itself and to perceive itself as one with the world-being... By that very fact the individual ceases to be the self-limiting ego; in other words, our false consciousness of existing only by self-limitation, by rigid distinction of ourselves from the rest of being and becoming is transcended; our identification of ourselves with our personal and temporal individualisation in a particular mind and body is abolished.

In the course of evolution, each psychic being evolves through innumerable births and this enriches itself in a world experience. This enrichment, through many births, ultimately embraces the whole world-being itself. Each one of us has to grow through the process of evolution, maybe 50,000 lives or maybe a million but we will have the same end – we will become one with the world-being and consequently “our personal and temporal individualisation in a particular mind and body is abolished.

Now Sri Aurobindo addresses the main question: But is all truth of individuality and individualisation abolished? does the Purusha cease to exist or does

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* he become the world-Purusha and live intimately in innumerable minds and bodies? We do not find it to be so. He still individualises and it is still he who exists and embraces this wider consciousness while he individualises: but the mind no longer thinks of a limited temporary individualisation as all ourselves but only as a wave of becoming thrown up from the sea of its being or else as a form or centre of universality.

This is the answer to the very first question we had asked ourselves: “the individual is in any sense eternal or that there can be any persistence of individuality after liberation has been attained by unity and self-knowledge”. When this individual Purusha becomes one with the world-being, it does not lose its individuality.

We have realised or merged with the world-being and yet remain an individual. How is it possible? He says that the difference that comes in is that the Purusha thinks of himself as “a wave” upon the sea. There is no more separation from the world-being or the Supreme.

When there is realisation, one has the consciousness of being one with the Supreme. That is the only meaning of realisation.

There is the story in the Rig Veda of a bird on a lower branch eating the fruit of Nature and another bird on a higher branch watching. When finally the lower bird looks up and sees the other bird and says, hey, it is me, it is my other self, that is called realisation. When the psychic being looks at its own Jivatman and understands that is itself, that is realisation. The famous Mahavakyas in the Upanishads say the same thing: “He am I” – *soham*,

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“Thou art That” – *tatvamasi*. Why am I thinking that I am separate from the Supreme?

Before realisation one thinks of oneself as a separate wave from the ocean; after the realisation one realises that one is actually the whole ocean. Behind one is the whole ocean, the whole Infinite is behind. And that Infinite is oneself. This wave is and this ocean is myself – God in all, all in God. There is only an abolition of the sense of separation. The rest continues as it is. Abolition of the sense of separation means a lot because all that we are doing today is out of the sense of separation – we quarrel and fight with each other and there is violence and hatred only because of it.

The abolition of the sense of separation immediately brings the sage’s compassion and spontaneous love.

On the human level, we may say that he is my child, so I love him but on that level of realisation the yogi feels that the other is not simply his child but he is himself.

As the consciousness of oneness grows and as the world grows in oneness, there is a lessening of suffering, pain, evil, violence, etc. Religion and philosophy and morality will have no use if each one of us can dip within and find our source of oneness. That is why Sri Aurobindo tells us that the only way to help humanity is to realise oneself; all other ways are a temporary experience.

In conclusion, Sri Aurobindo writes: The soul still makes the world-becoming the material for individual experience, but instead of regarding it as something outside and larger than itself on which it has to draw, by which it is affected, with which it has to

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* make accommodations, it is aware of it subjectively as within itself; it embraces both its world-material and its individualised experience of spatial and temporal activities in a free and enlarged consciousness.

The world is no more outside but it is within. It is the sense of separation that leads to all these complex problems we have in the world. The moment there is an object outside us, we react to it. If I see all of you as objects outside me, then obviously I respond, I react, I evaluate and I judge. There is a kind of give and take, a response.

There is something entering me and me entering the object. In Sanskrit we have words, such as sanjnana, vijnana and jnana – all these words mean nothing more than this double process of us entering the object and the object entering us. But if there is no object and everything is subject, if I am everything, then where is the question of reaction? The abolition of the sense of separation gives us the feeling of a subjective universe. You can see what an immense experience it would be to come out of ignorance! This is what happens when we realise that we are not separate from others or from the Divine.

Here I am reminded of a beautiful example from Sri Aurobindo's life. I was touched to read that sometimes, when Sri Aurobindo went to sit on his chair, he would see a cat sitting on it; so he would sit on its edge or on another chair but would not disturb the cat. He would also remove bones from the fish to feed the cat. Imagine the man writing *The Life Divine* taking out the little bones of a fish for a cat! For him, where was the difference? He could bring down Supermind and could deal with the little cat. That is the universality of oneness. As he says in a poem, "Who" "The hand that sent Jupiter spinning

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through heaven / Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl".

(CWSA 2: 202) That is the divine Man, that is the kind of humanity we want.

We come to the next argument in which we see what lies behind the individual and the world-being. There is the Self which is behind the individual Purusha, which at the same time, embraces the world-being. That is, it is one with the Purusha in the individual and yet at the same time, expresses itself in the cosmos. Both the individual and the universal are

united in the transcendental. Hence, if the individual gets united with the transcendental Self, the individual ought not to merge itself in the supreme Self and lose itself and thereby forgo “the power and consciousness and infinite delight of the Divine.” This kind of union is more “the individual seeking peace and rest of union in a motionless identity”. This is a passive union of the individual with the Divine, instead of having a waking union or a dynamic union.

For, in this active unity, the individual Purusha enlarges its active experience also as well as its static consciousness into a way of union with this Self of his being and of the world-being and yet individualisation remains and therefore differentiation. The Purusha is aware of all other individuals as selves of himself.

We can now imagine that this will be the very status even of a supramental being. We should not think that once the Supermind comes, everything will be one and the same. Even when the supramental creation comes, when it gets established, there is bound to be differentiation which forms the crux of this creation. If there is no differentiation there can be no union between

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* different entities and if there is no union, there is no purpose for the manifestation itself.

*Question: It has been said that the soul entity organises around itself to form the psychic being through several lives. Kindly relate this to two birds and also to Kshara and Akshara.*

*Answer:* The soul in the beginning is only a divine spark – that is why we call it an entity – it doesn't have a form; it is like a single spark or spot of light which is amorphous and does not have any regular shape. This light is there right in the atom and from that atomic level, this spark evolves within different forms – it can be in crawling snake or a flying bird or in a plant or a butterfly. It goes through different births and in each of its formations, it becomes more and more focused in its light. That dim light of the soul begins to brighten up and when it is sufficiently bright, as the Upanishads tell us it becomes the size of a thumb and it takes birth in man. Then we call

it a psychic being, whereas the other creatures have this psychic spark or soul. Now we call it being and no more an entity. Till now, we called it an entity without a particular formation but now it becomes a being with a particular form and consciousness and shape and mission.

Every soul needs to go through numerous births to enrich itself, in order to fulfill its mission and these numerous births exemplify the Kshara Purusha eating the fruit of Nature. Sri Aurobindo has given us an important clue that this bird on the lower branch will not look up to the bird on the higher branch to the Akshara Purusha until and unless it is fully mature and ready and then it is the infinite supreme Purushottama who grants it the

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release. Not until then is the soul allowed to escape Kshara Purusha status. It is not that we say, Oh, we want to realise God, so we will go to the forest and start meditating and then we get realisation. We can do what we want but we will not get the realisation until we are ready and the Purushottama grants it. That is why millions have gone to the forests but only hundreds have realised. It is only when the psychic being has attained a certain state of maturity that the supreme Purusha grants or graces it and says, now you can be released. At that instant, it looks up to the higher self and says that is me. That realisation cannot come by our mental will. Purushottama's grace is needed for the so-called release of the soul; it is the Infinite Supreme Paratpara who grants that grace in the case of each soul.

*Question: The Mother says 'the ego can be overcome only by prayer and aspiration'. We pray for this. How to aspire and what is the meaning of true aspiration?*

*Answer: Why do we aspire or pray? Normally, we aspire or pray for an object. I may aspire to be egoless or I may aspire to be in the psychic consciousness. True aspiration is for living in a particular state of consciousness. One can aspire to be in the Mother's consciousness – I suppose that is the best and safest aspiration. The closer we come into oneness with the Mother's consciousness, the more the ego diminishes. Such is the link. The consciousness of oneness takes away the*

consciousness of separateness and ego is nothing but the consciousness of separateness.

Instead of putting effort to reject this and reject that, to purify this and to purify that, it is better to aspire to be in the Mother's consciousness.

We are aware of the story of Hercules. Once Hercules

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* was asked to clean hundred stables overnight. So, he started cleaning them one by one but the amount of work required to clean even a single stable was immense. After some time, he realised there was a stream nearby and he cut a channel for the stream to bring water into the stables and within no time he cleaned the hundred stables. By morning he had achieved this Herculean task.

This, I feel, is a very beautiful imagery that can be applied to Integral Yoga. We cannot purify ourselves of all the impurities by ourselves in a lifetime. The best thing is to get the Mother's "stream" of grace coming in – that is the true aspiration. Call for her grace, aspire to be in her consciousness! Then her stream of grace comes in and cleanses us. She knows which stable is stinking the most and needs to be cleaned first. I feel that is the best, safest and quickest way, rather than doing, as Sri Aurobindo says, a negative sadhana because by that way we may spend lives together and achieve little.

What's the real explanation behind this waking union or the dynamic union? I take recourse to the Mother's explanation of this deeply philosophic concept: But I said this somewhere while speaking about the story of love... I said that it begins with the Ananda of identity and that after the full circuit of the creation, it ends in the Ananda of union. (CWM 8: 226) Beautiful! The Ananda of union adds to the Ananda of identity. This Ananda of union would not have existed had there not been this circuit of manifestation, this circuit of involution and evolution. To put it in simple words: manifestation is a necessity for the Supreme because it gives to the Supreme the joy of union which is absent in the Ananda of identity. Therefore, the individual

also is necessary for the supreme transcendent Divine.

We are necessary for Him as much as He is necessary for us. It is said that the Divine needs the bhakta just as the bhakta needs the Divine – there is a metaphysical truth behind it.

This explains the supreme Ananda, the great joy we feel when we call the Divine. It is not simply a call, not simply an aspiration, not simply a prayer, it is that innate psychic need: the Divine's innate need to meet the Divine.

It is not simply x, y, or z who is trying to meet the Divine; it is the Atman within the person who wants to meet the Paramatman in the Transcendent. This is Ananda of union. If there is perfect identity, there can be no Ananda of union. The Mother continues her discussion: This is perhaps a little subtle, but it is a fact: and perhaps it is just in order that the Ananda of identity may find what I might call its consummation and crowning in the Ananda of union, that the whole circuit was made.

But if there is perfect identity, there can be no union, the feeling of union does not exist, for it necessarily implies something other than perfect identity. There can be a perfect union, but there is no perfect identity.

Don't try to understand with words and with your head for these two words express altogether different experiences. And yet the result is the same, but the one is rich with all that was not in the other, the richness of the whole experience—the whole universal experience. (Ibid., 227)

A footnote in the text to this part of the conversation reads as follows:

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* I have said that about Love, the manifestation of Love which is the supreme Ananda. Sri Aurobindo also said it: beyond Being and Non-being there is something which is, which manifests as supreme Love and which is at once Being and Non-being. And the first manifestation of That is the Ananda of identity—

essentially it is the identity becoming aware of itself in Ananda and then, it makes the full circuit through the whole manifestation and all the forms taken by Love and returns to the Oneness through union. And this adds to that Ananda, the Ananda of union, which would not never have existed if the circuit had not been made. (Ibid., 226)

We have a famous line in *Savitri*: “A god come down and greater by the fall”. (CWSA 33: 343) The fall is the self-manifestation in the multiplicity but he became

“greater” – it is one of the most beautiful explanations of this creation. Here the Mother uses the different terms,

“Ananda of union” and “Ananda of identity”, to convey the same idea.

Love is the foundation of this creation, because without it the whole manifestation would have no meaning.

Therefore, there is a need for this dynamic union and that is the whole thrust of this evolution. It is not we who make this effort, it is the soul which wants to rejoin with the Divine. This is called the dynamic union, the active unity or the waking unity and as it progresses and we realise this union, we become aware of all other individuals as selves of our self. As we grow towards this union with the Divine, we grow one with all the other creatures of this creation, though we remain individuals. Sri Aurobindo says in his sonnet “The Indwelling Universal” that “The

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world’s happiness flows through me like wine, / Its million sorrows are my agonies”. (CWSA 2: 601) That is how one, who becomes one with the Divine, becomes one with humanity. If we want to be of help to humanity, the best way is to be one with the Divine.

We could see this concept from the evolution angle.

For union, what is needed is love; for identity, we do not need anything. Therefore, the play of love is so important for this creation because it is all

a game of returning, of reunion with the Divine and this can be done only through love the love of the Divine, the love of the Mother.

In this manifestation love is in everything – right from the atom to the plant, to the animal, to humanity and beyond humanity, all is a game of love. On the material level, we call it hunger; on the vital level, it is desire; on the mental level, we call it will; and on the spiritual level, it is aspiration – but it is the same love right from physical to the spiritual. It is love which is trying to bloom, grow higher, grow wider, grow more intense. On the level of the physical body, it grows by taking in, by its hunger. At the vital level, it becomes desire to possess. When it comes to the level of mind, the same love becomes will – to achieve, to attain” This turns to aspiration on the psychic level.

We have discussed about the two types of Ananda because they relate to the passages we were reading in *The Life Divine* regarding an individual who unites with the transcendent Self and the universal existence and why he may not want to turn away from the manifestation and merge in the Transcendent. One answer may be because he wants to infinitely enjoy the sweetness, the love, the Ananda of union.

If we seek an exclusive union with the Divine, what an

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* be the reason? In the light of our earlier discussion, we may say we want the Ananda of identity. Sri Aurobindo answers: “But we do not forfeit that by accepting the differentiation any more than the Divine forfeits his oneness by accepting it”. The Divine has not separated himself into parts by manifesting; he is the same divine Oneness in the transcendence and in the manifestation.

Or we may say that we want peace by this Ananda of identity. Sri Aurobindo answers: “But we have the peace and rest by virtue of our unity with Him, even as the Divine possesses for ever His eternal calm in the midst of His eternal action”. In the beautiful carvings and paintings of anantashayanam, Vishnu is sleeping on the serpent Ananta; he but at the

same time he is the basis of the universe every motion is him, every action is him.

Another reason why we may want the divine Transcendence is the mere joy of getting rid of all differentiation. One may be fed up with all people and policies and actions and programmes and may say, 'I want quiet, I don't want all this multiplicity around me'.

Sri Aurobindo answers:

But that differentiation has its divine purpose: it is a means of greater unity, not as in the egoistic life a means of division; for we enjoy by it our unity with our other selves and with God in all, which we exclude by our rejection of His multiple being.

This question of multiplicity has its own purpose because it is a means to a greater joy. When we mix with people in the proper way, not in the lower vital consciousness, there is a give and take of energies;

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that also can give a sense of joy and rest and peace and communion. Sri Aurobindo adds:

Certainly, we may prefer the absorption in a pure exclusive unity or a departure into a supracosmic transcendence, but there is in the spiritual truth of the Divine Existence no compelling reason why we should not participate in this large possession and bliss of His universal being which is the fulfilment of our individuality.

The entire argument of this paragraph is that it is better not to exclusively absorb oneself in identity with the transcendent Divine. Don't withdraw into the forest, into meditation away from society, because this world is the body of the Divine and it has a purpose and to participate in it in the right manner will give the same joy, if not greater than when one unites exclusively with the Divine in the transcendence. Sri Aurobindo is constantly reminding that we can be in the world, in this multiplicity and

yet not lose our peace, our rest, our unity thus, we will have the added joy of the multiplicity.

In the next paragraph, he says:

But we see farther that it is not solely and ultimately the cosmic being into which our individual being enters but something in which both are unified. As our individualisation in the world is a becoming of that Self, so is the world too a becoming of that Self.

The world-being includes always the individual being; therefore these two becomings, the cosmic and the individual, are always related to each other and in their practical relation mutually dependent.

The individual comes from the universal and the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* transcendent. Normally, we think there is a division between the three it is not so. The individual contains in a way the cosmos. For example, if we see a pen from the top, we will see only its tip. But behind the tip there is the entire pen. This tip is not independent, it is only the front part of what is behind. Similarly, the individual has the entire cosmos or universe behind it. The individual is not a separate being but someone included in the cosmos.

Therefore, Sri Aurobindo writes that we can enjoy this universal being while being an individual in this world because there is the universal in us or behind us; it is not alien to us, it is a part and parcel of our being. Therefore, we should not separate them. As he writes:

...it is only the surface consciousness which by ignorance failed to possess that inclusion because of its self-limitation in ego. But when we speak of the mutual inclusion of the cosmic and the individual, the world in me, I in the world, all in me, I in all,—for that is the liberated self-experience,—we are evidently travelling beyond the language of the normal reason.

This is the problem. If someone says “I am in the world and the world is in me” we cannot understand this kind of language. I can say, “I am in the world” but when I say

“the cosmos is in me”, how is it possible? I am such a small human being, so limited, how can I contain that cosmos?

It is paradoxical and self-contradictory. But Sri Aurobindo clarifies:

That is because the words we have to use were minted by mind and given their values by an intellect bound to the conceptions of physical Space and circumstance and using for the language of a higher psychological

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experience figures drawn from the physical life and the experience of the senses.

The basic thing is that our mind and our concepts are limited. This glass on my table can be here or there, it can only be at one place at a time. That is because our mind is used to seeing things at one place at a time and our language is nothing but the reflection of our mental consciousness. Our language depends on our mental consciousness and it also is attached to the physical senses. When we say “God is in me and I am in the God”, it is not a physical space-time experience that we are talking about; it is a spiritual and psychological experience which transcends our space-time scenario and the space-time limitations of our language.

Therefore this mutual inclusion is spiritual and psychological; it is a translation of the two forms of the Many, all and individual, into a unifying spiritual experience,—a translation of the eternal unity of the One and the Many; for the One is the eternal unity of the Many differentiating and undifferentiating itself in the cosmos.

...we see that the whole difficulty and confusion into which the normal reason falls is that we are speaking of a higher and illimitable self-experience founded on divine infinities and yet are applying to it a language formed by this lower and limited experience which founds itself on finite

appearances and the separative definitions by which we try to distinguish and classify the phenomena of the material universe.

