

Deliberations on

The Life Divine

(Chapterwise Summary Talks)

Volume - Nine

Book - II

**The Knowledge and the Ignorance —
the Spiritual Evolution**

Part - I

The Infinite Consciousness and the Ignorance V. Ananda Reddy

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Dedicated to

The Lovers of The Life Divine

Acknowledgements

I here present to my readers with the ninth volume of 'Deliberations on *The Life Divine*'. Like the other volumes this is also a transcribed and edited text of my talks given in year 2006.

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 Miresh 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.

Contents

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Chapter – XI](#)

[The Boundaries of the Ignorance](#)

[1](#)

[Chapter – XII](#)

[The Origin of the Ignorance](#)

[44](#)

[Chapter – XIII](#)

[Exclusive Concentration of](#)

[Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance](#)

[92](#)

[Chapter – XIV](#)

[The Origin and Remedy of](#)

[Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil](#)

[157](#)

Chapter – XI

The Boundaries of the Ignorance

The chapter preceding this one, named “Knowledge by Identity and Separative Knowledge” discussed the four levels of Knowledge and how there is gradually a separation between the subject and the object in consciousness. The bridging instrumentation between the subject and the object essentially consists of the senses. Nature introduced this bridge in order that humans may be able to connect with the objective world. In the present chapter “The Boundaries of the Ignorance” Sri Aurobindo will examine the extent of our ignorance and analyse what are the things of which we are ignorant. Of course, we could enlist innumerable things of which we are ignorant, but he will give us the broad categories of our ignorance and we will discuss them presently.

In the first paragraph, we get a broad overview of Ignorance.

It is now possible to review in its larger lines this Ignorance, or this separative knowledge labouring towards identical knowledge, which constitutes our human mentality and, in an obscurer form, all consciousness that has evolved below our level. We see that in us it consists of a succession of waves of being and force, pressing from outside and rising from within, which become stuff of consciousness and formulate in a mental cognition and mentalised sensation of self and things in Time and Space.

Sri Aurobindo indicates that our separative consciousness consists of “a succession of waves of being and force” from outside and inside, and the immediate awareness of the

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mental being is mobile in time and lives perpetually in the present. This is just a background sketch of our ignorant mental consciousness. We are a conglomeration of different facets of human consciousness – the outer, the inner, the time-consciousness, the space-consciousness, the mental cognition which includes memory and our own thoughts and will power. He adds,

All this insecurely held material of self-expression and experience of things, this partial knowledge accumulated in the succession of Time, is coordinated for him by perception, memory, intelligence and will to be utilised for an ever-new or ever-repeated becoming and for the mental, vital, physical action which helps him to grow into what he is to be and to express what he already is.

The centre of all these forces – the inner, the outer, the memory or the will power, the action, the intelligence – is held together by the ego-sense. The hub of ignorance is the ego which ties all our experiences together. All these forces and action are “utilised for an ever-new or ever-repeated becoming” and then the ego-sense “formulates the habit of response of self-experience”. Due to our particular ego-sense, each one of us responds to the world in our own way.

My experiences have given me certain impressions, your experiences have impacted you differently. All this forms the ego-sense in us and as a result we respond differently to people things and situations.

What is this ego? It is formed of our experiences in time, of the memory of our actions and our thoughts and intelligence. If we analyse ourself, there is nothing that can be truly called the ego-knot. We cannot really dig it up and say “this is the ego”. It is a psychological centre as Sri Aurobindo says,

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 3

It is this ego-sense that gives a first basis of coherence to what otherwise might be a string or mass of floating impressions: all that is so sensed is referred to a corresponding artificial centre of mental consciousness in the understanding, the ego idea.

Let us take the example of a cell. The nucleus of a cell is dense at the centre. Similarly, the ego is a kind of densification of our past and present experiences, of our thoughts, imaginations, aspirations, impurities – all these are there which centralise and densify. Such densification form the ego-knot, ego-idea, ego-sense. The more this becomes dense and hard, the more it becomes difficult for us to surrender it to the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo says that “the ego-sense gives us the first basis of coherence”. What is the function of the hub of a wheel? It binds the wheel together. Similarly, the ego in us holds together our personality.

This ego-sense in the life stuff and this ego-idea in the mind maintain a constructed symbol of self, the separative ego, which does duty for the hidden real self, the spirit or true being.