Sri Aurobindo has brought in this question of the individual and cosmos being one and mutually inclusive because earlier he had argued that while being an

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* individual in this world one can enjoy union, peace, rest and the joy of the transcendent Oneness. Here, he says that this simultaneous experience of the transcendent Oneness and the multiplicity is translated in the multiplicity itself by the unifying spiritual experience of the individual and the all. This latter unification is inevitable because ultimately both cosmos and individual are expressions of the same underlying One Being.

We are speaking of the Infinite in finite terms, in a language that cannot capture the Infinite. So, there are always these paradoxes, contradictions, a relative inability to express what is there. What he tells us here is we should not go by our usual definitions of terms, like 'individual', because as we have seen, the individual is simply one front or face of the cosmos and the transcendent; it is not a separate entity. Experientially, I may feel that I am in God and God is in me and God is in all and there is no contradiction, to express these experiences in words may appear contradictory. Many saints and yogis have had this experience but translating it into a language becomes difficult. Whenever they have done so, in books like the Gita or *The Life Divine*, normal human beings, who do not have this background of experience, find it illogical and impossible to believe. That's the problem of reading without the background of experience. For a yogi, it is not contradictory but the logical mind forbids it: how can a human being be God with all his terrible imperfections!

Sri Aurobindo explains:

Thus when we speak of an individual we mean ordinarily an individualisation of mental, vital, physical being separate from all other beings, incapable of unity with them by its very individuality.

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If we go beyond these three terms of mind, life and body, and speak of the soul or individual self, we still think of an individualised being separate from all others, incapable of unity and inclusive mutuality, capable at most of a spiritual contact and soul-sympathy. It is therefore necessary to insist that by the true individual we mean nothing of the kind, but a conscious power of being of the Eternal, always existing by unity, always capable of mutuality. It is that being which by self-knowledge enjoys liberation and immortality.

We mentally understand the 'individual' in the separative sense. It starts with the body which sees that it is separate from other bodies. But my mind also thinks that it is separate from others' minds and my emotions feel that they are separate from others' feelings. A bigger mistake we make is that even when we say, we have a soul, we say that my soul is separate from others. Sri Aurobindo says we have to leave behind this 'separative' meaning of the individual; what we mean is that an individual is a particular face of the Universal and the Transcendent. If we can understand this, then Sri Aurobindo takes us even further beyond our normal conceptions: And then we get to this that not only am I in the world and the world in me, but God is in me and I am in God; by which yet it is not meant that God depends for His existence on man, but that He manifests Himself in that which He manifests within Himself; the individual exists in the Transcendent, but all the Transcendent is there concealed in the individual.

Further I am one with God in my being and yet I can have relations with Him in my experience. I,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the liberated individual, can enjoy the Divine in His transcendence, unified with Him, and enjoy at the same time the Divine in other individuals and in His cosmic being.

The question is, do we agree with that? Is it really our common experience? We may accept that there is Brahman or the Supreme because, after all, this world has been created by something or somebody, it must be God or

Divine. That is the Absolute. Our scriptures have said that the absolute Brahman is Nirguna, he has no relations.

The Absolute and the relative are irreconcilable opposites.

How can there be a relation between the supreme God and the world? To be really honest, all of us come back to our own little minds. We find it difficult to imagine that God and this sorrowful world are anywhere related.

We speak about the perfection of God, but where is the perfection here in this world? Great compassion is there, all is violence here. Truth is there, all is falsehood here. Is there any possibility that this world and Divine are anywhere compatible? Reason cannot accept it and naturally so because it doesn't find any bridge between the two. There is only acceptance by faith.

All we have is acceptance by faith and not experience at all. Where do we experience this Saguna and Nirguna?

We have no idea of it, not the least understanding of it.

These statements are contradictions – two opposing and conflicting affirmations cannot both be true. If we say that this world is real and that the Absolute is real, how can both be real? On our level, with our own limited senses and mind, only one of them can be true. To my day-to-day experience this world is true. If in my inner experience, in silence and meditation, I find some other

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Reality to be true, then this world cannot be true. Why?

Because the difference between these two realities is too vast. Sri Aurobindo says that for our logic: It is impossible that there should be oneness with God and yet a relation with Him such as this of the enjoyment of the Divine. In oneness there is no one to enjoy except the One and nothing to be enjoyed except the One.

If I have realised God, if I have identified myself with the Divine and have become one with the Divine, can I have a relation with the Him? That's a very logical question. If I say there is a relation between two things, the two things must be separate. Can we have a relation with God once we identify with God? We cannot. This also relates to Sri Ramakrishna's saying that if he were given the choice to be the honey or the honey-bee, he said he would like to be the honey-bee because the bee can taste the honey but the honey cannot taste itself. In the manifestation we can taste the Divine but in identity the Divine cannot taste himself.

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To continue with our discussion of previous class, we realise that if God, the individual and the cosmos are not separated, there cannot be any relation. But our spiritual experience says they are one and the same and yet we can have a relation. Reason says, it does not know if in the past they were one, it does not know if in future they will be one but it knows at present they are completely different from each other. The very fact that people go to churches or temples means that they are separated from God because they are trying to build a relation; there is a distance from God which they are trying to make it

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* shorter. This is what we see around the world: all this pooja, bhakti, religion, ethics are teaching us to go closer to God. We come to a kind of paradox. Vedanta says

'Tat tvam asi', 'Thou art That' and our logic says that we cannot have the cake and eat it too. On one side we are told 'Thou art That' and on other side we go to the temple.

This is a self-contradiction. We are trapped between our logic and our scriptures.

Adi Shankaracharya came to our rescue and said why are you bothered about these questions? All this is *mithya*; all that you are doing is an illusion. There is neither the individual nor the world. How easily he has

solved the problem! He just cut the knot and said we are unnecessarily wasting our time. Unity is the one eternal fact, so the cosmos and the individual are non-existent.

They are “illusions imposed on itself by the Eternal”.

Illusion is Maya imposed on the Eternal by the Eternal himself.

We have the rationalists who say, firstly, that the Supreme Divine and this world are so vastly different, that they cannot be reconciled; there is no bridging the gap between the Supreme and the world. Secondly, they argue that if there were a relationship, the two must be separate. Therefore God, the individual and the cosmos must be separate. Thirdly there is Adi Sankaracharya's logic which says that the world and relations must be illusions because Brahman is Nirguna or without relations at all. This paragraph ends with the following conclusion:

Therefore it is the reasoning which is the most satisfactory to the simply rational mind. Yet is there here a triple error, the error of making an unbridgeable

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gulf between the Absolute and the relative, the error of making too simple and rigid and extending too far the law of contradictions and the error of conceiving in terms of time the genesis of things which have their origin and first habitat in the Eternal.

Sri Aurobindo deals with these logical solutions on a logical basis. He does not shun these problems on experiential basis by saying, he has seen Brahman and he knows. He stays on the same logical ground and disprove these one by one. He says there are three mistakes here.

First, we are making too much of a gulf between the Absolute and the world; second we are extending the law of logical contradiction to spiritual things; and third, we are trying to interpret in terms of time and space things which are eternal in their reality.

Here perhaps one may ask, God and cosmos we may think of as eternal but how is the individual eternal? In reply, Sri Aurobindo answers, “it is therefore necessary to insist that by the true individual we mean... a conscious power of being of the Eternal always existing by unity, always capable of mutuality”. In other places, he would say we are multiple faces of the Eternal. The individual is not just the body, the life and the mind, rather the true individual is the Atman which has the entire cosmos and transcendent behind him.

In a different way, each one of us has an Atman that is the same; we are all individuals but behind each one of us is this entire cosmos. Unfortunately, because of the ignorance, because of the limitations of our ego, we are not able to know it. The entire problem of this individual human being is his self-limitation, otherwise there is no difference between the individual and the Transcendent.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Individual almost by definition means a self-limitation of the Transcendent.

The moment there is self-limitation, it leads to incapacity. Mark the logical step. We ask why this ignorance, why this suffering and pain? At the origin of all this is self-limitation. Why do we call it the origin of all problems? Because what is limited becomes incapable.

And then incapacity leads to desire. I desire for a thing when I do not have it. And desire ends up in death. The life-force of desire uses the body for its food, its own body and the bodies of others and puts it into competition with others similarly situated in this self-limitation. So, incapacity, desire and death are the sequence of all our falsehood and problems.

Now going back to Sri Aurobindo’s explanation here, we have seen the triple error. Sri Aurobindo explains each one of them. The first is the unbridgeable gulf we make between the Absolute and the relative. He starts with the question, “What is the Absolute?”

We mean by the Absolute something greater than ourselves, greater than the cosmos which we live in, the supreme reality of that transcendent Being which we call God, something without which all that we see or are conscious of as existing, could not have been, could not for a moment remain in existence... For all relatives can only exist by something which is the truth of them all and the source and continent of their powers and properties and yet exceeds them all...

This is the general concept of what we mean by Brahman, the Absolute, the ultimate Reality. Basically, either one can have the experience of something vaster than this universe, or else, if we go logically, then it is

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the origin of things. If we keep going to the end of what comes before something else, somewhere we have to say there is somebody or something called God or Energy or Brahman or the Absolute or just the Source. Some people think that the Absolute is the universe. But where has the universe come from? From what was the universe created? Whatever the name we give it, there is logically a Source to this world and this Source the West calls as the Absolute and India calls Brahman.

Brahman has been described as “*neti neti*” – “it not this, it is not that,” as well as by “*iti iti*” – “it is this, it is that.” In fact, it cannot be defined by any negatives or positives; Brahman always exceeds them. Therefore, it is said that Brahman is ineffable, indescribable and indeterminate? We cannot say ‘God is this,’

whether by ‘this’ we mean the universe or energy or something else; it is ‘this’ but it is something more.

Sri Aurobindo says that it exceeds the sum of relativities and that all relativities are a “partial, inferior or practical expression”. He continues:

We see by reason that such an Absolute must exist; we become by spiritual experience aware of its existence: but even when we are most aware of it, we cannot describe it because our language and thought can deal only with the relative. The Absolute is for us the Ineffable.

Remember the question – whether there is an unbridgeable gulf between the Absolute and the relative.

Reason says they cannot both be true. But, in reality, there is no such problem. The Absolute or Brahman is absolute in its freedom. The Divine is absolute in perfection: he has absolute love, absolute compassion, absolute energy,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* absolute beauty, absolute goodness, absolute everything.

But when we say “absolute in freedom”, that means he is not bound by anything. But the logic comes in and says that if God is absolutely free, he cannot have limitations

– and here is the paradox – he cannot even limit himself.

Where is the absolute freedom in that? He is not bound by anything but he cannot limit himself? Is that the right logic? That is the problem of Advaita Vedanta. They say Brahman is supremely Nirguna, he is Absolute, beyond all relativities, beyond change. He cannot become the world or become a limited human being. But the Divine asks, if I am free, then why can't I become a human being?

Sri Aurobindo says that Brahman is not bound by the limitations of the relative but it is also not bound to non-limitation; it is not bound to its freedom from limitation. This is a fallacy of the reason to say that the Absolute and the relative are unbridgeable. How does Sri Aurobindo bridge them? He says you do not have to bridge the Absolute with the finite because the Infinite is also the finite. If I say that the Infinite is this and the finite is that, then I have to put a bridge but if the Infinite is at the same time the finite, there is nothing to bridge.

If we say he is all-powerful but he cannot become weak, then where is the big gap? This is the contradiction that is there in all our old yogas and old religions. God is up there because he cannot be in the world which is so

ignorant. Sri Aurobindo says that God has become this world, the Infinite has become the finite, the Absolute has become the relative. This is the solution to the first logical problem.

Next, Sri Aurobindo says that by arguing that the Absolute is not only free from limitations but that it is

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also incapable of them, unable to self-limit itself, we come to the problem faced by Adi Shankaracharya: By this false step of our logic we get into an impasse. Our own existence and the existence of the universe become not only a mystery, but logically inconceivable. For we get by that to an Absolute which is incapable of relativity and exclusive of all relatives and yet the cause or at least the support of relativity and the container, truth and substance of all relatives.

We have then only one logical-illogical way of escape out of the impasse; we have to suppose the imposition of the world as a self-effective illusion or an unreal temporal reality, on the eternity of the formless relationless Absolute.

Sri Aurobindo says that there is no need to bridge the Absolute and the relative because the Absolute includes the relative within it. This was not the solution suggested by Adi Shankaracharya. He had told us that this whole cosmos is an illusion that is self-imposed by Brahman upon himself. As Sri Aurobindo describes his view: This imposition is made by our misleading individual consciousness which falsely sees Brahman in the figure of the cosmos—as a man mistakes a rope for a serpent...

Adi Shankaracharya then proposes a logical-illogical way of escape out of the impasse: in my ignorance, I have mistaken this universe for the Brahman like I might mistakenly see a snake instead of a rope. The question remains how has this illusory snake-universe come into being and how have I come into being to mistakenly see this snake-universe? Sri Aurobindo says, by calling it an illusion instead of a reality, one does not explain how

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* or why it has come into being, it has just been labeled differently. Moreover, if I mistake a rope for a snake, if I see a universe where there is only Brahman, I may be excused but if we say that Brahman has imposed upon himself a false world, then we can imagine the outcome of such a statement! If I am in ignorance, I may be forgiven but to use the same logic to say that Brahman is also in ignorance of itself is quite not an acceptable claim. He may pretend to be ignorant, like we play hide and seek but then he is capable of being found again because he is still there in the universal game.

For Sri Aurobindo, this theory of illusion of Adi Shankaracharya does not hold any ground. He concludes by saying:

But the Absolute, obviously, finds no difficulty in world-manifestation and no difficulty either in a simultaneous transcendence of world-manifestation; the difficulty exists only for our mental limitations which prevent us from grasping the supramental rationality of the coexistence of the Infinite and the finite...

The Absolute obviously finds no difficulty in reconciling the unconditioned with the conditioned. That is the hallmark of Sri Aurobindo's explanation. He says, we, in our mental consciousness, are unable to see this Infinite and finite together. In our mental rationalism, we say either-or but for the supramental rationalism, for the logic of the infinite, both are co-existent.

Sri Aurobindo has given this answer out of his own experience of the Supermind. Adi Shankaracharya's problem was that perhaps his experience did not go the same path and attain the Supramental consciousness. We

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do not know but perhaps he attained the Overmental consciousness where there is still a division between the Supreme and the world. It is only the Supramental consciousness which sees a simultaneous existence of all the worlds, the finite and the infinite, the conditioned and the unconditioned, relative and unrelated, the simultaneous existence of the individual, the

cosmos and the Transcendent. This global spherical vision comes only in the supramental consciousness – what he calls here the supramental rationality or the logic of the Infinite. As Sri Aurobindo concludes here, “It reconciles in its great primal facts of being what to our mental view, concerned as it is with words and ideas derived from secondary facts, are irreconcilable contraries”.

The logic of the finite works on exclusiveness and oppositions but the logic of the Infinite works on coexistence. Having said that, we now move to the second error: the law of contradictions is much exaggerated. It

“is that two opposing and conflicting affirmations cannot both be true”. How does Sri Aurobindo explain that this cannot be applied to the Absolute?

That law is necessary to us in order that we may posit partial and practical truths, think out things clearly, decisively and usefully, classify, act, deal with them effectively for particular purposes in our divisions of Space, distinctions of form and property, moments of Time. It represents a formal and strongly dynamic truth of existence in its practical workings which is strongest in the most outward term of things, the material, but becomes less and less rigidly binding as we go upward in the scale, mount on the more subtle rungs of the ladder of being.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* This law is very important for partial and practical truths. The logic of the Infinite is good but I still see the sun rising in the east. I am not in outer space and cannot see the earth rotating around the sun. What my senses tell me, what my mind reacts and responds to, that’s the practical truth. But a practical truth is a partial truth –

that’s where we make a mistake. We take practical truth to be the absolute Reality. Practically it has its own utility. It is important to classify and divide Space and Time to deal with them for particular purposes. For all that we do in our practical life the law of contradiction is very important because it gives us greater efficiency, less confusion, greater clarity.

He says this law of contradictions is most appropriate on the physical level but as we go beyond the physical, it is not so clearly demarcated. If I say that this book is here, it means it is not in any other place but on the emotional level, can I say I love a person or I hate a person totally?

Sometimes I may love the person, at another time I may hate the person. Some aspects of the person I may love, some I may hate. It is not an absolute emotion.

Emotions change, for emotions the black or white of this book does not exist. As we go beyond the emotional level to the mental level, there is an even greater flexibility and fluidity in ideas. There are no strict ideas that say one must do things exactly this way. Someone can say, no, you can do it another way also. I do not have to be rigid in my own ideas; I can change them or I can accept different ideas and incorporate them into my own. Ideas mingle easily. They do not remain as divided as things are on the material level. If we go beyond ideas, beyond the mental level, we can imagine that contradictions become less

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and less and at a certain point opposite things combine simultaneously – both things are correct. As we go to the higher levels of consciousness, the oppositions of the impersonal and personal Divine, the Nirguna and Saguna Divine – all these distinctions and divisions do not exist; rather the two aspects exist simultaneously. We can go through this door or that door to the Divine – both doors are co-existent.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

It is especially necessary for us in dealing with material phenomena and forces; we have to suppose them to be one thing at a time, to have one power at a time and to be limited by their ostensible and practically effective capacities and properties; otherwise we cannot deal with them.

That is the practical reality. On the material level, we have to take one thing at a time as we are limited by the practically effective capacities and properties of things.

There are practical limitations. But he adds: But even there, as human thought is beginning to realise, the distinctions made by the intellect and the classifications and practical experiments of Science, while perfectly valid in their own field and for their own purpose, do not represent the whole or the real truth of things, whether of things in the whole or of the thing by itself which we have classified and set artificially apart, isolated for separate analysis.

Today, Science has evolved and proven that this matter is not as it seems to be. It is not an immobile thing; there is a tremendous amount of movement, energy, action even in a seemingly immobile object. Just as on the level

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of emotions I cannot say I only love or hate a person, here also, on the material level, I cannot say this object is only solid and immobile – it is not so from the scientific point of view. It is mobile energy, it is neutrons and protons and electrons moving with tremendous speed. Even on the material level, the law of contradiction is losing its ground; it is not as rigid and divisive as it was before.

The isolation is certainly necessary for first knowledge.

A diamond is a diamond and a pearl a pearl, each thing of its own class, existing by its distinction from all others, each distinguished by its own form and properties.

We say this object is different from that one. There are differences of form, colour, texture, consistency. Taking note of these differences is necessary on the physical level.

We can appreciate both a red rose and a lotus: they are completely different and both are beautiful because of their differences. Sri Aurobindo says at a practical level, differences are important. That is how life has variety and can be enjoyed because each individual is different from the other. At the same time, we can recognise that “each has also properties and elements which are common to both...”

Now Sri Aurobindo argues something else. The law of contradictions is defended on the level of matter and the physical; here it is good, necessary and gives us variety.

But he tells us not to stop there. The whole problem with human beings is that we stop on the physical level.

We say this person is different from me, this religion is different from mine, this country is not my country and therefore, we come to ego-quarrels. But if we take the next step, things will change radically. If we realise that

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there is much more commonness between two things than their differences, we might not fight with each other.

For example, if we take up two objects – this microphone and the paperweight – we can see there is a commonness between them: both are metallic, both are round, both have a silver colour. These are the external commonalities but there is also a deeper commonality that they are both made of atomic matter. At the deepest level, we see that all these things are essentially the same thing – they are all forms of Energy.

Why are we emphasising on the common points?

How does it help in our life? It is beautiful to go to the garden and see the differences. If we say all these different flowers are just atomic matter, that takes away the joy.

Sri Aurobindo says that if we just go by these external differences, we can enjoy the variety and we can profit by understanding the difference between pearls and diamonds but once we fully understand the commonness between pearls and diamonds, then we may be able to make a pearl or diamond ourselves out of their common energy. That is the secret behind materialization and dematerialization that some yogis could do. This is the science of knowing the commonness, the common energy and some yogis could mould that common energy and make things. On the scientific level, if we know that the basic structure of water is  $H_2O$ , then in the lab we can

combine H<sub>2</sub> and O and make water. By going behind the external truth of things to their fundamentals, we can manipulate and create these things.

That is the advantage of going to the source of the thing wherein we have 'control' over the outer things. As Sri Aurobindo says:

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...if we can get to the knowledge and control of their elements and the common properties of the class to which they belong, we may arrive at the power of making either a diamond or pearl at our pleasure: go farther still and master that which all material things are in their essence and we may arrive even at the power of transmutation which would give the greatest possible control of material Nature.

This is where Science should lead us: to find out the secrets of matter so that we do not disturb or destroy matter and yet be able to gain control and mastery over it. This is so not only with matter. We can take the same theory to the level of human nature. We all know we are different people with different forms and genders and ages. The differences are nice. We enjoy the company of different friends, have communication with others but then what happens? We have limitations and we get into conflicts. If I can get into the essence of all of us, to the Spirit, then I can contact everyone, wherever they are, at every instant. This union, this unity amongst us can be felt at all points. Then I do not depend anymore on differences; I depend on the commonalty in us that is our spirit or soul. That's the advantage of going deeper to the essence, we can have unity and harmony.

At the surface level, there will be differences not only of form but of opinions, of expressions, of religions.

That is why Sri Aurobindo would tell us that if you want to realise human unity, no amount of external effort –

no religion, no philosophy, no morality, no ethics, no idealism – can bring us together; it is only the deeper spiritual consciousness that can do that

because it is only at the deeper level that we are one. On the outer level,

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we are not one. We are variations of the same spirit, so, obviously the differences have a meaning but we should not go by the differences alone, we also have to go into the deeper spirit to find our unity.

Thus the knowledge of distinctions arrives at its greatest truth and effective use when we arrive at the deeper knowledge of that which reconciles distinctions in the unity behind all variation...

There is an essentiality of things, a commonalty of things, an individuality of things; the commonalty and individuality are true and eternal powers of the essentiality: that transcends them both, but the three together and not one by itself are the eternal terms of existence.

That is a master sentence! Sri Aurobindo relates the three terms of our existence: essentiality, commonalty and individuality. Essentiality is the spirit; commonalty is the common features; individuality is the unique features. All three are absolutely necessary. We may say that an animal and a plant are different but there is an essentiality to them – it is that they are the same consciousness. There is one consciousness behind these variations of forms of individuality. It is consciousness that takes different forms. When we say the word ‘spirit’, it is too vague.

Where there is consciousness (chit) there is also force or energy (tapas). We can say that Chit translates itself into Tapas and Tapas translates itself into matter. In matter, of course, we have multiple manifestations of plants, animals, human beings, etc. When we go back from matter to energy, we see the foundation or the origin of everything. This is Spirit, this is the essentiality, the Consciousness behind. In Sri Aurobindo’s language,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Consciousness is what Existence is. Sat or Existence is Consciousness, it is the essentiality behind everything. It is this

Consciousness which we have called in different terms as Sachchidananda or Brahman or the Absolute.

By using the term 'Consciousness', we can better understand what Brahman is, what Sachchidananda is.

The most important term for our level of manifestation is Chit or Consciousness because that is what becomes this world. In a world when there is no manifestation, Chit is not important, only Sat is important. But when the process of manifestation begins, it is Consciousness-Force, chit-tapas, that becomes the carrier of Sat and Ananda. The chit-tapas moves forward, taking shape and form through the process of energy it holds within itself Sat and Ananda.

When we make a pot, the potter uses clay but he cannot make the clay without water. There has to be water that is completely mixed with the clay, then only can the form of the pot come out. We can say that substance or existence is the clay, water is consciousness and the form that comes out is an experience of joy-creation. Without all three nothing manifests.

To return to the text: on the material level, the law of contradiction is a truth but it is a partial and practical truth, not the complete truth. It is necessary in life to organise ourselves, especially on the material level. As we go beyond the physical level, we should not hold rigidly to this law of contradictions; it does not have the same rigid truth on the higher levels. Thirdly, there is a commonalty behind everything, even on material level.

If we go to the level of commonalty, we can manipulate things. On the spiritual level, we go beyond commonalty

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into the essentiality. Commonalty can still be psycho-physical but essentiality can be reached only on the spiritual level. That's what a yogi does, he gets into the essentiality of things. When Sri Aurobindo says that matter can change, it is not merely a foresight; he has become one with the essentiality. That's what I hold true about Sri Aurobindo's vision about

future. It is not like a futurologist telling what is going to happen in 23rd century.

Sri Aurobindo has become identified with the essentiality of the supramental consciousness itself and having done so, he knows what will happen in the flow of time as clearly as tomorrow's sunrise. Once one knows the essentiality, then one doesn't have to do guess work. In the Spirit, in Chit, in the supramental consciousness, he is Time. Especially in the supramental consciousness, as Sri Aurobindo has described, there is constant trikaladrishti, the simultaneous vision of past, present and future.

For Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, it is not a matter of predicting that the Supermind is coming; it is a question of seeing it, just like when you came into this room you recognised it. It is a recognition of what is already existent for you, natural for you, because it already exists in your consciousness on the material level. For the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, the supramental world or consciousness is like walking into that "room", already existent; it is just a matter of the passage of time. There is no doubt or debate about what would happen to this world.

Now we come to a beautiful passage: All things, even while different, are yet one. For practical purposes plant, animal, man are different existences; yet when we look deeper we see that the plant is only an animal with an insufficient evolution

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of self-consciousness and dynamic force; the animal is man in the making; man himself is that animal and yet the something more of self-consciousness and dynamic power of consciousness that make him man; and yet again he is the something more which is contained and repressed in his being as the potentiality of the divine,—he is a god in the making.

That is the essentiality of the human being: that he is the hidden god and the Superman "in the making".

Man himself, who takes up all that went before him and transmutes it into the term of manhood, is the individual human being and yet he is all mankind, the universal man, acting in the individual as a human personality.

The individual human being is not only himself, he also has the potential of all that is hidden in him. Just as the animal is hidden in the plant and the human being is hidden in the animal, God is hidden in the human being.

Each is a layer of the same eternal consciousness. It is as if the eternal consciousness was hidden in the darkness and one layer of darkness is opened and we have matter; another layer opened subsequently and we have plant and the last layer of animal is opened and we have man.

Now, one more layer has been opened by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and there is revealed the Superman. It is the Eternal revealing himself but what happens is that there needs to be an Avatar who comes to pull off that veil which the Divine had put on himself. He hid himself in this world but he needs to descend here to pull off each veil.

In our practical dealings with life we have to arrive at the same truth. For certain practical ends we have to say that a thing is good or bad, beautiful or ugly, just

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or unjust and act upon that statement; but if we limit ourselves by it, we do not get at real knowledge. The law of contradictions here is only valid insofar as two different and opposite statements cannot be true of the same thing at the same time, in the same field, in the same respect, from the same point of view and for the same practical purpose. A great war, destruction or violent all-upheaving revolution, for example, may present itself to us as an evil, a virulent and catastrophic disorder and it is so in certain respects, results, ways of looking at it; but from others, it may be a great good, since it rapidly clears the field for a new good or a more satisfying order.

Sri Aurobindo is coming back to the same point but here he has a slightly different emphasis – it is practical.

Sometimes for our action we may need to classify something as evil, otherwise we cannot act, we cannot progress. See how the Mother and Sri Aurobindo would act upon this world. They were living in the supramental consciousness and were beyond good and evil and yet they were practical enough to say this is wrong, you should not do that, don't go there, you'll get hurt if you do that, this is an anti-divine force, etc. They would give absolute details of what to do and what not to do. This means that even for this vast vision, on the practical physical plane of consciousness, the truths are what they are at present. When supramentalisation takes place, a dramatic difference will no doubt come in, what now seems beautiful or ugly, good or bad may change but for now we have to take things as they are. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo had equanimity but they did not equalise things and say that everything is good and it doesn't matter what you do. On the practical level, for the present

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* time, these contradictions have a validity. On the physical level, two different and opposite statements cannot be true. Things can be opposite and the differences between them clear-cut.

The second World War was terribly destructive but it was also constructive. It rapidly cleared the field for a more satisfying order. Millions of people died but Sri Aurobindo said there was no other way that Nature could break the ego-barriers of the nations and move towards a more humane world order. Nature wants to move forward, evolve and if mankind out of its national pride and ego says I will not move then like a naughty child it gets a "slap"! Nature gave a big "slap" because the nations were stubborn, believing that they were the best, the greatest. This happens also with religions. Any religion which thinks it is the greatest will break up within itself, because nothing is allowed to stay sole, it has always to merge in the larger.

This is the movement of Nature. The potter beats the clay very hard in the beginning because in the beginning, the mass of clay is very resistant. But when the vase begins to take a beautiful shape, the potter doesn't beat it hard but uses his delicate fingers to shape it. When it is all done, he takes water and gently smooths the surface and puts it on the altar. It is the

resistance in you and me, in mankind that requires this slapping, this war and violence. If we open ourselves to the Divine, he will not need to “slap”

us. But if we need to be hit hard, Nature does not hesitate because it wants to bring out that beautiful ‘divine vase’

from within all of us.

So, how can we say if something is right or wrong?

There are different views from different angles. As

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Sri Aurobindo says, “every man is a mixture of contraries... We can only understand entirely if we get to some sense of the Absolute...” This is the supramental vision; one cannot understand the movement without understanding the Eternal. One cannot appreciate the partial without understanding the whole. It is only when we have the vision of the whole that the relative or the partial can be truly understood.

The reason why the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have given so much emphasis to human beings is because they understood the whole gamut of the divine scheme and the role of the humanity in it. As he said, “man is a God in the making”. If we do not have this supramental vision, then we may just say that man is a devil. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo saw that man was a god in the making, that he must be protected and encouraged. Humanity had to be shown the right way of delivering God out of itself because this is the role of mankind in the divine scheme.

Unless and until we have the total divine view, we cannot understand either the individual person or the world. If we lack that vision, we tend to be misled by small things or get trapped in a narrow viewpoint. Sometimes people, because of a minor sad or evil incident, try to commit suicide. Then, after some time, their vision broadens and they see the incident in a wider context and it appears no more than a small dark spot that has almost disappeared.

If we look only at the small events and details of life, we don't get their true value. Long many years back, I had visited an exhibition of Impressionist Painters. In the paintings there were no brush strokes, only minute dots of black, red, green, etc. – mixture of colours without making any sense. But when we see from far, we don't see

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the dots, we see a beautiful figure or a scenery. We may ask why did he put black dots, he could have put brown?

When we distance ourselves, then suddenly a beautiful picture emerges in detail. By distancing we get the whole vision of the foreground against the background, of the frame, of the atmosphere created by the painting. Then the picture becomes completely different, it is no more meaningless – we understand the details of the individual only in the context of the totality. This is also true for individuals in the real world. Each thing has a validity but we can understand it only in the context of the whole. I now begin to see how sadhana is essential to understand a person or a situation. How very narrow is our vision, how we see things only from one angle! If we do sadhana, we have a wider vision in which we can embrace things, have greater flexibility and openness of mind to take others' points of view. When we do so, we find that things become more meaningful and beautiful because of the secret behind all forms:

For behind all relativities there is this Absolute which gives them their being and their justification.

No particular act or arrangement in the world is by itself absolute justice; but there is behind all acts and arrangements something absolute which we call justice...

Now, Sri Aurobindo is going to briefly discuss the philosophy of justice and extend it to other values such as goodness and beauty. He says that each one of our acts expresses a relative justice which is labouring to express an absolute justice. Similarly, each act expresses a relative good and beauty that is striving to express an absolute good and beauty. There is an inborn sense of good,

beauty and justice in the psychic being and by coming in contact with it, we get a truer sense of these qualities in life. A child often has an innate sense of these qualities which later gets overlaid by mental ideas about them or by falsifications and compromises of the mind and vital nature in its experiences of life. Behind everything is the Absolute and it is That that gives things their value but it is only by broadening our vision and getting some sense of that we can find it in the relative.

That is why we say that in education nothing can be taught, everything has to be brought forth. A teacher cannot teach a student to be good, to be spiritual or God-loving. He can only help the child to realise these things by contacting them from within. If we take the child to the seashore, to a beautiful garden, to a quiet landscape, the child will immediately appreciate it because his sense of beauty comes forth.

On the surface of life, everything is only relatively expressive of the Truth behind and it is often in contradiction and conflict with other relativities together with which it is attempting to work out some truer figure of the Absolute. Sri Aurobindo says: The human reason is wrong in attaching a separate and definitive value to each contradiction by itself or getting rid of one by altogether denying the other; but it is right in refusing to accept as final and as the last word the coupling of contradictions which have in no way been reconciled together or have not found their source and significance in something beyond their opposition.

Another error of our reasoning mind is to conceive the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* genesis of things in terms of time when actually they have their origin in the timeless Eternal. Sri Aurobindo says: We cannot, either, effect a reconciliation or explanation of the original contradictions of existence by taking refuge in our concept of Time. Time, as we know or conceive it, is only our means of realising things in succession, it is a condition and cause of conditions, varies on different planes of existence, varies even for beings on one and the same plane: that

is to say, it is not an Absolute and cannot explain the primary relations of the Absolute.

All our experience is in terms of space and time, in a succession of moments past, present and future and we try to apply those standards to the Absolute. These

“divisions and successions are only figures in a mental experience”. The manifestation did not begin at a certain date and time in the unmanifest. He says, “if we look at existence as a whole, we see that infinite and finite coexist and exist in and by each other”. These oppositions are only the conveniences of our mental consciousness, our divisions of the indivisible.

We make contradictions by trying to fit everything into the parameters of Space and Time. Existence is eternal and the relative is something that comes up in the eternal like a wave in the ocean. It is not that the wave left the ocean and became an individual entity; it is simply a movement of the ocean. Even when we say there have been pralayas and seven times the universe has been reabsorbed – that’s the old belief – even then the immobile energy and consciousness was there and reemerged into manifestation. It is said that this time instead of a pralaya

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there would be a change of the form itself, what is called the physical transformation of matter.

Sri Aurobindo cautions that these errors of the mind can also happen when we try to understand spiritual experiences:

We have to make use too of distinct spiritual realisations which may at first seem contrary to each other, because as mental beings it is difficult or impossible for us to seize at once largely and completely what is beyond our mentality; but we err if we intellectualise them into sole truths,—as when we assert that the Impersonal must be the one ultimate realisation and the rest creation of Maya or declare the Saguna, the Divine in its qualities, to be that and thrust away the impersonality from our spiritual experience. We have to see that both these realisations of the great spiritual seekers are

equally valid in themselves, equally invalid against each other; they are one and the same Reality experienced on two sides which are both necessary for the full knowledge and experience of each other and of that which they both are. So is it with the One and the Many, the finite and the infinite, the transcendent and the cosmic, the individual and the universal; each is the other as well as itself and neither can be entirely known without the other and without exceeding their appearance of contrary oppositions.

We must not make trenchant oppositions between spiritual experiences of eternal time and timelessness, between the impersonal and the personal, between the One and the many, between the finite and the Infinite, between the relative and the Absolute – they all must be

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* reconciled, they all co-exist. They are not destroyed by their opposites, they only come forth and recede in our experience. This is the basic conclusion of Sri Aurobindo.

He then comes to the conclusion of the chapter: We see then that there are three terms of the one existence, transcendent, universal and individual and that each of these always contains secretly or overtly the two others. The Transcendent possesses itself always and controls the other two as the basis of its own temporal possibilities; that is the Divine, the eternal all-possessing God-consciousness, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, which informs, embraces, governs all existences. The human being is here on earth the highest power of the third term, the individual, for he alone can work out at its critical turning-point that movement of self-manifestation which appears to us as the involution and evolution of the divine consciousness between the two terms of the Ignorance and the Knowledge.

This entire scheme of the transcendent, the universal and the individual are an inseparable unity – they are one and together. The universal and the individual are like the left and right hands of the Transcendent.