Ego is important in the beginning of life because it makes up a “constructed symbol of self”. When I say “I, Mr. so and so”, I do not mean my real self. Normally, most people are not aware of the Atman or the psychic being or the true Self.

When we say ‘I’, it is this separative idea of ourselves that we refer to. Earlier we saw that the ego shifts – sometimes my ego is identified with my mind, sometimes with my feelings, sometimes with my body! We experience our ego at the level on which our consciousness is situated. The Atman is only one; we cannot say my Atman is here, my Atman is there. Similarly, there is only one psychic being. But, the ego

4

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* centre keeps shifting because it is not a solid entity. It is only a densification of the state of my consciousness.

As there is a ‘mental ego’, there is also a ‘vital ego’ and a

‘physical ego’ – they form different centres. Perhaps now I am acting out of my mental ego, but when I am on the field playing football, then the physical ego comes forth. This self-thrusting force is the physical-vital ego. Sri Aurobindo uses the phrase: “this ego-sense in the life stuff and this ego-

idea in the mind”, which means it moves around both Life and Mind. The separative ego performs its duty for the hidden real self until the psychic being is realised – after the realisation the function of ego starts diminishing. In the next sentence, he says,

The surface mental individuality is, in consequence, always ego-centric; even its altruism is an enlargement of its ego: the ego is the lynch-pin invented to hold together the motion of our wheel of nature.

That is the central sentence: “the ego is the lynch-pin invented to hold together the motion of our wheel of nature”.

Our whole being is the wheel and there are different spokes in the wheel, like memories, experiences, impressions, prejudices, etc. And the hub, the lynch-pin of the hub which holds the wheel together is the ego. It has been invented by Nature for a specific purpose.

In the next sentence, he explains:

The necessity of centralisation around the ego continues until there is no longer need of any such device or contrivance because there has emerged the true self, the spiritual being, which is at once wheel and motion and that which holds all together, the centre and the circumference.

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 5

This is an interesting sentence! He says, “the centralisation around the ego continues until there is no longer need of any such contrivance”. It explains why we are in the ego.

The Mother once explained that we will not get rid of the ego just because we wish to. There is a particular need for it. Ego is another way of achieving individualization or Sri Aurobindo writes here “the necessity of centralisation”.

So, the ego helps us to become individualised and it remains until there is no longer need of any such device.

The true individual is behind, but the outer being must be individualised. Otherwise, as we explained earlier, we are an amorphous being. Hardly any person here is an individual.

We are all a kind of amalgamation of the influences of ideas and prejudices that we have drawn from our culture, our background, our friends, our family and from our environment. A true individual is very rare. Perhaps some part in us gets individualised. If one is an artist, the true creative self may come out when he/she creates, while the rest of the being is a kind of a meeting place of ideas. A creative person cannot be a bazaar of ideas, he must bring out from himself/herself something individualized. Some artists and poets are at first influenced by others – they imitate others – but that is the beginning. In the process of developing their art, they bring out something of their own. That is why art is useful for its helps to bring forth individual; other works that are not creative do not bring out the individual as much as art does.

Sri Aurobindo has given us a backdrop by telling us that our entire ignorance is held together by the ego-centre. Now, he will describe the various boundaries or limitations of our ignorance. The first one is the ignorance of our past: But the moment we study ourselves, we find that

6

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the self-experience which we thus coordinate and consciously utilise for life, is a small part even of our waking individual consciousness. We fasten only upon a very limited number of the mental sensations and perceptions of self and things which come up into our surface consciousness in our continual present: of these again memory saves up only a scanty part from the oblivious gulf of the past; of the storings of memory our intelligence utilises only a small portion for coordinated knowledge, our will utilises a smaller percentage for action.

He says that in our day-to-day experience we gather many different ideas, impressions, emotions, sensations and so on. Even when I look at the road some impressions come into my mind – the road is dirty, the road is good, there is some new building, etc., – all these impressions come into my mind. Out of all these, only some are stored in memory, and out of this

storage, only some are utilised. Therefore, we are ignorant of most of our past experiences. That is the first ignorance or the first boundary.

But then, Sri Aurobindo adds, a surprising twist, he says, But this is only in appearance, for it would be a wholly untrue account to say that all that is not thus saved up and utilised is destroyed, becomes null and has passed away ineffectually and in vain. A great part of it has been quietly used by Nature herself to form us and actuates that sufficiently large mass of our growth and becoming and action for which our conscious memory, will and intelligence are not responsible.