Sri Aurobindo calls the human being the highest power of the third term, the individual, because “he alone can work out at its critical turning-point

that movement of self-manifestation which appears to us as the involution and evolution of the divine consciousness.” When he says

“the highest power”, he does not mean it in the sense that mankind is the most powerful but in the sense that he is best suited to bring out the hidden Godhead. Through the individual human being, there could be worked out

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a divine end to this process of evolution, a life divine.

The individual has this possibility of manifesting *The Life Divine*.

In that power lies the justification of individual existence; the individual and the universal unfolding in themselves the divine light, power, joy of transcendent Sachchidananda always manifest above them, always secret behind their surface appearances, this is the hidden intention, the ultimate significance of the divine play, the Lila. But it is in themselves, in their transformation but also their persistence and perfect relations, not in their self-annihilation must be unfolded. Otherwise there would be no reason for their ever having existed; the possibility of the Divine’s unfolding in the individual is the secret of the enigma; his presence there and this intention of self-unfolding are the key to the world of Knowledge-Ignorance.

We have the great work of manifesting the Eternal in the individual. The Eternal is in the individual, the Eternal is in the temporal form. He has entered into this temporal form so that human beings may realise this possibility of manifesting the Eternal in time, which also implies the coming out of ignorance into knowledge. The Eternal and the individual are playing a Lila here: the divine play, to bring about a life divine ultimately!

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## Lecture Notes

**I. The Problem of the Survival of the Individual** a) Although we now know the triple poise of the Omnipresent Reality – the Transcendent, the Universal and the Immanent – there arises one problem which needs to be solved. Is the individual in any sense eternal or does he/she disappear after

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* self-knowledge and unity with the Divine?

b) Normally, our reason identifies our individual self with the ego and therefore we think that with the transcendence of ego the individual too gets abolished. But the truth is that behind the superficial formation, that is, behind the ego, is the Purusha which in fact uses the world-being or Prakriti for its own experience.

c) When the Purusha is liberated, in the sense that when it exceeds the primary experience and abolishes the barriers of its active self-limitation and individualisation, then is the individual abolished.

Then again the question: the Purusha ceases to exist or does he become the world Purusha and live in innumerable bodies? This is the fundamental problem before our reason.

## II. The Possible Answer

a) We have to differentiate between the dynamic union of the individual with the Divine and the absorbed identity. In the active unity the individual exists though he exceeds the little separative ego; the universal does not absorb and abolish all individual differentiation. In the absorption too there is a differentiated unity allowing the individual to act without losing oneness.

b) These two becomings of the supreme Self – the individual and the cosmic – are mutually dependent on each other. In the fullness of its experience the individual feels “the world in me, I in the world, all in me, I in all”. This mutual inclusion is a spiritual and psychological experience wherein at its acme “all is The Eternal and the Individual 183

in each, each in all, all in God and God in all.”

c) One of the main reasons for this problem is that when we speak of the liberation of the soul, we are applying a language that is not suited to describe the higher and illimitable self-experience.

d) To bring in a clarity of terminology, by ‘individual’

we mean normally something that is separate from everything else, though there is no such entity anywhere in existence. Correctly speaking, by the ‘true individual’ what we mean is a conscious power of being of the Eternal.

### III. The Triple Error

Because of the problem of language as well as the non-availability of the higher experience of the liberated consciousness, our normal mind makes a triple error.

a) the error of making an unbridgable gulf between the Absolute and the relatives; b) the error of making too simple and rigid and extending too far the law of contradictions; and c) the error of conceiving in terms of Time things that belong to the Eternal.

**IV. The Absolute and the Relative** The ancient sages did not have this problem of language – they spoke of Brahman both negatively and positively.

The negative is not a zero – it is teeming with the power of Existence. Similarly, all the positives of the Absolute are its various statements of itself to our consciousness and all these positives only complete the negatives; they do not contradict them.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* **V. Law of Contradiction** The law of contradictions is applicable to us but it becomes less rigidly binding as we go higher in the scale of consciousness; ultimately, we see that it is inapplicable to the Absolute. We also see that often this law of contradiction does not apply even to us; for example, a war may seem to be something evil but seen from a different angle, it may be good because it clears the field for higher evolution.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Because of our habit we see the Absolute as a division between the One and Many, the Impersonal and Personal. Instead of going beyond confusions by the aid of metaphysical distinctions, we bind ourselves by them; that is a human fallacy.

We see then that there are three terms of the one Existence – transcendent, universal and individual – and each of these always contains secretly or overtly the other two. Otherwise, there would be no reason for their ever having existed. The possibility of the Divine's unfolding in the individual is the secret of the enigma; his presence there and the intention of his self-unfolding are the key to the world of knowledge-ignorance.

**Chapter – IV**

## The Divine and the Undivine

This is an interesting chapter in the sense that it is closer to our daily life problems. We are normally bothered with the question of why there is evil and suffering, what is good, what is bad, what are evil or anti-divine forces, etc. These questions can be very well-clarified from a philosophical point of view. In our previous chapter, we have seen the relation between the Eternal and the individual. The individual is only one of the triple aspects of the Divine; it is not something separate but is only one facet of the Divine. The Divine has three poises: the transcendental, the universal formation and an individual face of the same Supreme consciousness. If we say that the Divine is everything – the individual, the universal, the transcendental – then immediately the question arises: if all is He, then what is the meaning of a “life Divine? How can we even speak of a “life Divine” if all is already the Divine?

Sri Aurobindo says that the aim of human evolution is to achieve a life divine. This itself shows that there is no Divine life at present. Yet on the other side, we said all is the Divine. It is a kind of paradox. It suggests that the present is undivine and that the future will be divine.

We have to be very clear in our argument. If we say we want *The Life Divine*, it means we do not have it now. So, it seems that all is not divine, there is something undivine also. It is because of the undivine that we want to move towards the Divine.

This is the realistic situation. Great yogis would say

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* all is Divine; for them, they see nothing as undivine, they would say that even the present ignorance and suffering is Divine. For someone, who is merged in the Divine consciousness, nothing is bad, nothing is good.

For example, when Mirabai took the poison given to her by her husband, she did not bother to see whether it is good or bad, she took it as a drink offered to Sri Krishna and maybe she even thought it was a drink given by Lord Krishna! In that attitude, every instance of life becomes one brought by the Divine. There could be a high level of consciousness where all these differences are lost. But how many of us are like Mirabai? That is the question. For us there is something that is not right, that is not divine and we want to move towards the Divine. That is the paradox of our life.

Let us look at Sri Aurobindo's analysis of the problem, starting from the second paragraph of this chapter.

The distinction between the divine and the undivine life is in fact identical with the root distinction between a life of Knowledge lived in self-awareness and in the power of the Light and a life of Ignorance,—

at any rate it so presents itself in a world that is slowly and with difficulty evolving out of an original Inconscience.

If we really analyse this question of the undivine and Divine, what we find is that it is basically a question of Ignorance versus Knowledge. If we were to give ourselves a more detailed description of the undivine, what would be our idea of what the undivine is? We could enumerate a few of them: ego, desire, ignorance, the experience of pain and suffering. One of the most basic experiences

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of the undivine is suffering. That may be the closest we could go to the undivine. Sri Aurobindo explains: All imperfections, all perfections have to be taken into view in our consideration of the difference between an undivine and a divine existence... when we make the distinction... most of all we are thinking of the distinction we are obliged to make between good and evil or of that along with its kindred problem of the duality, the blend in us of happiness and suffering.

When we seek intellectually for a divine presence in things, a divine origin of the world, a divine government of its workings, the presence of evil, the

insistence on suffering, the large, the enormous part offered to pain, grief and affliction in the economy of Nature are the cruel phenomena which baffle our reason and overcome the instinctive faith of mankind in such an origin and government or in an all-seeing, all-determining and omnipresent Divine Immanence.

We all have experienced it. Ignorance and the subconscious do not bother us so much because they are not in our experiential range. We say it is alright, all is divine and we keep our faith in God. But when there is acute suffering, it is then that we are more likely to deny the Divine's existence. We may call for help to God but when we see that in one stroke our whole family is washed away in an earthquake, along with ten thousand other people dead in a split second, we may get shaken in our faith and say where is the Divine? This doesn't happen when we are being egoistic and dominating others; then we don't deny the Divine. If somebody dies, we say it is a part of life but when we are suffering with immense pain, we ask where is the Mother? Why isn't she coming to help

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* me? Suffering is one of the most important things to us in the sense that it makes us question the existence of the Divine himself.

But this standard of judgment is not sufficiently comprehensive and it is supported upon a too human point of view; for to a wider outlook evil and suffering appear only as a striking aspect, they are not the whole defect, not even the root of the matter.

Suffering is a striking aspect and only one experience of the undivine but we must go deeper to understand what is the undivine. To understand what the undivine is, let us consider first what is the Divine. We might say: Knowledge, Power, Consciousness, Beauty, Light, Harmony, Oneness and Unity are divine. Then the undivine is ignorance, weakness, unconsciousness, ugliness, darkness, disharmony and division. However, when we speak about the undivine, normally, we think first of pain and suffering. Sri Aurobindo tells us that we have to recognise that we are not trying to get rid of pain and suffering alone. It's not just about curing

yourself or having better health or living longer. We are concentrating on our physical, whereas the undivine is in other aspects of our lives just as much.

This is what is explained by Sri Aurobindo thus: Besides the deficiency of the ethical and hedonistic satisfactions demanded by our being, the paucity of Good and Delight in our world-experience, there is also the deficiency of other divine degrees: for Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Power, Unity are, they too, the stuff and elements of a divine life and these are given to us in a scanty and grudging measure; yet all are, in their absolute, powers of the Divine Nature.

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We have here a wider definition of the undivine. This is important for us to absorb because, otherwise, we can become one-sided. The moment we say undivine we think of an evil or satanic power but even a piece of paper thrown in the wrong place is undivine because that is ugliness. All that is against Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Power or Unity is undivine. There is much to be done in sadhana! As we progress we understand more and more why Sri Aurobindo says that all life is yoga; it is but we do not realise it. We are still too much influenced by the old yoga systems. They said, if you follow this path and do not follow the other one it means you are doing yoga.

That's the problem. Sri Aurobindo says, "It is this bondage to a perpetual stamp of imperfection and disharmony that is the mark of the undivine; a divine life, on the contrary, even if progressing from the little to the more, would be at each stage harmonious in its principle and detail".

Right in the first chapter of *The Life Divine* he writes:

"For all problems of existence are essentially problems of harmony". A life that is becoming more and more harmonious in principle and detail is going towards the divine life; whereas the undivine life is full of disharmony.

*The Life Divine* grows from harmony to greater harmony.

Sri Aurobindo is not using the word 'unity' but 'harmony'.

The word 'harmony' is much richer than 'unity' and 'oneness' because harmony means unity in multiplicity.

We have to achieve unity living in this multiplicity and that means harmony with others. It means social harmony, religious harmony, intellectual harmony, harmony on all levels possible, including harmony within ourselves. As the Mother says, if there is disharmony within you, you fall ill; it is the main source of sickness. Pain and suffering

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* come because we lack harmony in our own being that invites illness. It can be cured by reinstating that harmony in us. Wonderful correlations have been found that establish how a particular ailment in a particular part of the body is associated with the disturbance in a particular level of consciousness. To get well one has to work on re-harmonising the consciousness itself. Then the medicines taken would be of greater help.

It is the general principle of imperfection that we have to admit and consider. If we look closely at this general imperfection, we shall see that it consists first in a limitation in us of the divine elements which robs them of their divinity, then in a various many-branching distortion, a perversion, a contrary turn, a falsifying departure from some ideal Truth of being.

Now Sri Aurobindo takes a deeper view. We started by saying that all this is divine and yet the present reality appears to be the opposite. The question now is how did this come about? He says, "it consists first in a limitation in us of the divine elements which robs them of their divinity". The first cause of the undivine is limitation of the divine elements – limitation leads to imperfection, disharmony, suffering, etc.

We remember that manifestation is the Divine limiting himself. The process begins with the Supreme oneness and then he decides to self-limit into an individual. The process of manifestation could be called the process of self-

limitation of the Divine of his own powers, capacities and consciousness. All is Brahman but the manifestation is Brahman in a self-limited form. It is a kind of self-shrinking and we know that Brahman, being omnipotent, can do anything, including limiting himself. That is what

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he has done; one of the choices he has made is that he has delimited himself and by this process he has made the finite individuals with limited life-force and matter. He has shrunk himself as the human and the atom!

In that process of self-limitation, some other things intervene: “a various many-branching distortion, a perversion, a contrary turn, a falsifying departure from some ideal truth of being”. Once there is this self-limitation, the rest of the deviations come in, falsification in the sense of unhealthy distortions and corruptions. He continues:

There has been either a lapse of the inner spirit from a greater consciousness and knowledge, delight, love and beauty, power and capacity, harmony and good, or else there is a failure of our struggling nature, an impotence to achieve what we instinctively see to be divine and desirable.

Although we are limited divinities into which has come perversion and distortion, we still have a sense of beauty, justice, Ananda and a great ideal we call God because we retain some memory of the superconscient Divinity.

Even in our fallen state of ignorance there remains a link because, after all, we have come from God. Somewhere we do remember our godliness. That is what all humanity is striving for in the name of justice, equality and freedom, love and compassion – it wouldn't have been possible had there been only the human nature. It is because there is still in our subconscious memory a sense of our divine nature that we can even think of the Divine.

If we penetrate to the cause of the fall or the failure, we shall find that all proceeds from the one primal fact that our being, consciousness, force, experience

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of things represent—not in their very self, but in their surface pragmatic nature—a principle or an effective phenomenon of division or rupture in the unity of the Divine Existence.

Sri Aurobindo has taken pains to describe the term limitation – limitation leads to diminution and that leads to incapacity. Let us make an analogy of an adult to a young child. A child is also a human being, so why is it that he can't do the things that as adult can do? He has a diminution of physical substance and organisation, of vital force, of capacity of will, of mental development. Everything is limited. Similarly, we are all Divine potentially but a diminished divinity and therefore, there is a relative incapacity for goodness, knowledge, force and Ananda. For example, suffering is nothing but an incapacity to receive Ananda. The incapacity to absorb sufficiently Ananda becomes sorrow or suffering in man. The moment a snail touches something, its antennae withdraw. It receives a kind of shock and recoils immediately and automatically. Even if it is a little flower, it thinks it to be dangerous because its subconscious experience has been that. Over the centuries of evolutionary process it has become very sensitive and so now, it is not able to enjoy touching even the flowers because it has fear and an instinctive withdrawal. This is similar to our human suffering. Our physical suffering is due to a fear in our body which causes a shrinking, such that it cannot open to Divine Ananda.

Sri Aurobindo says, “There has been either a lapse of the inner spirit from a greater consciousness and knowledge, delight, love and beauty, power and capacity, harmony and good...”. There has been a diminution of

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these qualities. In a way, we cannot blame ourselves. It is the Divine himself who has limited himself. When I say that I am in ignorance, that is the greatest statement of ignorance because I am saying that I am separate from the Divine. The first mistake is there. We are a diminished divinity and so, automatically there is less power, less beauty, less Ananda.

This limitation is not only at the level of experiencing Ananda and ending up in suffering but it leads to many other incapacities. It brings in a blindness in our vision of things, a fragmented experience of life, a diminution of

“power and intensity”, etc.

To add to these practical effects of limitations, There arises too by a secondary ulterior effect a perversion of these highest things; in our limited mentality unconsciousness and wrong consciousness intervene, ignorance covers our whole nature and—

by the misapplication or misdirection of an imperfect will and knowledge, by automatic reactions of our diminished consciousness-force and the inept poverty of our substance—contradictions of the divine elements are formed, incapacity, inertia, falsehood, error, pain and grief, wrong-doing, discord, evil.

That is where we human beings come into picture.

We don't call animals perverse; but we call human beings perverse. Animals also have the same diminished divinity but in human beings perversion comes in because of our limited mental consciousness. There is a twist which brings in the deformations of wrong-doing, pain, evil, discord, etc. Perversion comes in especially by a mixing of the mental with the vital. A tiger killing a deer is not perverted; it is its natural swabhava. But

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a person, who possesses things that he doesn't need, exemplifies perversion of a sort because it is not natural.

Unfortunately, the worst thing is that we are attached to this perversion. He says there is an attachment to this experience of division, a clinging to the divided way of being which prevents the excision of these perversions.

On one side of our being we want to be happy, we want to have knowledge, peace and everything but if we are asked to give away something, we

realise the attachment we have! That is the human nature: it loves suffering; deep down we seem to enjoy suffering! We feel at home in this small consciousness. The Mother once explained that she was traveling with a Japanese man to whom she gave the experience of a touch of his soul. The next day he came running to the Mother saying “what have you done to me?” He could not love his country anymore as he did before because once we contact our soul we are no more bound by nationalities, we go beyond it. But that man was so much at home in his littleness that he could not think of going beyond being a Japanese. We feel we are losing our moorings if we get wider in consciousness.

Our littleness is our security. This is the paradox about being human. We do not really want God. In addition to having perversion we are attached to it: an attachment to this experience of division, a clinging to the divided way of being which prevents the excision of this unhappiness or its rejection and removal.

A related problem comes in our religious traditions.

We are asked and expected to follow certain practices and beliefs. Once we follow them it is very difficult to break away from that habit. How can I be detached? We are all attached to our dharmas and shastras. All these things

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make human life complicated; otherwise, it would not be so difficult.

When people say that all is a divine manifestation, even that which they think is undivine, it is essentially divine even if the form baffles or repels them. We might say that when we think that the world is divine, we do mean that every form is divine – there is ugliness, disharmony, imperfection we mean it is divine in its essence, not in its outer form. We mean that deep within the human being God is hidden, even though in his outer life he is undivine. But Sri Aurobindo is not satisfied with this explanation. He says:

But this affirmation is not enough; it leaves the problem unsolved, why that which is in itself ever pure, perfect, blissful, infinite, should not only tolerate but seem to maintain and encourage in its manifestation

imperfection and limitation, impurity and suffering and falsehood and evil: it states the duality that constitutes the problem, but does not solve it.

It is true that the problem of the perfect becoming imperfect is not solved by this dichotomy of the inner being as perfect and only the outer being as imperfect.