This is an important clarification that our conscious memory of what has happened may have been lost, but its effects is not necessarily lost. He says, that it is wrong

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 7

to imagine that everything not remembered has been destroyed. On the contrary, a great part of it is utilised by Nature to build up the present personality. To give a simple example: today we are discussing Chapter XI of *The Life Divine*, but it is because for the last four or five years we have been holding these classes on *The Life Divine* that our minds are becoming more and more mature, we are getting to understand better. We may not remember all that we discussed, but our classes have helped us to grow in our ability to understand what we are reading. Over a period of time there has been a change, a maturity in our consciousness, there has been some growth. The experiences of the past classes have been utilised by Nature for our development. Then he says,

A still greater part is used by her as a store from which she draws and which she utilises, while we ourselves have utterly forgotten the origin and provenance of this material which we find ourselves employing with a deceptive sense of creation; for we imagine we are creating this new material of our work, when we are only combining results out of that which we have forgotten but Nature in us has remembered.

We are not what we think ourselves to be. We believe we are creating new thoughts and emotions now, but often this is a combined result of

experiences we have forgotten; Nature in us has remembered them. If we quietly sit down and trace every idea backward, we can find that it came from someone else in the past. When we have an emotional reaction against somebody, if we quietly sit down and ask,

“why did I have this prejudice?” We may remember that somebody told me something negative about that person.

We may have forgotten, but Nature in us remembered.

8

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* We may get angry at the person because something had happened in the past. The important point is that nothing is forgotten, nothing is wasted. Everything either Nature uses or we use by our memory.

It is like we have built a building of 30 floors and are looking out of the windows from the top, but we must not forget that there are 29 floors below. The present is a structure built upon all the years of our existence. We may not be able to see all that has come before, it is submerged.

Sri Aurobindo says in some other context that our outer being is like the tip of the temple which stands out of the flood of water. We see only the tip but we know that most of the temple is submerged in water.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

If we admit rebirth as part of her system, we shall realise that all experience has its use; for all experience counts in this prolonged building and nothing is rejected except what has exhausted its utility and would be a burden on the future.

We should not think that our life is made up only of the experiences of our present life from our childhood until now, there is also the past of our previous lives. Our present is also made up of these innumerable previous births which have had an important influence on who we are and what we experience today. We should not limit ourselves to our present life, we have

had thousands of previous births which have influenced us to come to our present circumstance today. Many people ask, “Why did I come to this Ashram?”

I never wanted to come and I didn’t even know about it.”

Yet they came and stayed. Sri Aurobindo asks us not to take the present as we see it today in this life; we are ignorant of

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 9

the past in this life, and also of our past births – all of which make up the present.

The concluding sentence of the paragraph is: We are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence.

We can look at this and say “how insignificant is my present life” or we can look at it and say “how very important is my present life”. We can look at it both ways. He calls it “a bubble on the ocean of our existence”. We have had thousands of past births and our present life is only a small bubble which will be there for a few years and then burst.

Or else we can see that it is because of these thousands of lives that we are what we are today. It is not just as some psychologists believe that we are what we are because of heredity and education. These are valid contributions to our present personality, but they are just streaks; our personality has been building up since thousands of births.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo sketches another boundary: we are also ignorant of our inner being. As he writes:

A superficial observation of our waking consciousness shows us that of a great part of our individual being and becoming we are quite ignorant; it is to us the Inconscient, just as much as the life of the plant, the metal, the earth, the elements. But if we carry our knowledge farther, pushing psychological experiment and observation beyond their normal bounds, we

find how vast is the sphere of this supposed Inconscient or this subconscious in our total existence ... and what a

10

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* small and fragmentary portion of our being is covered by our waking self-awareness.

He says our mind and ego are like the temple dome jutting out of the water, and submerged under the waters is the subliminal, and below the subliminal there is the subconscious, and below that is the vast Inconscient. Only this little dome of the temple is what we see, the rest of it is under water. We are ignorant of our inner being. This is another limitation of our ignorance.

A further clarification of this ignorance: This concealed self and consciousness is our real or whole being, of which the outer is a part and a phenomenon, a selective formation for a surface use.

This seems to be a small sentence, but it must not to be overlooked. This is the real secret he is giving us. He says that the outer is a part and phenomenon, a “selective formation”

for a surface use. This entire subconscious and subliminal consciousness is putting forth one kind of personality, a selective formation. This “selective formation” is there for a particular experience that my inner being wants.