Sri Aurobindo argues:

If we simply leave these two dissonant facts of existence standing in each other's presence, we are driven to conclude that there is no reconciliation possible; all we can do is to cling as much as we can to a deepening sense of the joy of the pure and essential Presence and do the best we may with the discordant externality, until we can impose in its place the law

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of its divine contrary. Or else we have to seek for an escape rather than a solution... our problem is to find some way of escape out of the falsehood of the manifested world into the truth of the hidden Reality.

If we say that the human being is essentially divine and outwardly undivine, what is the solution? If we accept this argument, the obvious solution would be to reject the outward nature and merge in the essence, or else, the materialist might say, we are undivine – there is ignorance and imperfection – but there is nothing we can do about it; so just make the best of this life.

Sri Aurobindo analyses this in detail because he doesn't want us to either leave this imperfect world or to accept it as it is; he wants us to confront and transform this undivine nature. That's where the whole difference from other viewpoints come – his argument is based on the Spiritual need in man:

...there is too somewhere deep down in us the need of a total consciousness, there is in Nature a secret universal seeking for the whole Divine, an impulsion towards some entire awareness and delight and power of

existence; this need of a whole being, a total knowledge, this integral will in us is not fully satisfied by these solutions.

This is Sri Aurobindo's remarkable, bold personality.

He says Nirvana is possible, escape from imperfection is possible but they do not take the integral personality of the human being into consideration. The yogas of the past highlighted one part of the being and suppressed other parts – that has been the history of Indian spirituality. Nobody until Sri Aurobindo has emphasised

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the wholeness of the human being, except in the ancient Vedas and Upanishads, I suppose.

Even the scriptures have been misunderstood because of our wrong interpretations and that is why, although they have helped individuals, they have not fulfilled their potential for transformation. It is perhaps for this reason that the Mother says that with the writings of *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo has released the force of the Gita which will fulfil itself in the future. Had Sri Aurobindo not written *Essays on the Gita*, the Gita would still be closeted in the human intelligence, in a limited idea of karmayoga and it would never have been shown as an integral vision of life and yoga.

The Gita was so flexible that commentators, such as Adi Shankaracharya, Subhashchandra Bose, Gandhiji and others could interpret it as they wanted. They interpreted it in the light of their experiential domain which was partial.

Sri Aurobindo understood the inner integral truth of the Gita. The mantra in *Essays on the Gita* is vibrating, the Gita's power and magnificence are encapsulated in it, that's the marvel. The integral vision of the Gita has been revealed now after humanity has been prepared mentally, emotionally and physically by the practices of Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga and Jnana yoga done independently.

Sri Aurobindo has now come as the basic preparation has been done in the elite of humanity, though not in common humanity – and he has now revealed the integral vision of the Gita.

Sri Aurobindo notes, “there is too somewhere deep down in us the need of a total consciousness, an impulsion towards some entire awareness and delight and power of existence”. He has responded to this need of a

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* total consciousness. That’s why in *The Synthesis of Yoga* there is an emphasis on knowledge, works, devotion and perfection. Till now the old systems of yoga emphasised either on wisdom or works or devotion but now he says all the aspects are required. That’s how Sri Aurobindo answers to the present aspiration of humanity. He is, in fact, the time spirit of present evolution. What the world wants is an integral answer to our problems and that is what Sri Aurobindo has given us.

Another solution to the basic problem discussed before is, We may say that not only is the Spirit in things absolutely perfect and divine, but each thing also is relatively perfect and divine in itself, in its expression of what it has to express of the possibilities of existence, in its assumption of its proper place in the complete manifestation. Each thing is divine in itself because each is a fact and idea of the divine being, knowledge and will fulfilling itself infallibly in accordance with the law of that particular manifestation. Each being is possessed of the knowledge, the force, the measure and kind of delight of existence precisely proper to its own nature...

Sri Aurobindo discusses another argument that could be given to explain the apparent discrepancy between the Divine and the undivine: that everything in relativity is also divine, even in its smallness and limitations it is divine. It is like we make a ring out of a lump of gold and though it becomes small, it doesn’t become silver.

It doesn’t lose its gold-ness. Similarly, we can say that everything is not only essentially divine but individually it is divine. Each individual thing is part of the Divine.

It is thus perfect in the relation of its phenomena to

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the law of its being for all are in harmony with that, spring out of it, adapt themselves to its purpose according to the infallibility of the divine Will and Knowledge at work within the creature.

He says that each individual thing is an integral part of a whole, it is perfectly cut to fit its place. It perfectly fulfills its function, it is in perfect harmony with all the other parts. It only looks imperfect to us because we are not looking at the whole picture. Although there may be a truth in this argument, it is not fully satisfying. Why?

All this may be true up to a certain point and so far as it goes; but this also is a solution incomplete by itself and it cannot give us an entire satisfaction. It takes insufficient account of the human consciousness and the human view from which we have to start; it does not give us the vision of the harmony it alleges and so it cannot meet our demand or convince, but only contradicts by a cold intellectual conception our acute human sense of the reality of evil and imperfection...

By itself, this view of things amounts to little more than the facile dogma which tells us that all that is is right, because all is perfectly decreed by the divine Wisdom... It supplies us with nothing better than a complacent intellectual and philosophic optimism: no light is turned on the disconcerting facts of pain, suffering and discord to which our human consciousness bears constant and troubling witness...

Those who say that there is divinity in smallness, in relativity, in imperfection – it sounds good but does it really solve our problem of evil and suffering and ignorance? The problems still persist: you may say this ring is gold in its nature but it can still be

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* covered with something undivine. In fact, we also have a divine soul but our external personality of mind, vital and

body is full of perversions and limitations.

Sri Aurobindo says these arguments may be good intellectually but they do not satisfy our human need and urge us to find a way out of this imperfection and suffering. We want to know some practical and effective way to come out of this ignorance, to come out of this suffering. Sri Aurobindo is like a practical scientist who says that he accepts there is the undivine aspect in life in this world and wants to know not only its cause but also its cure.

The ancient yogas have told us that everything in creation has a swadharma, whether it is a stone, an insect or a human being; each individual in creation has its own swadharma and fulfills it infallibly according to its law.

Everything acts and lives according to the original idea in it. Each thing has precisely its own nature. That means the swadharma of a tiger is completely different from the swadharma of a butterfly or a flower. This also means everything in this creation is perfect – it is perfect because it fulfills its swadharma. The flower is absolutely perfect in itself, as it cannot be bettered. Do we ever say that if this flower would be a little brighter in colour it would be better! No, it couldn't have been otherwise. It is as the Divine wishes it to be and it fulfills its own swadharma

– its inner law. It gives its fragrance, beauty, colour and offers that to the Divine without any expectation and with a spontaneity and fullness of offering. Whether the flower is on a plant or it is near the altar it doesn't matter, it beautifies every place it is at. As he says: Each being is possessed of the knowledge, the force,

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the measure and kind of delight of existence precisely proper to its own nature; each works in the gradations of experience decreed by a secret inherent will, a native law, an intrinsic power of the self, an occult significance.

This is the Real Idea or the supramental Idea within each thing: that is its swadharma. This Real Idea is there in a mango tree, a rose and in each of

the flowers, animals and insects. Whatever is the supramental Idea in it, it has given it an expression. The flower is not a supramental being but the flower has definitely a supramental Idea hidden within it. As Sri Aurobindo writes here, “each works in the gradations of experience decreed”. The supramental Idea in the flower or the animal has a limited, self-decreed expression. The divine Will is in everything; it is in human beings too but we are still in the transition of fulfilling this Will.

Not only is each thing perfectly suited to its swadharma, Sri Aurobindo continues:

It is perfect and divine also in relation to the whole, in its proper place in the whole; to that totality it is necessary and in it it fulfils a part by which the perfection actual and progressive of the universal harmony, the adaptation of all in it to its whole purpose and its whole sense is helped and completed... If to us things appear undivine, if we hasten to condemn this or that phenomenon as inconsistent with the nature of a divine being, it is because we are ignorant of the sense and purpose of the Divine in the world in its entirety.

We do not know the divine purpose, the role each thing has in the totality. The little part that I can see with my

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* limited consciousness and experience may seem ugly or undivine but if this little patch is a part of the circle, then it has a place in the whole. That is to say, if we can understand the whole plan of this divine creation, then we will see that each of the seemingly undivine things in it has its own role and position.

One very apt and important example discussed by Sri Aurobindo is related to our own country. Why did the British have to conquer India? When we look at the last 100 years – with so much torture and suffering – we feel the British colonisation was wrong. But if we considered the global picture of India’s evolution for the past 10,000 years and took a look into its future for the next thousand years we would see that the little black mark of British occupation here had a meaning and a purpose.

Sri Aurobindo has said that they were sent by Nature. He says otherwise it would have been impossible that a small island country could conquer a huge country like India had it not been in the programming of Nature herself.

India was slumbering in its old age, it needed a shakeup.

It had become lethargic in its thinking and action. After thousands of years of creative work, the nation had exhausted itself. The external personality of the country was stuck in a kind of tamasic consciousness. Therefore, Nature sent a country which had luckily received the message of the time spirit, the scientific spirit. It was a small country but any country open to the time-spirit advances more than other countries. Great Britain was that country, small in size but very open to the higher need of the times. Once it had caught the intentions of the time-spirit, Nature let Britain go and spread it to the whole world. So, it is not for nothing that the British came

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to India and conquered it. This example reinforces the idea that everything can be understood if the totality is comprehended.

Is a philosophy that says that everything in Nature, no matter how terrible it may seem, has its own swabhava to fulfill and that everything is divine because it is a part of a divine manifestation satisfactory? This is what was said in India during the last 1000 years of the bhakti movement

– God is within, God is outside, everything is God: if you suffer, simply offer it to God. This explanation of the world led to a kind of resignation and pessimistic belief that though life may be terrible we just have to accept it. It is an attitude that led to lethargy, *tamas*.

This pessimistic philosophy may have some element of truth but for a nation or a human being to accept this as the whole truth or the only truth is to benumb its thinking. In the name of karma we accept everything.

Sri Aurobindo in his writings on the ‘Value of Education’

writes that India needs to regain its own original thinking as she lost the capacity to think for herself. Are we now thinking for ourselves? Sri Aurobindo argued that to understand the problems of India, Indian people must recover the capacity to think for themselves. This type of thought that everything, no matter how deplorable, is divine gives no lead into the psychic element of our nature, to the soul's aspiration towards light and truth and spiritual conquest over imperfection and evil.

That's what the great poet Robert Browning said,

“God's in His heaven/ All's right with the world”.

Sri Aurobindo calls it a “facile dogma”. He says that this kind of thinking is contrary to true spiritual culture because in it there is the soul's aspiration for victory over

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* imperfection and evil. If we are truly spiritual, then we have to battle against imperfection, falsehood, suffering and evil and not accept them. In fact, the Mother would even tell us that we should attempt to conquer death. This is true spirituality. In religion we may say that everything is God but that doesn't give us any motivation to fight against darkness and imperfections of the world. It only motivates to fight with each other over religious beliefs and this kind of thinking has weakened the country.

Theories, such as God in heaven so all must be right with the world, do not correspond to our soul's aspiration because it always wants to perfect life; it does not want to escape from life. In fact, it has come to life only to perfect it. If you tell someone to go and do meditation and become a sannyasin, the person may ask why did he come upon earth if it was to return empty-handed?

The soul says, I have come to perfect human nature, this ignorant nature and why do I return without attempting to fulfil my mission! That is the

contradiction that we in India have been suffering from for many centuries.

Earlier, Vedanta, the Upanishadic philosophy was full of life-affirming thoughts but then some negative thought prevailed. Bhakti movement contributed a psychic element but it was not sufficiently spiritualised and so, the psychic element easily got reduced to sentiments and emotions. Bhakti is a kind of inner union with the Divine but as many go towards the Divine they stop in between with emotionalism and sentimentalism.

Sri Aurobindo is a Gita yogin; he does not believe in non-violence which also weakened the country. It is unfortunate that our long history ended up in this non-violence movement which was the tomb-stone on India's

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fall. That is why Sri Aurobindo fought back in the true spirit of the Gita telling us that we have to be spiritual and to be spiritual means to strive for perfection.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo continues: If the human consciousness were bound to the sense of imperfection and the acceptance of it as the law of our life and the very character of our existence ...

then we might say that what we are marks the limit of the divine self-expression in us; we might believe too that our imperfections and sufferings worked for the general harmony and perfection of things and console ourselves with this philosophic balm offered for our wounds, satisfied to move among the pitfalls of life with as much rational prudence or as much philosophic sagacity and resignation as our incomplete mental wisdom and our impatient vital parts permitted.

What a magnificent sentence! For Sri Aurobindo, to accept imperfection as the law of life is very harmful.

Things have to move forward. We cannot just say all is well with the earth and "console ourselves with this philosophic balm offered for our wounds," – this single sentence explains the whole attitude of India –

“satisfied to move among the pitfalls of life with as much rational prudence or as much philosophic sagacity and resignation” as possible. This is what our karma theory has become – a hindrance to any spiritual endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo calls this a “philosophic balm”. These arguments are there in the psyche of the nation and in human beings – they may call it karma or fate, the name is different but the attitude is the same: we must submit to our fate. Sri Aurobindo says that apart from bringing

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a passive attitude, what is dangerous is that we accept the human being as he is the ultimate product of evolution which is not true.

Or else, taking refuge in the more consoling fervours of religion, we might submit to all as the will of God in the hope or the faith of recompense in a Paradise beyond where we shall enter into a happier existence and put on a more pure and perfect nature...

The same passive “philosophic balm” has been very conveniently used by various religions. We are told by religious leaders that if we accept whatever laws and dogmas they give to us, we will be given an accommodation in heaven! Human imagination connived all types of heavens which provided what the people of that religion were thirsty for. What we do not have here on earth is found there in paradise. Religion has given us attractive ideas which have weakened the spiritual fervour of man.

Against this attitude Sri Aurobindo comes out strongly:

...there is not only a mental part in us which recognises the imperfection, there is a psychic part which rejects it. Our soul’s dissatisfaction with imperfection as a law of life upon earth, its aspiration towards the elimination of all imperfections from our nature ... are as much a law of our being as that against which they revolt; they too are divine, —a divine dissatisfaction, a divine aspiration.

If we are truly spiritual, we have to battle imperfection, attempt to conquer it by evolution and struggle. This is why Sri Aurobindo has given us an integral yoga of self-perfection. Spirituality means self-perfection and integral

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self-perfection means perfection on all levels. First of all, we should start battling our own imperfections and not only the imperfections outside of us.

This is a wonderful phrase – “a divine dissatisfaction, a divine aspiration”. This is, if I can say, the central urge of the psychic being. It is divinely dissatisfied with the imperfections of life and aspires to perfect them. That is the real swadharma of humanity but yet how far we are from this swadharma! How much we still make compromises, give in to our religious thoughts and traditions! Where is the divine dissatisfaction? To be dissatisfied means not to be happy about the wrong things that are around us and to be trying to perfect them.

Dissatisfaction leads to an effort for perfection. If we want to do something perfectly there first has to be a basis of dissatisfaction with the way things are. However, we do not seem dissatisfied – somehow or other, we are satisfied because God is everywhere. Moreover, we have our karma to carry and after all, we are single individuals in a corrupt world; so, what can we do? By all these excuses, we compromise. Sri Aurobindo says it is the psychic being that is dissatisfied and will not compromise and so, we need to be in contact with our psychic being to have this attitude and to practice perfection in life.

The author of these ideas is someone who is convinced of what he is saying because he has been experimenting endlessly on perfecting himself. You can see the effort that is behind this writing. On every page, in every chapter, there is the same conviction that a philosophic and intellectual acceptance with the way things are is not right, that we must find the spiritual knowledge that transforms the present laws and external forms.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo was constantly striving for this perfection.

He had realised Brahman consciousness in his younger days. With this realisation he could have withdrawn as amongst the great sages but he never agreed with that, he wanted the transformation of life and external perfection.

Everything is Brahman but that belief is not sufficient to transform Matter. We can see what a tremendous effort and struggle Sri Aurobindo has made!

To pick up the argument once again.

It is right and reasonable to endure with equanimity suffering and subjection to defect as the immediate will of God, a present law of imperfection laid on our members, but on condition that we recognise it also as the will of God in us to transcend evil and suffering, to transform imperfection into perfection, to rise into a higher law of Divine Nature.

Sri Aurobindo says that it is a sage attitude to say that all is the will of God, that everything comes from Divine.

But we should also take up a yogi's attitude, that it is also the will of God to transcend evil and suffering. An inner detachment and surrender to the will of God is perhaps the first step but to conquer the outer nature is the spirit of the true spiritual warrior.

Let us continue now with Sri Aurobindo's explanation in *The Life Divine*:

In our human consciousness there is the image of an ideal truth of being, a divine nature, an incipient godhead: in relation to that higher truth our present state of imperfection can be relatively described as an undivine life and the conditions of the world from which we start as undivine conditions; the

imperfections are the indication given to us that they are there as first disguises, not as the intended expression of the divine being and the divine nature.

One of the important ideas that we need to understand is that the sense of imperfection is there in us because we have deep within us the image of perfection. There is a

“concealed Divinity” which stands there as a reference for perfect justice, beauty, delight, etc. And it is this inner Power, Light or as we said earlier, the psychic being which lights up in us the aspiration to attain this inner image of perfection, in whatever field it may be. As wrote Sri Aurobindo in his writings – the sense of imperfection is the beginning of all perfection! It is because of this inner aspiration for achieving higher levels of perfection that we can consider “Our present nature can only be transitional...” and that in the future there will be a perfect divine life in its most outward manifestation. All these arguments are right in their own place but we cannot accept them as total and absolute truths. We have to go deeper into the real causes of ignorance, imperfection and suffering.

Secondly, we need to know their cosmic role and purpose. To explain these causes, Sri Aurobindo leads us thus:

There are three propositions about God and the world,—if we admit the Divine Existence,... but, one of the three,... does not harmonise with the two others and by this disharmony the human mind is thrown into great perplexities of contradiction and driven to doubt and denial.