Why is it that sometimes we change our lives completely?

Say you were a businessman but you decide to become an artist. It is not simply because you failed in your business that you have decided to take up art. Maybe the failure in your business was necessary because the inner being now says, “Enough of business, I have had this experience, now I want to change my life.” But you would not change your life unless there was a big blow and you became bankrupt; only then would you say, I will take up art. This is not simply another kind of life, it is the need of your inner being. That is why there are sometimes shifts in the pattern of our life.

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 11

In the past a lot of the sadhaks in the Ashram made such shifts. They were full-fledged family people with children and spouse, having a good position in society and suddenly they left everything and came to Pondicherry, not just to Pondicherry the town, but to do sadhana. They came because their inner being decided, the call was intense. They put aside questions about their family and children and the so-called social responsibility. There was a shift in their inner being that wanted to express itself. Similarly, there were people in the Ashram who said “I want to get married and have a family life” and they left the Ashram. The Mother explained to us that this happened because the inner being needed that experience. We should not judge the person and say what he is doing is right or wrong, that by leaving the Ashram he has done something bad or unspiritual. She would say it is the need of the inner being. And the other people who left their marriages and their children to come away, we should not blame them and say “they are unsocial, they had social responsibilities that they ran away from”. All that does not apply when the inner being calls. That is why I am emphasising on this single phrase, “a selective formation for a surface use”. Let us not have prejudice of the mind that says what is spiritual and what is non-spiritual, what is Ashram life and what is outside life – it is all the path of the inner being.

We perceive only a small number of the contacts of things which impinge upon us; the inner being perceives all that enters or touches us and our environment. We perceive only a part of the workings of our life and being; the inner being perceives so much that we might almost suppose that nothing escapes its view.

Here we have a long paragraph, these are the first few

12

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* lines where Sri Aurobindo gives us a comparative picture of this inner being and the outer being. Outwardly, we have a small limited perception; but the inner being is almost the opposite, “it perceives all that enters or touches us and our environment”. That is why we see that things that go into our subliminal or subconscious may be remembered long after 10, 20 or even 50 years. That is why it is really

important to see what we are doing, what we are reading, with whom are we moving around, what social influences are affecting us.

We may think, “I am young, I have the right to do all these things.” Yes, you have the right, but we should not forget that all this sinks into our being. You should not think that you can just have a little fun and it is all over; everything goes in and stays there, and later on it may come out.

We remember only a small selection from our perceptions, and of these even we keep a great part in a store-room where we cannot always lay our hand upon what we need; the inner being retains everything that it has ever received and has it always ready to hand.

Once the Mother told me personally that spirituality must begin when one is young. It is not that when we are young we can read anything like comics and novels and dirty books, and only later on start reading *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*.

If our subconscious is full of muck, where will *Savitri* go and settle down? Spirituality should start right from a young age.

These are very powerful sentences; he says “the inner being retains everything that it has ever received and has it always ready to hand”. This is why in our Indian culture we tell our children the stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana, which influence the mind of the child in a deep manner.

I do not know if the parents of the present day still do that. Today there are many ways of entertaining children

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 13

than story telling. TV shows and cartoons full of fighting and violence keep the children more engaged. There are also such video games that make the player kill or shoot the enemy. What we forget is that all that sinks into the subconscious and the subliminal. Then at a later age when we want the child to turn to spirituality or noble thoughts, it becomes extremely difficult. The child has all the violence and negative ideas filled in him and his nature becomes violent and aggressive. It is then too late to mould him.

That is why when we want to educate a child, the subliminal must be taken into account. In traditional Indian culture we had the children listen to the Gita, even if they did not understand. They may not understand, but this is going into their subliminal consciousness. We are preparing them to be spiritual persons.

Let us come back to the text. We were reading in the paragraph that begins with: “This concealed self and consciousness is our real or whole being...” This phrase –

“our real and whole being” – suggests the importance of this inner being which as we have seen is submerged under the surface of the waters unknown to us.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

We can form into coordinated understanding and knowledge only so much of our perceptions and memories as our trained intelligence and mental capacity can grasp in their sense and appreciate in their relations: the intelligence of the inner being needs no training, but preserves the accurate form and relations of all its perceptions and memories and, —though this is a proposition which may be considered doubtful or difficult to concede in its fullness, —can grasp

14

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* immediately, when it does not possess already, their significance.