The first proposition is that the supreme Absolute exists in all; secondly all exists in and as part of that Absolute,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Brahman. He admits that some religions do not accept the idea that God or the Absolute could be the cause of evil and therefore have brought in a demiurge, such as Ormuzd or Ahriman someone or something lower than the supreme Divine who has created the evil. However, for Sri Aurobindo that does not really satisfy the

philosophic issue because the question remains from where has this demiurge come? If we ask what is the source of Satan, there are two possible answers: 1) the Supreme, 2) he is independent and has no source. If he is self-born, then we have two godheads, one the creator of good and the other the creator of evil. This second possibility doesn't really satisfy the human intellect even though for religious sentiment it may be good because it keeps God pure.

The second proposition is:

A second affirmation... is that by the supreme consciousness and the supreme power of this omnipresent Divinity... all things are ordered and governed in their fundamental relations and their process. But, on the other hand, the actual process of things, the actual relations which we see are, as presented to our human consciousness, relations of imperfection, of limitation; there appears a disharmony, even a perversion, something that is the contrary of our conception of the Divine Existence, a very apparent denial or at least a disfigurement or disguise of the Divine Presence.

Sri Aurobindo says that there is apparent in the world around us a disfigurement of the divine presence. It is almost a denial of the divine presence. Thus, this observation of the world is in stark contrast with the first proposition that there is an Absolute which is pure,

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perfect, blissful and omnipresent, by which and in which the world and all exists. Out of this contradiction, he says: There arises then a third affirmation of the Divine Reality and the world reality as different in essence or in order, so different that we have to draw away from one to reach the other; if we would find the Divine Inhabitant, we must reject the world he inhabits, governs, has created or manifested in his own existence.

This incompatibility between the perfect Absolute and this imperfect world leads to the third proposition that to find the Absolute we have to reject the world. Adi Shankaracharya did reject the world as an illusion. The materialists accept the world with its imperfections and reject the perfect Absolute which does not in reality exist in their logic of understanding. Sri

Aurobindo explains that there are several possible ways to circumvent the contradiction by accepting a duality, though they do not really solve the dilemma. He says: It is not difficult by some construction of the philosophic reason or of theological reasoning to circumvent the difficulty. It is possible to erect a fainéant Deity, like the gods of Epicurus, blissful in himself, observing but indifferent to a world conducted or misconducted by a mechanical law of Nature. It is open to us to posit a Witness Self, a silent Soul in things, a Purusha who allows Nature to do what she will and is content to reflect all her order and all her disorders in his passive and stainless consciousness,—or a supreme Self absolute, inactive, free from all relations, unconcerned with the works of the cosmic Illusion or Creation which has

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mysteriously or paradoxically originated from It or over against It to tempt and afflict a world of temporal creatures.

These several arguments are really a summary of human thought from the past two to three thousand years. Epicurus proposed a fainéant Deity which does nothing. God is in heaven and he has created the world and then left the world to itself. His job is done: he has delivered the world and now he lets the world grow as it wants; he has nothing to do in it. The Supreme is of no use; he is a kind of a step-father who doesn't bother about the son.

The philosophy of Sankhya in India said he is not like a step-father, instead he is like a very old father who is just a witness to the world, looking at the play of Prakriti and reflecting her activities. This philosophy propounds a dualistic theory of self and nature or what they call Purusha and Prakriti. Sankhya saw perfect God and the imperfect world and said Purusha and Prakriti play with each other, they are playmates. Prakriti, Nature, acts for the pleasure of the Purusha and all that she does whether good or bad has been approved and sanctioned by Purusha.

Then Vedanta came with a similar kind of attitude in which the one Brahman was seen to have two aspects, the Nirguna Brahman and the Saguna Brahman. Saguna Brahman is this world and Nirguna Brahman is beyond this world. It is different from Sankhya in that the source is one but

the Brahman takes two different poises: the aspect of creation having many qualities and another aspect of the transcendent which does not have any quality and does not involve itself in the creation.

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Sri Aurobindo then asks, can we really separate the Nirguna and the Saguna Brahman? Can we really separate Purusha and Prakriti? These ideas of Vedanta and Sankhya find a synthesis in Sri Aurobindo. How does he reconcile what he calls this double status? He says it is Purusha's Prakriti, it is not Purusha and Prakriti. Prakriti belongs to Purusha. Prakriti, this nature, is the nature of the Divine. Similarly with the static and dynamic aspects of Brahman, that we think are separate are not really so. He explains this in a beautiful line: "this temporal consciousness and its formations are also in the end a Power of the one Self, depend upon it, can exist only by it...". This dynamic creation depends upon and exists only by the static Brahman. Therefore, they cannot be separate or independent from one another. Sri Aurobindo in *The Synthesis of Yoga* says that this world is verily the nature, the body of God. Just as the relation we have between our soul and body, Prakriti is the body of God or as he puts it in *Savitri*, "a tabernacle of God" (CWSA 34: 699).

That is how Sri Aurobindo synthesises and brings us back to the vision of the Vedas and the Vedanta. He reverses the present trend of thinking back to the Vedic and early Vedantic thought where the world was viewed as one with the Divine. It was during the last thousand years or so that these separative philosophies became so dominant that they have culminated in materialism where we say God is dead or has nothing to do with the world.

Sri Aurobindo has breathed life back into God. He has given us back God and the world in their true nature. He has fought a tremendous battle on the intellectual level and it will still take a long time for humanity to accept this truth. It is very difficult for us to throw away what we

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* have believed in and imbibed since more than a thousand years. Sri Aurobindo has reversed the current of this

thinking and therefore, it will take time for us to accept this radical change. It is a long work and that is why Sri Aurobindo has repeated many times these arguments.

The same basic ideas come again and again because he is hammering on our pre-conditioned rigid human thinking. We can accept these ideas in this discussion but the moment we go out into the old religious beliefs of caste and creed and the division between worldly life and ascetic life, it is different.

This is how he concludes:

The Self, the Reality must be aware of and aware in the world consciousness which exists in its being; a power of the Self, the Reality must be constantly determining or at least sanctioning its phenomena and operations: for there can be no independent power, no Nature not derived from the original and eternal Self Existence.

If it does no more, it must still be originating or determining the universe through the mere fact of its conscious omnipresence.

Sri Aurobindo grants that peace, quietness and bliss of the Nirguna Brahman are true. He does not negate the old yogic systems but finds them incomplete. The point he is making here is that the old yogas did not facilitate the whole spiritual experience. He has brought the integral spiritual experience in his yoga. This integrality is the synthesis of the Nirguna and Saguna Brahman and this integral vision is obtained only in the supramental consciousness. In a way we can say that we cannot fully understand *The Life Divine* or *Savitri* until we have a contact with this consciousness. That is what the Mother

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clearly said about *Savitri*, that it cannot be understood by mankind now; it is only the new consciousness which can understand it. As mental human beings we can only stand under the blessing and grace of *Savitri*. Let us stand under the shadow of this divine grace and if it trickles in and graces some people, they are the blessed ones.

We were discussing these three propositions in relation to the question of what is the cause of ignorance, imperfection and suffering. Could it be that the Supreme Being is the cause of the world? The divine Reality itself seems so much different from the reality of the world that they seem to be two different incompatible realities. One possible solution is that the Divine is the Creator who has only created the world but does not take care of it; it acts on its own accord. Then the Sankhya school says that Purusha is like a silent inactive witness who watches and consents to Prakriti's action but this Purusha is content to allow Prakriti to direct and execute its activity in its own way. The Vedantic solution is similar but not so clearly dualistic: it says that the Nirguna and Saguna are two aspects of the same Brahman but that the inactive Nirguna is not involved with the activity of the Saguna Brahman. Finally, Sri Aurobindo says that although there is a practical truth that Purusha is separate from Prakriti or that the Nirguna is distinct from the Saguna but in the deeper reality Prakriti is really the action of the Purusha, the Saguna originates from the Nirguna. We may even say that the Saguna is the differentiated and active form of the undifferentiated and inactive Nirguna. We cannot evade the problem of the apparent difference between the world and the ultimate Reality by separating them from each

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* other; we cannot remove the responsibility of the creation from the Creator.

To continue with our reading:

Once we admit a divine government of the universe, we must conclude that the power to govern is complete and absolute; for otherwise we are obliged to suppose that a being and consciousness infinite and absolute has a knowledge and will limited in their control of things or hampered in their power of working. It is not impossible to concede that the supreme and immanent Divinity may leave a certain freedom of working to something that has come into being in his perfection but is itself imperfect and the cause of imperfection, to an ignorant or inconscient Nature, to the action of the human mind and will, even to a conscious Power or Forces of darkness and evil that take their stand upon the reign of a basic Inconscience. But none of these things are independent of Its own existence, nature and

consciousness and none of them can act except in Its presence and by Its sanction or allowance.

This is the conclusion. Once we have accepted that there is a supreme Reality and he is the cause of the universe and its source, then obviously he is also the governor of everything. He has the absolute power to govern the universe. “Governing” is a beautiful word!

The Divine governs what he has created and governs it with absolute power. Nevertheless, when a President governs a state, he can delegate some responsibilities to a few chosen ministers. That is, he can give power to some others to do the work. A President doesn't necessarily get into the details himself; he may have representatives to do that. The advantage and the disadvantage is that

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he is responsible for everything and at the same time he allows the representatives to make their own choices and mistakes. He gives the power to the delegate to take decisions. God has given to Nature the power to act as it feels best. It could be the human mind and will or it could be a force of darkness and evil. There are all kinds of lower powers of the Divine. One secret we should remember is that in God's manifestation there is an indispensable hierarchy of powers.

There is an interesting story told by the Mother. When the supreme Divine wanted to objectify himself – (The term “objectify” is wonderful! It is better than “create”

which gives a sense of separation and better even than

“manifest” which is philosophical and abstract. The term “objectify” implies to bring out or project into the forefront.) he brought forth Consciousness-Force, the Aditi of the Vedas.

The supreme Lord projects himself as Aditi who creates the world. Aditi has the work of manifestation, the self-manifestation or objectification of the Supreme. The Supreme gave her two guidelines: the first is to make the

world in a hierarchical manner and the second guideline is to allow freedom in this hierarchy of manifestation.

The higher rules the lower but give those lower in the hierarchy the freedom to act. In that freedom to act comes the error. But what is important is that nothing is independent of the Supreme. The Divine is the governor, the Divine is the creator, the Divine is in all, the Divine is concerned with the world which he has manifested.

There is no other Lord than he. Sri Aurobindo's premise is that all is in the Divine and the Divine is in all. He has

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* taken the widest view, that of a true Vedantin. His is an extremely bold and forthright vision.

Now, he will take up one by one the three problems of imperfection, suffering and evil. He says: And first we must realise that the existence of ignorance, error, limitation, suffering, division and discord in the world need not by itself, as we too hastily imagine, be a denial or a disproof of the divine being, consciousness, power, knowledge, will, delight in the universe. They can be that if we have to take them by themselves separately but need not be so taken if we get a clear vision of their place and significance in a complete view of the universal workings. A part broken off from the whole may be imperfect, ugly, incomprehensible; but when we see it in the whole, it recovers its place in the harmony, it has a meaning and a use.

This is the same point I had explained earlier with the image of the impressionistic painting: that if we look at the individual dots in the painting closely, they are meaningless but if we stand back and take a composite view of the whole, they have their place and use. What does it mean? It means that what we consider to be imperfect, evil, ignorance, suffering or Avidya also have their place and use when viewed in a comprehensive manner. That is perhaps why so many philosophers could not understand the why of this suffering and pain. And not understanding, they found out all kinds of ways to escape from it. The Buddha gave us the

great eightfold path to come out of suffering and evil. But how many have come out, we may ask.

In order to come out of pain and suffering we should

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first understand that they are not undivine in themselves;

“pain is the hammer of God”. These “hammering” pains are useful in the larger picture of human evolution. That is the first thing we have to understand when analysing imperfection and suffering. Next, he says: The Divine Reality is infinite in its being; in this infinite being, we find limited being everywhere,

... But, in reality, when we come to an integral self-knowledge, we find that we are not limited, for we also are infinite. Our ego is only a face of the universal being and has no separate existence; our apparent separative individuality is only a surface movement and behind it our real individuality stretches out to unity with all things and upward to oneness with the transcendent Divine Infinity. Thus our ego, which seems to be a limitation of existence, is really a power of infinity; the boundless multiplicity of beings in the world is a result and signal evidence, not of limitation or finiteness but of that illimitable Infinity.

Earlier in our discussion we made a long list of what is undivine and included things like ego, imperfection, limitation, suffering and pain. Now suddenly Sri Aurobindo asks, who told you that they are undivine?

Have you really gone deep into pain and suffering? Have you really gone behind ego? It is like searching for a word on Google. We type the word and click “search”. When we search for “evil” we get a long history about it in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and elsewhere. That search button is like the ego. We think it is the reality but if we click that button, we go beyond and see a whole world of things; we can see infinity. Each of our defects and imperfections is only a search word on the surface

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* which is not to be taken as final. We have to go deeper into each of these. The Mother would tell us that if you go to the end of pain you would find bliss. All this finite has the Infinite behind it, just as the ego too is “really a power of infinity”.

Apparent division can never erect itself into a real separateness; there is supporting and overriding it an indivisible unity which division itself cannot divide.

This fundamental world-fact of ego and apparent division and their separative workings in the world existence is no denial of the Divine Nature of unity and indivisible being; they are the surface results of an infinite multiplicity which is a power of the infinite Oneness.

There is one more thing that we should note. This world and the fact of ego and the apparent division and separative working of Nature is not a denial of the Divine.

The fact that we have pain and suffering and imperfection does not mean that we are separated from the Divine. We may feel disconnected from the Divine, when we feel pain and suffering but the moment we feel we are connected even that pain connects us with Ananda. That is the secret because the Divine is in reality non-divisible. Ananda and pain are neither separated nor are they separable.

When Sri Aurobindo fell and broke his thigh bone, he lay there as if it was the beautiful couch of Sri Narayana –

he was lying there absolutely in bliss and people wondered what was happening! Nirod-da rushed in thinking that Sri Aurobindo was in pain. But Sri Aurobindo said the pain had given him the experience of Bliss. Even that acute pain of fracture of his thigh bone turned into Ananda. This will be possible only if one does tapasya like

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Sri Aurobindo did. He says he has shown the path, you have to walk it. Doctors would normally prescribe pain killers and give us some temporary

relief. For this divine medicine we have to walk the path and only then we can get cured of imperfection and the pain and suffering.

I feel reading Sri Aurobindo is like a liberation of the mind.

Reading *The Life Divine* liberates us because he breaks down those mental structures which have been built up in the past in the name of religion, morality, tradition, etc. While reading this book one feels that Sri Aurobindo is the great liberator of our minds.

We may say it may have been easy for Swami Vivekananda or Sri Aurobindo to get rid of pain but is it really possible for people like you and me? Yes Sri Aurobindo says that you too can get rid of ego and suffering and pain. He tells here that there is the possibility and shows the way to do it. In *The Synthesis of Yoga* he explains how to do it but I am not digressing into that now.

To continue with the text:

There is then no real division or limitation of being, no fundamental contradiction of the omnipresent Reality; but there does seem to be a real limitation of consciousness: there is an ignorance of self, a veiling of the inner Divinity and all imperfection is its consequence.

We are looking into what is the cause of imperfection.

It is self-limitation. On one side we have said that ego, imperfection, sorrow and suffering are not really undivine because when viewed in the totality of things, they have their place and use. At the same time, however, we cannot say that they do not exist. Sri Aurobindo takes

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* up a realistic stand. They may not be undivine but that does not mean that they do not exist. They do exist but how and why? The cause of all these imperfections is the limitation of our consciousness. It is an extraordinary phrase: "limitation of consciousness".

Some words act as keys to understand Sri Aurobindo. He says that all imperfections are due to the limitation of consciousness.

If that is so, then all the imperfections can be removed by enlarging the consciousness, by making the consciousness limitless. That will help us get rid of our imperfections; they will become lesser and lesser and we will become more and more perfect.

The problem is that we put the cart before the horse.

For example, we want physical health and want to be cured of this or that disease. So, we take certain medicines or change our diet or take this or that treatment. But nobody thinks of taking care of their emotional or mental harmony. Nobody takes care of their soul that is crying because its voice is not heard. We cannot concentrate exclusively on our mental or physical health; we will never achieve that because we are forgetting about the other parts of our being. If we want to have harmony and health there is one “key”. As Sri Aurobindo says in *Savitri*,

“Our life is a paradox with God for key.” (CWSA 33: 67) When we find the Divine, then all the solutions are given but we have forgotten the priority in our life.

The Mother put it in a simple manner; she was asked why is it that everybody wants happiness? She said that it is because the world has been manifested from Ananda and delight, the world lives in Ananda and delight and the world is moving towards Ananda and delight. The very existence and pulse of this universe is Ananda. Our

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wish and our right to have happiness comes from there.

But why do we not have it or when it comes why is it so fleeting? It is the same thing: we have our priorities wrongly placed, we have put God behind and the world in front. Then how will we get true happiness? She says to put God in front and the world behind, then all our happiness can be loaded in the cart and it may even be spilling over with happiness. Similarly, the

Mother said that typically people are born, grow up, get married, get settled and then after they are retired, they start going to the temple, going on pilgrimages and begin thinking of the Divine. She said we have to reverse these priorities: we have to put God first and then our life should follow God's path.

There is another gem from the Mother related to happiness. She said if you are not happy there could be two reasons: one is you have put God behind and the second is that you are insincere. She says that you are unhappy in proportion to your insincerity.

Sri Aurobindo says that suffering is due to the limitation of consciousness; so, this insincerity is also a part of that limitation of consciousness. If we want to widen our consciousness, one of the ways is to become more and more sincere in work. What will happen is that we will get a wonderful package: we will get the thing we are working for, we will get more happiness and we will widen our consciousness and lessen our limitations. By reducing our limitations, our mental capacities will increase, our physical health will be better and our emotional balance will be regained.

With these keys of sincerity, putting God first in our lives and widening our consciousness, the Mother and

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo have given us important clues to the solution of life. It is not by doing hundred different things to improve our health that our life will improve. When we take God for "key", we get all our answers and solutions.