The surface mind can understand things because of mental training. If one has been a student of philosophy and literature, for example, it may be easier to read *The Life Divine* or *Savitri* than if one is in some completely different field. But the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have told us – it is not the surface being that will truly understand *Savitri* or *The Life Divine* or any scriptures – what understands is the inner being. The Mother herself related a few incidents in which uneducated persons could explain the Gita and Vedanta.

That is because this knowledge is there in their subliminal consciousness. On the outer level, we can understand to the extent that our mental capacity can grasp, but the inner being needs no training. This is why the Mother would tell us to read a little bit of Sri Aurobindo's writings every day, whether we understand or not.

We have the story of Abhimanyu, a baby in the womb of his mother who did not even know the language Sri Krishna spoke, but his subliminal did not need to understand the language used by Sri Krishna, it understood the essence.

That is why it is better always to read Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the original, not the translations. With all due respect for the great translations what we get out of a translation is the word, not the consciousness. We may understand the words with the outer mind, but what goes into the subliminal is not the word, but the vibrations, the consciousness.

I used to go to Orissa to give talks where there would be gatherings of a thousand people. There were old ladies who did not know a word of English, but they would sit through three hours of talks morning and evening. Once

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 15

we asked, "Didi, why is it that you are sitting here, you do not understand a word?" She said, "It does not matter; I know the speaker is speaking about the Mother, and that is more than enough for me." What they were absorbing is the vibration, the consciousness, and when we speak of the Mother, we speak only of that consciousness, and out of their great love they receive something of that. I saw the same thing in Moscow; there was an elderly lady who sat through my lectures which were being translated into Russian, and at the end of the talk, she said "I could understand you better than the translator because I caught your feelings, I felt something here in my heart when you spoke." The translation was only words, but when we speak through the heart it may be that the Mother uses us and communicates her consciousness through us.

If we can understand *The Life Divine* with our mind there is a thrill, but that is a bonus; even without understanding it, the sound of the mantra gets into the subliminal, which has its own inner sense, inner feeling, inner hearing, inner sight. Even if we do not read it aloud, but read it silently to ourselves things go in. That is why at the time of passing away, people in India read the Bhagavad Gita.

In the West they read the *Bible* to the person who is dying. It is because the vibration and consciousness of the scripture gets into the subliminal – the person who is dying may not hear or understand what is being read

– but somewhere something else absorbs this vibration before it leaves the body and is affected by it when it leaves.

Sri Aurobindo gives a wonderful explanation of this tradition:

...the intelligence of the inner being needs no training, but preserves the accurate form and relations of all its

16

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* perceptions and memories and ... can grasp immediately, when it does not possess already, their significance. And its perceptions are not confined, as are ordinarily those of the waking mind, to the scanty gleanings of the physical senses, but extend far beyond and use, as telepathic phenomena of many kinds bear witness, a subtle sense the limits of which are too wide to be easily fixed.

Our physical ears can hear up to a particular distance, but the subtle physical senses can perceive across distances and spaces – as he puts it, “beyond the scanty gleanings of the physical senses”. We can capture a sound or smell with our senses, but the subliminal sense can hear or smell from a much longer distance. He says they “extend far beyond and use, as telepathic phenomena of many kinds bear witness, a subtle sense”.

Telepathy is an example of how the subliminal understands the thoughts of another person. It is sometimes said that mothers hear the cry of their child when others don't. It is not just the question of the physical sense, it is the

subliminal; because the child is close to the subliminal of the mother, she hears it with the inner ear.

The relations between the surface will or impulsion and the subliminal urge, mistakenly described as unconscious or subconscious, have not been properly studied except in regard to unusual and unorganised manifestations and to certain morbidly abnormal phenomena of the diseased human mind; but if we pursue our observation far enough, we shall find that the cognition and will or impulsive force of the inner being really stand behind the whole conscious becoming; the latter represents only that part of its secret endeavour and achievement which rises successfully to the surface of our life. To

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 17

know our inner being is the first step towards a real self-knowledge.

The chapters that we are reading – the previous one, this one, and the next one – are purely psychological, not metaphysical like some others. Sri Aurobindo does not simply tell us to have self-knowledge of atman or the psychic being; here he is giving us the process. When we go towards the self, the first region we come across is the subliminal, and this, he says, is our real or whole being, the outer is only a kind of expression, a kind of receiver of its influences. It is the source of our energies, the source of our inspirations.