The ancients said: *sharvana, manana, nididhyāsana* –

study the scriptures, reflect on them and then meditate on the Truth underlying them. Don't just practice whatever you hear. It is often seen that in our ignorance and confusion, we go from one guru to the other, from one master to the other. We may not stop and ruminate over what has been said or instructed. *The Life Divine* makes us think. Once we are convinced, then only we can follow.

Sri Aurobindo says that imperfection is the consequence of the limitation of consciousness: For we identify ourselves mentally, vitally, physically with this superficial ego-consciousness which is our first insistent self-experience; this does impose on us, not a fundamentally real, but a practical division with all the untoward consequences of that separateness from the Reality. But here again we have to discover that from the point of view of God's workings, whatever be our reactions or our experience on the surface, this fact of ignorance is itself an operation of knowledge and not a true ignorance. Its phenomenon of ignorance is a superficial movement; for behind it is an indivisible all-consciousness: the ignorance is a frontal power of that all-consciousness which limits itself in a certain field, within certain boundaries to a particular operation of knowledge, a particular mode of conscious working, and keeps back all the rest of its knowledge in waiting as a force behind it.

Sri Aurobindo has used a wonderful phrase: "ignorance

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is itself an operation of knowledge and not a true ignorance". He further tells us that it is "frontal power"

acting within certain boundaries and that it is a particular operation of knowledge. We could say that it is a kind of focusing of knowledge. It is not a denial of knowledge for all knowledge is waiting as a force behind it.

There is the famous example of Arjuna shooting an arrow in the eye of the fish. This is a perfect example of the focus of consciousness. The Divine is seeing "only the eye of the fish", everything else is kept in the background.

When we concentrate, we fix our consciousness on a single point to the exclusion of all other things around it.

We do not lose our knowledge of the other things but this knowledge is kept in the background for some time. That is what ignorance is: the Divine focuses to such an extent that he suspends all other knowledge to think of only one thing. Ignorance is not non-knowledge, ignorance is suspended knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo says that everything has a use. How is this ignorance useful? Why has it come? He tells us here:

...there is a secret working which fills up all the deficiencies of the frontal Ignorance, acts through its apparent stumblings, prevents them from leading to another final result than that which the All-Knowledge has decreed, helps the soul in the Ignorance to draw from its experience, even from the natural personality's sufferings and errors, what is necessary for its evolution and to leave behind what is no longer utilisable. This frontal power of Ignorance is a power of concentration in a limited working, much like that power in our human mentality by which we absorb ourselves in a particular object and in a particular

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* work and seem to use only so much knowledge, only such ideas as are necessary for it,—the rest, which are alien to it or would interfere with it, are put back for the moment...

Henceforth, when we say 'ignorance', it is not like the ancients have described it – as Avidya and darkness.

These religions want to make us slaves, members for salvation and therefore, they projected Avidya as non-knowledge. When we come to understand Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we understand that actually there is nothing wrong in being in ignorance. Why?

Because if we press the button of ignorance, we can go into all-knowledge. What is it that all-knowledge is doing with this ignorance? This all-knowledge, this chit-tapas, is focusing at a particular point in this manifestation and those points of focus are called X, Y, Z. We are all names for these focal points upon the earth of that all-knowledge and Sachchidananda. Is it not wonderful that we are not really ignorant in the negative sense and that we are focus points upon earth of the Absolute? Many times when we are fully focused and engrossed in something, we do not even hear a calling bell or any other sounds. When we are focused, other knowledge and its perception are suspended. At times, we don't feel hungry or we don't see that someone is standing there waiting for us

because our senses are suspended on concentrating exclusively on a particular moment.

So, all our lives are nothing but the focus of the Supreme Consciousness in the name and form of X, Y or Z. If you say we are ignorant, I would say rather that the Divine is focusing through us on this world. Immediately that darkness of ignorance is wiped off. Sri Aurobindo takes

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away the negativity behind the word Avidya or ignorance and tells us that it is God's own footprint upon earth.

Why is God concentrating upon us so much? Because he wants his consciousness to touch Matter. He wants that supreme all-knowledge, all-consciousness to focus like a magnifying glass. When we focus the sun's rays with a magnifying glass, it can burn things. The supreme Lord is focusing through the magnifying glass called X or Y so that a ray of the supreme consciousness may burn Matter, not to destroy it but to transform it. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo are trying to ignite in us that psychic flame so that "matter" in us will start to burn and get transformed.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

In our valuation of the movements of our consciousness this ability of concentration is rightly held to be one of the greatest powers of the human mentality. But equally the power of putting forth what seems to be an exclusive working of limited knowledge, that which presents itself to us as ignorance, must be considered one of the greatest powers of the divine Consciousness.

As a comparison, we can say that for every important work we want to achieve in life, we need to concentrate, we need to focus our attention and consciousness. This is what is needed to achieve any great work. The Divine too, when he manifests, requires this stark focus which we call ignorance.

In the universe we see this supreme self-possessing Knowledge work through a multitude of ignorances, each striving to act according to its own blindness, yet through them all it constructs and executes its universal harmonies.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The Divine focuses upon earth, upon matter, through a multitude of ignorances, through multiple points of focus.

That is the beauty of the Divine Consciousness. Although we are each supposed to be a particular focus of the Divine Consciousness, most of us may not be fulfilling that focus or that function at all. Yet through whatever little we manifest of the Divine Consciousness, even that is a benefit and a profit. It is said that we need many births to fulfill our divine destiny but if we concentrate upon our inner self, we may not need so many births. In any case, through all this the Divine achieves a harmony and his purpose.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

More, the miracle of its omniscience appears most strikingly of all in what seems to us the action of an Inconscient, when through the complete or the partial nescience—more thick than our ignorance—

of the electron, atom, cell, plant, insect, the lowest forms of animal life, it arranges perfectly its order of things and guides the instinctive impulse or the inconscient impetus to an end possessed by the All-Knowledge but held behind a veil, not known by the instrumental form of existence, yet perfectly operative within the instinct or the impetus. We may say then that this action of the ignorance or nescience is no real ignorance, but a power, a sign, a proof of an omniscient self-knowledge and all-knowledge.

This again is a beautiful mystery he reveals to us. What seems to be this inconscient darkness of matter, this complete ignorance, through this we see that a wonderful order has come up. It is not the time period which is important. It may have taken millions or billions of years, it doesn't matter; the output of this inconscience is this

beautiful matter that we see. And then matter too has given birth to life, life in the form of the plant and animal kingdoms. What a beautiful creation has emerged from an apparently lifeless inconscient matter! The outcome is a wonderful divine product which means that through this inconscience there is a conscious divine Will working out its aims. Let us not think that this inconscient darkness exists or works without a proper divine Will behind it.

This divine Will is slowly pushing itself forward because there is no one to take it forward consciously, even in human beings, let alone in the plant or animal kingdoms.

Even in the human beings who are supposed to be more conscious than other life forms on this earth, how much do we follow the divine Will?

In spite of that there is an evolution and development of consciousness in humanity. One solid sign of this evolution of human consciousness is the coming of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo who have brought the Supermind. I have often said that the Supermind could not have been brought in at the time of the Christ or at the time of the Buddha. Why? Because human beings were not ready.

Not that we are ready today but through the evolutionary process there has been a preparation of humanity for this new consciousness. The continual influences of the Avatars, vibhutis and saints have helped to open the human consciousness to higher levels and this enabled Sri Aurobindo to come and bring down the Supermind.

If this preparation was not there, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could not have come. This is a sign that in this ignorance of mankind some work has been done.

As with the cause, — the Ignorance, — so is it with the consequences of the Ignorance. All this that seems to us incapacity, weakness, impotence, limitation

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of power, our will's hampered struggle and fettered labour, takes from the point of view of the Divine in his self-workings the aspect of a just limitation of an omniscient power by the free will of that Power itself so that the surface energy shall be in exact correspondence with the work that it has to do, with its attempt, its allotted success or its destined because necessary failure, with the balance of the sum of forces in which it is a part and with the larger result of which its own results are an indivisible portion. Behind this limitation of power is the All-Power and in the limitation that All-Power is at work...

In Sachchidananda, consciousness is omniscient but this consciousness, chit, becomes focused in the ignorance and the all-knowledge is held back. Now an interesting link is that wherever there is chit or consciousness there is also tapas or force which is self-limited in exactly the same way as the consciousness. There is a corresponding limitation of the force to the consciousness, still enabling it to do the work it has to do at that level. This is interesting and reveals a lot of things. If we are at a particular level in consciousness, then the force we are given is also at the same level. If our consciousness is at the vital level, we cannot have the supramental power. If we want to increase our power of manifestation, to have higher powers, we must raise our consciousness to a higher level. One may have political power, money power but all these belong to the vital level. We may become the president or prime minister of a country, still it belongs only to the vital level and has nothing to do with the higher powers. If we have a vital consciousness, then our corresponding force is also vital. We now see the immense destructive forces around the world, political corruption, fundamentalism, environmental destruction, everything.

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It only shows that there is tremendous vital power at work because we are in the vital level of consciousness.

We are supposed to be mental human beings but most people still live in the vital consciousness and therefore, the vital force is dominant in the world. If we want to change the circumstances, we must take a leap in our consciousness. That is why Sri Aurobindo is constantly telling us to change our consciousness, not to change the externalities by adding more religions,

more creeds, more philosophies, more temples, etc. It changes nothing; the consciousness will remain as vital as ever.

External changes have no more any significant value.

Sri Aurobindo tells us to go to a higher consciousness and then we will get a higher power. Higher power does not mean more destructive power. Higher the power, the better it can control the lower nature. All this suffering and pain, all this disharmony would lessen and get controlled. That is why Sri Aurobindo took a great leap into the supramental consciousness – it was to bring in the supramental power and it came down on 29th February 1956.

The atom bomb is not purely a power of matter, it is a power of mind which has perverted matter. In the book *The Supreme* the Mother tells us how humanity has corrupted matter and misused it. The nuclear bomb has great power, there is no doubt but it is matter that has been misused by the twisted human mind. It is this mental consciousness, which is warped by the vital, that has manipulated matter and created the atomic bomb. In that book she also said that matter has been so disturbed by this perverted human mind that it has thrown up many diseases that are taking physical vengeance upon mankind. Then she says, very beautifully, “each step

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* that I have placed on the earth, everywhere, everywhere, I have thrust this force and this light of transformation into the atoms and molecules of this matter which are under my feet, to awaken them to the necessity of this work of transformation” (*The Supreme*: 60). That is why she walked in the Playground and played tennis in the Tennis Ground; it was not for the fun of it but to create a direct contact between the supramental consciousness and Matter.

This goes to the question of raising the consciousness to increase one’s power. If we want to do something in a better way, if we want to succeed in a thing, if we want our work to be wonderful and harmonious, we must invoke the higher levels of consciousness. The Overmind or the Supermind may be too high for us but even the Higher mind, the Illumined mind, the

Intuitive mind have great power. If you can contact these ranges, which are more or less within the pursuit of the human consciousness at present, then already those levels of consciousness can bring in a corresponding power which will make our efforts more successful.

For example, if we can raise the level of consciousness and dedicate ourselves to the Divine, that kind of consciousness could bring a corresponding higher force in Management. That could manifest a new kind of Management, a new way of working together in a group.

Behind the limited power of human beings is the All-power. Through the small attempts of human beings, the All-power ultimately realises through the passage of time what it wants to do. As we go higher in consciousness, the greater power that comes has greater effectiveness on evolution, it increases in the right direction its speed of progress. What the vital power took a million years to

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do, the power of Supermind may do in a hundred years.

As we go higher in evolution, the time factor becomes shorter and shorter.

We have discussed the self-limitations associated with ignorance and incapacity and next Sri Aurobindo discusses suffering.

As to suffering, which is so great a stumbling-block to our understanding of the universe, it is evidently a consequence of the limitation of consciousness, the restriction of force which prevents us from mastering or assimilating the touch of what is to us other-force: the result of this incapacity and disharmony is that the delight of the touch cannot be seized and it affects our sense with a reaction of discomfort or pain, a defect or excess, a discord resultant in inner or outer injury, born of division between our power of being and the power of being that meets us. Behind in our self and spirit is the All-Delight of the universal being which takes its account of the contact, a delight first in the enduring and then in the conquest of the suffering and finally in its transmutation that shall come hereafter; for pain and suffering are a perverse and contrary term of the delight of existence

and they can turn into their opposite, even into the original All-Delight, Ananda.

Just as *chit* sinks into ignorance, *tapas* turns into incapacity, Ananda gets converted into suffering and pain. Delight or bliss, because of limitation, turns into pain. If I hold a pen from its pointed end, the pen feels heavier and I feel more pain in my hand than if I hold the pen from the opposite side where the base is wider. This pointedness is like the focus of consciousness which we have said is ignorance and this “focus” also creates pain. If

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* we widen our consciousness, there will be comparatively less pain.

How is it possible to get Ananda out of physical pain? Can pain be changed into Ananda? We know it can be because Sri Aurobindo did it! The question is, how can it be changed? It was not because he was an Avatar that he could change it; we are not talking about miracles. We said he could change it because he did an intense tapsaya.

He did it practically as a scientist might do it. We have his *Record of Yoga* where he experimented and tested the possibilities of consciousness. It all depends on the level of our consciousness. It will not happen if we don't change that. We cannot simply say Sri Aurobindo or the Mother said it could change and then it would change. But if we can understand this in a logical manner and once our mind is clear about the possibility of changing pain into delight, it may still take us 2000 years to achieve but at least that 2000 years will begin today. We can then begin dismantling the edifice of this seemingly eternal structure of pain and suffering and death forever. Sri Aurobindo is hammering on our mental Consciousness because, after all, whatever we are doing is partly due to the influence of our mind-set. Our past mental karma, whatever education we have been given, the circumstances and culture we are brought up in the mind-set of our parents and friends are all influencing us. Sri Aurobindo is hammering to break this mould of the mind-set on the intellectual level. This was the reason for the writings of the Arya. It is not a religion or a propaganda that he was trying

to spread but an effort to break our fixed mind-sets about our present limitations. Some cellular change is coming and we must become open enough to receive it. As Sri Aurobindo says here, “pain and suffering are a perverse and contrary term of the delight of existence and

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they can turn into their opposite, even into the original All-Delight, Ananda.” Pain and suffering can be changed into their opposite because they are simply a self-limitation of the All-Delight.

On reading these paragraphs from this chapter a question or two came up in my mind. Here in the Ashram, we read Sri Aurobindo and believe in rebirth and the joy of the psychic being in our philosophy but what about a Buddhist who doesn't believe in the psychic being?

The Buddha never spoke about it. Is it that they do not experience this kind of joy? I didn't find an answer until one day I came across a passage from the Mother.

She explained that these philosophies that desire to escape from the world and do not want rebirth have an influence upon the psychic being. There is a collective suggestion that goes deep into the subconscious of the race and affects the very aim of the psychic being. The Buddhist philosophy and the Advaita philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya told us to leave this manifestation and there has been a collective suggestion which has had its influence.

That throws a greater light upon Sri Aurobindo's work.

Now there has to be a collective suggestion through all the Aurobindonians in the world and through Sri Aurobindo's literature that there is a soul that manifests itself in the world and there is going to be a transformation of matter.

Lectures and seminars that are conducted in order to spread this message have the utility of increasing the collective suggestion. Down the line in 50 years, 100

years or 500 years, there will be a collective consciousness that holds this idea that matter will be spiritualised, that the soul is here to manifest the Divine in matter, that we can change our physical consciousness, that death is not

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* an inevitable fact and can also be changed. This is the utility of the collective subconscious. We should read Sri Aurobindo not only for the sake of ourselves but to spread this idea in the collectivity.

It may still take some time for the new race to come but whatever the time, it is not really that long in the scheme of evolution. That it will take time may also be by Grace, because how many of us are ready for that?

How many have even read *The Life Divine* much less understood and practiced it? By reading it and spreading its message, a few will practice it and out of that a very few will become transformed. That is why we all should read Sri Aurobindo's works. Our mind-set must be broken because it is the mind that is the hindrance to the new consciousness. It is through this mind that we must break into the new consciousness. It is not just the descent of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that is necessary; our minds must absorb their thought and consciousness and then a new light, the mind of light, will come. It is a long process.

It is better to read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the original language. The Mother told us when we were children that it is not that English is lesser than French but there is different stamp of consciousness, the vibration is different. But she said to the children that those who knew French should read her writings in French and to read Sri Aurobindo in English. Sri Aurobindo Ashram's Bulletin is there in both English and French but we used to read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their original languages because that carried the original vibration.

Let us continue now with the text. Sri Aurobindo says: But even when we thus regard the universe, we

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cannot and ought not to dismiss as entirely and radically false and unreal the values that are given to it by our own limited human consciousness. For grief, pain, suffering, error, falsehood, ignorance, weakness, wickedness, incapacity, non-doing of what should be done and wrong-doing, deviation of will and denial of will, egoism, limitation, division from other beings with whom we should be one, all that makes up the effective figure of what we call evil, are facts of the world-consciousness, not fictions and unrealities, although they are facts whose complete sense or true value is not that which we assign to them in our ignorance. Still our sense of them is part of a true sense, our values of them are necessary to their complete values.

Sri Aurobindo here states a new argument. He has already told us that the source of incapacity, suffering, pain and ignorance is “born of division between our power of being and the power of being that meets us.”

Now he writes that this does not mean that we can dismiss these things as unrealities nor should we accept them as they are. These things are our present facts and we should not underestimate them. Our sense of them as adverse and evil is not completely true but it is a necessary part of the working out of the Truth.

Now he will take up the question of what is the utility of this pain and suffering.

One side of the truth of these things we discover when we get into a deeper and larger consciousness; for we find then that there is a cosmic and individual utility in what presents itself to us as adverse and evil. For without experience of pain we would not get all the infinite value of the divine delight of which pain is in

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* travail; all ignorance is a penumbra which environs an orb of knowledge, every error is significant of the possibility and the effort of a discovery of truth; every weakness and failure is a first

sounding of gulfs of power and potentiality; all division is intended to enrich by an experience of various sweetness of unification the joy of realised unity. All this imperfection is to us evil, but all evil is in travail of the eternal good; for all is an imperfection which is the first condition—in the law of life evolving out of Inconscience—of a greater perfection in the manifesting of the hidden divinity. But at the same time our present feeling of this evil and imperfection, the revolt of our consciousness against them is also a necessary valuation; for if we have first to face and endure them, the ultimate command on us is to reject, to overcome, to transform the life and the nature.

All this pain and suffering is a passage towards the ultimate achievement of Delight but at the same time, even this travail has a utility. As he says in *Savitri*, “Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break / A dead resistance in the mortal’s heart”. It has its utility. A sculptor starts with a big rock and chips it with a big hammer. Slowly, as the figure in the rock comes forth he uses a smaller hammers and takes off smaller chips and ultimately in the end, he may use the soft sand-paper to smooth on the face. Similarly, as we go higher in consciousness the hammer blows become softer and softer and in the end they become delightful. In the beginning we need a kind of endurance and ability to face the hard strokes.

Sri Aurobindo notes that even though evil is in travail of ‘the eternal good’ we also need to revolt against it.

It means, we need to first endure it, reject it and then

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transform it. The Mother explains this process with regard to pain. She says first of all people must learn to endure it. Don’t run to the doctor for the least ailment. But then she says there is another practical way of dealing with pain: cut the knot of the pain. Tell the nerve, you have done your job of telling my mind that there is something wrong, thank you for that but now stop. You cut the mental connection with the pain. In another context she suggested that we disassociate with the pain, for example, if we have a headache, we can say it is not my headache, it doesn’t belong to me, it is not my body. It is not so easy.

So, the first strategy is to face and endure the pain but a higher control is to reject it as if it does not belong to us.

We can even raise the consciousness to the extent that the pain does not exist. Besides these methods we can also transform pain itself into Delight.

But a higher way is to understand is given by Sri Aurobindo: It is possible, when we live inwardly in the depths, to arrive at a state of vast inner equality and peace which is untouched by the reactions of the outer nature and that is a great but incomplete liberation,—for the outer nature too has a right to deliverance. But even if our personal deliverance is complete, still there is the suffering of others, the world travail, which the great of soul cannot regard with indifference. There is a unity with all beings which something within us feels and the deliverance of others must be felt as intimate to its own deliverance.

That is where the great Avatars and vibhutis have been our inspirers. Christ, the Buddha, Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo may be taken as examples. They themselves had gone beyond pain and suffering but they looked into the deliverance of other people's suffering.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* That comes spontaneously to them because they lived in a universal consciousness, knew others' pain and strove for their deliverance as well.

Mentally we may think that we should take away the suffering of others but doing external things is not sufficient. To end pain and suffering one must go within to the point where we contact the psychic being. The moment one contacts the psychic being, one feels the need to help in the "deliverance of others". So, there is a movement inwards and then a movement outward to help others. The Buddha came to the threshold of Nirvana but he did not merge himself and said he will ensure the deliverance of the last man on earth. Sri Ramakrishna said the same thing, that he is ready to take 33,000 births if necessary but he will see that the last man is delivered of pain and suffering. Swami Vivekananda also said something in the same line. The "second coming" of the Avatar is very symbolic. It is not just the physical

return through rebirth but a returning to this earth consciousness, to the collective consciousness to deliver it.

That is the fundamental truth of those spiritual Masters.

Even for the common yogi, the more spiritual he becomes the more he thinks of others. It is the non-spiritual people who become more and more selfish. That can be a parameter to see how spiritual is our consciousness: how much are we self-centered and how much we try to help others. Of course, how we define 'help others' makes a difference.

But if, accepting this side of Nature, we say that all things are fixed in their statutory and stationary law of being, and man too must be fixed in his imperfections, his ignorance and sin and weakness and vileness and suffering, our life loses its true significance.

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Here is another line of argument. We could say that the human is still an animal, he is imperfect, then let him be with his imperfections. He will keep struggling, he will keep getting little moments of pleasure and pain; let him continue. Why should he think about evolution and Supermind? Why bother about all these questions?

Mankind is fixed in its imperfection; why do you want to push him towards becoming a superman?

If so, man can never really deliver out of the ignorance and falsehood the truth and knowledge, out of the evil and ugliness the good and beauty, out of the weakness and vileness the power and glory, out of the grief and suffering the joy and delight which are contained in the Spirit behind them and of which these contradictions are the first adverse and contrary conditions of emergence.

The argument is that if humanity is to be left as it is, the consequence is that those who are a little more awakened and sensitive to this imperfection and evil will say why should they continue to be in this? If it is like a dog's tail which can never be straightened and then they may as well leave the world.

And if we leave the world as it is, then all good and knowledge, strength and beauty will be lost, they will not get manifested. That is the warning to those who think that man is imperfect and nothing can be done. But evolutionary growth cannot be permanently stopped by any human attitude. Sri Aurobindo once said something to the effect that humanity might then be put into the waste-bin of Nature and she will proceed without him. She may create a new race. If humanity does not become her instrument in delivering the higher spirit, then it may be rejected like it was done with the dinosaurs.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Whether the result will be an individual enjoyment of the absolute divine nature or of the Divine Presence or a Nirvana in the featureless Absolute, is a point on which religions and philosophies differ: but in either case human existence on earth must be taken as condemned to eternal imperfection by the very law of its being; it is perpetually and unchangeably an undivine manifestation in the Divine Existence.

The soul by taking on manhood, perhaps by the very fact of birth itself, has fallen from the Divine, has committed an original sin or error which it must be man's spiritual aim, as soon as he is enlightened, thoroughly to cancel, unflinchingly to eliminate.

According to one argument, humanity cannot be perfected. The soul has come upon earth by an error or as a fall from the Divine. If we say humanity is eternally condemned to imperfection, then all this becomes a fiasco, a meaningless tragic error or mistake. Then the only recourse for the soul is to realise its situation and leave this world and this life behind and enter into Nirvana or the transcendent Brahman.

Next, he takes up one last argument from the Indian tradition that this entire creation is a Lila, a play of the Divine. On one side we see this painful life in the world and on the other side we see the superconscient Divine.

This paradox might be solved by the proposition that the world is an amusement of the Divine. Don't take it so seriously; it is just a game! In a

game some people win and some people lose, some people enjoy it while others suffer. In this divine Lila the Divine is playing, he pretends to be undivine, there is nothing really evil. It is all a show, like in the festivals somebody puts on the mask of Ravana

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and somebody puts on the mask of Rama and they play their parts.

Or else He has created the undivine, created ignorance, sin and suffering just for the joy of a manifold creation.

Another possible argument is that the Divine wanted to create a diversity with all these accents of sin and suffering together with joy and mastery. If everything was happiness and good it might be monotonous; this diversity adds excitement and adventure and the Divine can take in the joy of all these different experiences.

Or, perhaps, as some religions curiously suppose, He has done this so that there may be inferior creatures who will praise and glorify Him for his eternal goodness, wisdom, bliss and omnipotence and try feebly to come an inch nearer to the goodness in order to share the bliss, on pain of punishment—by some supposed eternal—if, as the vast majority must by their very imperfection, they fail in their endeavour.

But to the doctrine of such a Lila so crudely stated there is always possible the retort that a God, himself all-blissful, who delights in the suffering of creatures or imposes such suffering on them for the faults of his own imperfect creation, would be no Divinity and against Him the moral being and intelligence of humanity must revolt or deny His existence.

Some people say that God wanted people to glorify him, to praise him. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that such a cruel God who likes to see others suffer while he himself is in bliss may be rejected or denied as it would be inferior to our own highest tendencies. However, such a God might be accepted if several conditions were satisfied:

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* But if the human soul is a portion of the Divinity, if it is a divine Spirit in man that puts on this imperfection and in the form of humanity consents to bear this suffering, or if the soul in humanity is meant to be drawn to the Divine Spirit and is His associate in the play of imperfection here, in the delight of perfect being where, the Lila may still remain a paradox, but it ceases to be a cruel or revolting paradox; it can at most be regarded as a strange mystery and to the reason inexplicable. To explain it there must be two missing elements, a conscious assent by the soul to this manifestation and a reason in the All-Wisdom that makes the play significant and intelligible.

If it is a portion of the Divine himself who comes as the soul into this imperfection, then it would be more intelligible, as the Divine is not imposing this imperfection and suffering onto someone else. However, even then he says, there would have to be a conscious assent by the soul, the portion of the Divine that enters into the manifestation. It could not be just the universal Divine that is enforcing this Lila. The individual soul must be a partner in the game. And secondly, there would also have to be some reason for the pain and suffering, it could not be just for the sake of taking delight in suffering. What Sri Aurobindo does in *The Life Divine* is to give a rational explanation for this world which is significant and intelligible. His evolutionary theory in *The Life Divine* has intelligibility and a kind of acceptance of life as it is as a precursor to a greater divine life that is yet to come.

Now we come to the last paragraph of the chapter which is a continuation of the same argument. He says: A manifestation of this kind, self-creation or Lila,

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would not seem justifiable if it were imposed on the unwilling creature; but it will be evident that the assent of the embodied spirit must be there already, for Prakriti cannot act without the assent of the Purusha. There must have been not only the will of the Divine Purusha to make the cosmic creation possible, but the assent of the individual Purusha to make the individual manifestation possible.

In the Vedanta a major question is whether the individual Purusha has given its consent or not to its manifestation and the answer he gives here is that obviously the individual Purusha has given its consent.

Some people may say all this is fine but still I do not see why there should be this torment, this suffering, this pain, this inordinate delay in the progressive manifestation of the Divine in life. Couldn't there have been a better method, an easier method in which we could evolve and not suffer? He answers:

On the contrary, a play of self-concealing and self-finding is one of the most strenuous joys that conscious being can give to itself, a play of extreme attractiveness.

Why did the Divine have to “dive” into its opposite, the inconscient and from there start the evolution? Why did the supreme Light become complete darkness and then from there started the evolution? In childhood we have played the game of hide and seek. I am sure we all remember it as one of the most exciting games. Somebody hides and we search for him. Sri Aurobindo says that there is an innate joy in finding the hidden person. The same principle applies also to that Divine Consciousness.

He hides himself in the Inconscient and reveals himself

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* from the Inconscient through the gradual development of higher and higher forms. He says: There is no greater pleasure for man himself than a victory which is in its very principle a conquest over difficulties, a victory in knowledge, a victory in power, a victory in creation over the impossibilities of creation, a delight in the conquest over an anguished toil and a hard ordeal of suffering.

It is basically all a matter of finding delight in existence. When a great difficulty is conquered, we get a tremendous joy. It is the same for the Divine as it is for us. When there is struggle, when we have to put out our best to succeed, then the joy is greater.

When things are smooth and easy, we don't reach to the heights of our effort and consciousness. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo tells us that this long labour, these great difficulties, this pain and suffering are there and they will finally end up in a great delight. Then he describes another factor:

At the end of separation is the intense joy of union, the joy of a meeting with a self from which we were divided.

We realise this on the human level too. When we are away from our beloved people for a shorter period there is joy of union but when the separation is longer the joy of union is greater. He says this delay which may be painful brings a greater joy at the time of reunion.

These are three reasons that Sri Aurobindo beautifully elucidates for the soul's acceptance of the experience of manifesting itself in this ignorant and painful world: (1) to play hide and seek, (2) to overcome its difficulties; and (3) to experience the joy of reunion after a long separation.

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These are three principles behind this evolution and are answers to the "why" of this suffering and the "why" of the delay in the progressive manifestation of the Divine in life.

There is an attraction in ignorance itself because it provides us with the joy of discovery, the surprise of new and unforeseen creation, a great adventure of the soul; there is a joy of the journey and the search and the finding, a joy of the battle and the crown, the labour and the reward of labour. If delight of existence be the secret of creation, this too is one delight of existence; it can be regarded as the reason or at least one reason of this apparently paradoxical and contrary Lila. But, apart from this choice of the individual Purusha, there is a deeper truth inherent in the original Existence which finds its expression in the plunge into Inconscience; its result is a new affirmation of Sachchidananda in its apparent opposite. If the Infinite's right of various self-manifestation is granted, this too as a possibility of its manifestation is intelligible and has its profound significance.

This is a beautiful explanation here at the end: the plunge into the Inconscient results in a new affirmation of Sachchidananda in its apparent opposite. According to the Upanishads, the secret of existence is to find the delight of existence. We experience it through innumerable experiences, each to his own capacity and level of consciousness. At the individual level, the bhakta can find this delight through playing hide and seek with God; sometimes God is hidden and the bhakta searches for him and then there is the delightful reunion. The karma yogi works through various difficulties and then

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* finds the Divine behind all that difficulty and efforts.

The jnana yogi silences his mind and finds the Supreme Consciousness behind it.

On the cosmic level of creation also there is a search for the delight of existence. It is the *raison d'être* of this creation.

Sri Aurobindo has given us a philosophical explanation that is linked with our own individual existence.

Ultimately, when we ask what is divine and what is undivine we can say that this undivine manifestation comes from the Divine and is returning to a reunification with the Divine. It is not delinked but it is presently unconscious of its unity with the Divine. It is as if the Divine has descended down a continuous ladder into the Inconscient and is climbing back. We are moving from this undivine life towards a life divine. Ignorance, limitation and suffering are the result of the descent but they are temporary conditions that also have their own utility in the climb back. It is the individual divine soul who has chosen to descend this ladder into the Inconscient and climb back; it was not imposed on us.

The purpose of this adventure was to re-discover our divine Self in this apparent opposite, to reaffirm ourselves in this challenging world, to overcome the tremendous obstacles that it presents to our indomitable spirit,

to struggle through life and death and rebirth and finally, to transform this resistant matter and create a divine life here on earth. Then the two ends of existence, matter and spirit, will be reunited and Sachchidananda and our individual souls will enjoy the delight of reunion in a manifold, embodied divine existence in matter.

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## Lecture Notes

**I. The need to define the Divine and the Undivine** a) If we speak of a divine life as a culmination of the evolutionary process, then it implies that our present life is undivine. Hence, there is a need to distinguish between the divine and the undivine.

b) Basically, the distinction between divine and undivine is based on the root distinction between knowledge and ignorance. It is the bondage to a perpetual stamp of imperfection and disharmony that is the mark of the undivine. A life harmonious in principle and detail is a divine life.

c) Imperfection does not include only pain, suffering and evil but also the paucity and deficiency of Truth, Beauty, Power and Unity.

d) The basic cause of imperfection is the limitation in us of the divine elements. This limitation is caused by the phenomenon of division in the unity of the Divine Existence.

e) This division and limitation ultimately result in the intervention of ignorance and perversion which give birth to error, pain, discord, evil, etc.

**II. Solutions to the duality of the Divine and the Undivine** a) It is not sufficient to affirm that the Self, the Divine, the Brahman is not affected by pain and suffering or the imperfections and the ignorance.

b) Like the Buddhist view, some Vedantins consider all existence to be an impermanence and seek escape into Nirvana.

c) Such solutions of escape do not satisfy for long the human need for a total and integral knowledge and consciousness.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* d) One could say that each thing is divine in itself because each is a fact and idea of the divine Being, Knowledge and

Will. But this justification sees only parts and fragments; the true perfection is the perfection of the total divine harmony.

e) Such views are nothing more than a facile dogma; an intellectual and philosophical optimism. “A Divine Whole that is perfect by reason of the imperfection of its parts” is not the truth and such a view does not fulfil our psychic being’s aspiration.

f) A resigned acceptance that each thing is perfect in its place and that it is the immediate will of God is incorrect in its totality because it should also be recognised that it is the will of God in us to transcend evil and suffering and to turn imperfection into perfection.

**III. Three propositions about God and the World** a) The Omnipresent Reality is the basis and support of all that has become.

b) All things are ordered and governed by the Supreme Reality; at the same time there appears in the world disharmony and distortion.

c) The world as it is and the Divine Reality are so very different in essence that the world must be sacrificed if we would find the Divine.

d) The first two propositions are inevitable and understandable but the third one is incompatible with its precedents.

**IV. Solutions offered for the third proposition** a) A fainéant deity

b) A Witness Self

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c) An Active and Dynamic Consciousness of Brahman d) All such solutions do not solve the problem because the temporal consciousness and its actions are also ultimately rooted in the one Self.

e) The deeper truth is that Ignorance and Inconscience of Nature have arisen not independently but in the One Being; the divine Omniscience has allowed them to arise. There is no other Lord than He and hence, all perfection and imperfection is also himself.

**V. A reconciliatory vision of the Divine and the Undivine** a) Ignorance and limitation need not be a denial of the presence of the Divine Being. If taken separately, they may seem to be so. But it need not be so if taken in a complete view; in the whole, the part recovers its place.

b) For example: ego is in reality a power of the illimitable Infinity.

c) Similarly, ignorance also hides an indivisible All-consciousness. The frontal power of ignorance is in reality a power of concentration for a limited working. It is a power, a sign, a proof of omniscient Self-knowledge and All-knowledge.

d) Limitation has behind it the All-Power; through the sum of many limited workings the Omnipotent executes its purposes.

e) Similarly, pain and suffering are perverse terms of Delight and they can turn back into Ananda.

f) Thus, all imperfection is only a first condition of an evolving greater perfection. At the same time, the revolt of our consciousness against imperfection is also of a necessary value.

g) All this is then the law of manifestation and all

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* ignorance, limitation and imperfection are not to be taken as mistakes of the Divine Consciousness having no purpose.

**VI. A progressive manifestation** a) If we affirm that humanity is fixed in its imperfections, then the only issue is an escape out of life. If humanity cannot be a fulfilled divinity, it must cease, be left behind and rejected.

b) The only reasonable explanation of such a paradoxical manifestation is that this creation is a cosmic Lila. If so, God himself being all-blissful, delights in the suffering of creatures but such a God cannot be accepted by the moral being in man.

c) The paradox loses its edge if we can consider that there is a progressive ascent of souls through fixed grades of consciousness. Imperfection then becomes a necessary term of manifestation. An evolutionary manifestation demands a mid-stage with gradations above and under it and this mid-stage is the mental consciousness of man.

d) The question that remains to be answered is why was such a progressive manifestation necessary?

e) There are three possible reasons: i) The play of self-concealing and self-finding is one of the greatest joys. It is the joy of victory over difficulties.

ii) At the end of a long separation there is an intense joy.

iii) There would be an affirmation of Sachchidananda in its apparent opposite.

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