Normally, we don't realise, what we are thinking, or feeling is connected to our subliminal; we think it is my idea, my emotion! Sri Aurobindo says that these things come into us from the subliminal which is open to the universal mind and life. They express themselves in our outer mind and life and we think that we have made them. Earlier we saw that the things that the subtle senses in us perceive sink into our being and stay there; and when the time and opportunity come they may burst forth as an idea, a desire, an ambition.

They lie dormant within us.

To know our inner being is the first step when our consciousness goes within. Please do not confuse the

‘inner being’ with the ‘inmost being’. The ‘inner being’ is the subliminal, the ‘inmost being’ is the psychic being. In common parlance we may say ‘inner being’ when we mean

‘psychic being’ but Sri Aurobindo uses these two terms differently.

He has called this the general inner being and now he also calls it the subliminal self:

If we undertake this self-discovery and enlarge our

18

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* knowledge of the subliminal self, so conceiving it as to include in it our lower subconscious and upper superconscious ends, we shall discover that it is really this which provides the whole material of our apparent being and that our perceptions, our memories, our effectuations of will and intelligence are only a selection from its perceptions, memories, activities and relations of will and intelligence; our very ego is only a minor and superficial formulation of its self-consciousness and self-experience. It is, as it were, the urgent sea out of which the waves of our conscious becoming arise.

Once again it is reiterated here that if we undertake this self-discovery and enlarge our knowledge of the subliminal self, we shall discover that it is really this which provides the whole material of our apparent being. We have seen in the previous chapter also that the importance of the subliminal is that it provides the material of our apparent or surface being. Our perceptions, memories, effectuations of will and intelligence are only a selection. We have seen that the subliminal is the real source of memory along with the subconscious. From the subconscious some ideas come up and from the subliminal other ideas and the outer mind thinks these ideas are its own. But these are only a few of the ideas that are embedded in the subliminal and the subconscious. It is “the urgent sea out of which the waves of our conscious becoming arise”. But what are its limits? How far does it extend? What is its fundamental nature?

Ordinarily, we speak of a subconscious existence and include in this term all that is not on the waking surface. But the whole or the greater part of the inner or subliminal self can hardly be characterised by that epithet; for when we say subconscious, we think readily

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 19

of an obscure unconsciousness or half-consciousness or else a submerged consciousness below and in a way inferior to and less than our organised waking awareness or, at least, less in possession of itself.

There is a common misconception that just because we are not aware of something it is not important and does not have an active influence on us. But it is just the other way around! Usually what we do not know has a greater and deeper influence on our thoughts and feelings. We should change our understanding and realise that what is hidden is usually more powerful than that of which we are aware. Our roots within are very powerful. We experience the little flowers of its expression as an artist or a poet or a businessman or a scientist, but the trunk of the tree is in the subliminal and the roots are in the Atman.

He continues and says,

But we find, when we go within, that somewhere in our subliminal part, — though not co-extensive with it since it has also obscure and ignorant regions, —there is a consciousness much wider, more luminous, more in possession of itself and things than that which wakes upon our surface and is the percipient of our daily hours; that is our inner being, and it is this which we must regard as our subliminal self and set apart the subconscious as an inferior, lowest occult province of our nature. In the same way there is a superconscient part of our total existence in which there is what we discover to be our highest self, and this too we can set apart as a higher occult province of our nature.

Sri Aurobindo says when we go deep within, we find a subliminal consciousness which is wider, more luminous than our outer being, but he distinguishes it from the

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* subconscious which is an inferior consciousness and the superconscious which is a higher consciousness. He is showing us our ignorance of our inner being. Earlier he showed us the ignorance of our past – our past births as well as the past of our present life, and now he says we are also ignorant of our inner being, the subliminal, and further ignorant of our lower subconscious and our higher superconscious.

In the next paragraph he will tell us about the subconscious: But what then is the subconscious and where does it begin and how is it related to our surface being or to the subliminal of which it would seem more properly to be a province? We are aware of our body and know that we have a physical existence, even very largely identify ourselves with it, and yet most of its operations are really subconscious to our mental being; not only does the mind take no part in them but, as we suppose, our most physical being has no awareness of its own hidden operations or, by itself, of its own existence; it knows or rather feels only so much of itself as is enlightened by mind-sense and observable by intelligence.

We think that we are aware of our body, yet most of its operations are subconscious to our mental being. I may know that I am walking and talking, but do I know what is happening in my heart or my lungs or stomach? Most of the functioning of our body is subconscious, below the conscious waking consciousness.

Next he says,

We are aware of a vitality working in this bodily form and structure as in the plant or lower animal, a vital existence which is also for the most part subconscious

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 21

to us for we only observe some of its movements and reactions.

Just like with our physical body, the pranic energies that work in our body and also in plants and animals are mostly subconscious. We are not

conscious of this vital energy entering and leaving our body or flowing in the atmosphere around us. We are aware of some things we can do to regulate our vital energy, for example, pranayama and exercises, but we are not conscious of its functioning, even though it is essential to our physical, vital, mental and spiritual well-being. Sri Aurobindo shows us a mirror to the limitations of our knowledge. He says, We are partly aware of its operations, but not by any means of all or most of them, and rather of those which are abnormal than those which are normal; its wants impress themselves more forcibly upon us than its satisfactions, its diseases and disorders than its health and its regular rhythm, its death is more poignant to us than its life is vivid...

It is a beautiful description! We are only “partly aware of the operations” of our body and vitality, and not by any means of all or most of them. He adds that we tend to become more aware when there are problems – when we are hungry, then we become aware of our body’s need and seek food, but once we have eaten, we forget about it again.

When you want to buy a TV or a motorcycle or a car, you feel a tremendous passion, almost your whole consciousness is focused on it, but once you get it, that psychological tension fades away because you have it. Similarly, he says it is the body’s diseases and disorders more than its health and regular rhythm that catch our attention. When we are sitting comfortably, nobody bothers about how our body

22

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is working, but if we get a headache suddenly we become aware. He says, “its death is more poignant to us than its life is vivid.” If somebody we know dies, we start thinking about the value of our own life – “I am also getting old, I still have much work to do, I still have these ambitions and plans”, we tell ourselves. If there is no death around, then we don’t think of these things, and even these deaths we forget after a month, the flow of life takes over and it becomes normal.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

...we know as much of it as we can consciously observe and use or as much as forces itself upon us by pain and pleasure and other sensations or as a cause of nervous or physical reaction and disturbance, but no more.

Accordingly, we suppose that this vital-physical part of us also is not conscious of its own operations or has only a suppressed consciousness or no-consciousness like the plant or an inchoate consciousness like the incipient animal; it becomes conscious only so far as it is enlightened by mind and observable by intelligence.

We are not conscious about anything except by pain or pleasure and other sensations. It is only when our mind starts thinking about our body that we become conscious of it. Otherwise, without this mental reflection, it just eats and sleeps and works at the command of our vital and the physical nature. When the mind focuses and says “I must lead a healthy life, I must go for a morning walk, I must do my exercises, my pranayama”, then the body says “all right”.

If left to the body itself, most of us do not have an awakened or sharp body-consciousness except, perhaps, for athletes and gymnasts who live more in the body-consciousness.

In the next paragraph, which is more or less a continuation.

He says,

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 23

This is an exaggeration and a confusion due to our identification of consciousness with mentality and mental awareness. Mind identifies itself to a certain extent with the movements proper to physical life and body and annexes them to its mentality, so that all consciousness seems to us to be mental.

This is a fundamental characteristic of human beings that their consciousness is more or less mental. When we say awareness, we mean mental awareness. But the mind identifies itself to a certain extent with the movements proper to the physical life and body and annexes them.

Therefore, most of the time we are aware of our emotions and our body through the intermediary called the mind, not directly.

But if we draw back, if we separate the mind as witness from these parts of us, we can discover that life and body, —even the most physical parts of life, —have a consciousness of their own, a consciousness proper to an obscurer vital and to a bodily being, even such an elemental awareness as primitive animal forms may have, but in us partly taken up by the mind and to that extent mentalised.

Here, Sri Aurobindo brings in a new concept. In fact, the Mother in her transformation of the physical withdrew her mind so that she would experience the consciousness of the life energies and body directly, because this mentalisation of the physical and vital was an obstruction to their transformation. With this mentalisation, all our feelings are experienced through the mind, except, perhaps, when you are in a deep devotion; there the heart expresses itself directly. Otherwise, for most of the time, we symbolise our emotions with mental concepts and they are rationalised or

24

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mentalised. There is no purity of emotion. This is not the case in animals because they have no mental consciousness or a very simple one, and they have a purer vital and a purer physical – purer in the sense that they are not subservient to the mind.

Sri Aurobindo says that if we can withdraw the mind, we will discover that even the most physical parts of life have a consciousness of their own, a consciousness proper to an obscurer vital and a bodily being. The vital has its own consciousness, the body has its own consciousness, but the mind overrules these so we don't experience this vital and physical consciousness. In the animals it is more pure, so their reactions, their instincts, their physical and vital capacities and faculties are better. For example, dogs hear better than us and can smell better because there is no mentalisation of the senses.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would tell us that this is something that has to be dismantled when the physical transformation comes, this perverting

power of the mind has to be withdrawn. Then only can the supramental light come straight into the body. Of course, Sri Aurobindo himself said that after his great experience of silencing the mind in Baroda, he never thought. He was living in a consciousness where the mind did not impose itself, it was kind of withdrawn so the higher consciousness could come directly and use the mind as a channel and instrument.

His mind did not say “this is what I am going to say in this afternoon lecture, this is what I am going to write in the next chapter of *The Life Divine*” – it never cogitated, it never thought about it. As most of us know, when Sri Aurobindo was writing the *Arya*, the knowledge came straight into his fingers on the typewriter. He himself came to know what he

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 25

was writing only on seeing it on the paper of the typewriter.

This is how a very direct knowledge can come through, and it shows how very useless is our idea of the role and importance of the mind. We think, “if I do not use my mind how shall I speak? How shall I talk? How shall I reason?”

– but the truth is that the more we suspend the mind, the greater is the knowledge that we can get. It is a paradox, but it was shown to be true by Sri Aurobindo’s experience.

Yet it has not, in its independent motion, the mental awareness which we enjoy; if there is mind in it, it is mind involved and implicit in the body and in the physical life: there is no organised self-consciousness, but only a sense of action and reaction, movement, impulse and desire, need, necessary activities imposed by Nature, hunger, instinct, pain, insensibility and pleasure.

Sri Aurobindo describes the experience of the animal.

Animals do not have mental awareness like we have, but they have the vital mind and physical mind. It means that there the mind is subservient to the vital and physical and enmeshed with them. He says they have no organised

self-consciousness, but only a sense of action, reaction, and instinct on the level of the vital and the physical. Some animals are extremely intelligent in this way, have marvelous physical and vital abilities.

Although thus inferior, it has this awareness obscure, limited and automatic; but since it is less in possession of itself, void of what to us is the stamp of mentality, we may justly call it the submental, but not so justly the subconscious part of our being.

This vital mind and physical mind, which are predominant in animals, are also there in us along with the mental mind.

Sri Aurobindo calls these submental. There are all these

26

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* different levels of our being – submental, subliminal, subconscient, inconscient, superconscient – of which we are ignorant. This is a very beautiful analytical chapter in which we have been shown the extent of our ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo gives us an idea of the vital and physical mind which are–

...a consciousness proper to an obscurer vital and to a bodily being, even such an elemental awareness as primitive animal forms may have, but in us partly taken up by the mind and to that extent mentalised.

We have already discussed this earlier, but now let us now go to the end of the same paragraph, where Sri Aurobindo gives the definition of the true subconscient: The true subconscious is other than this vital or physical substratum; it is the Inconscient vibrating on the borders of consciousness, sending up its motions to be changed into conscious stuff, swallowing into its depths impressions of past experience as seeds of unconscious habits and returning them constantly but often chaotically to the surface consciousness, missioning upwards much futile or perilous stuff of which the origin is obscure to us, in dream, in mechanical repetitions of all kinds,

in untraceable impulsions and motives, in mental, vital, physical perturbations and upheavals, in dumb automatic necessities of our obscurest parts of nature.

He explains that the “subconscious is other than this vital or physical substratum” of mind. He describes it as “the Inconscient vibrating on the borders of consciousness...”

If we consider the range of levels, we can say there is the superconscient, the mind, the submental, the subconscious,

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 27

and the Inconscient. The subconscious, he says, carries

“...impressions of past experience as seeds of unconscious habits and returning them constantly but often chaotically to the surface consciousness.” Here, we have the seeds of our habits, and “much futile or perilous stuff of which the origin is obscure to us” which may rise up to our awareness “in dream, in mechanical repetitions of all kinds, in untraceable impulsions and motives, in mental, vital, physical perturbations and upheavals...” Our prejudices, habits, anger or fear, emotional attachments, physical perturbations rise up from the subconscious and come into mental awareness. What we normally think of ourselves is the outer physical, vital, and mental consciousness, but that, he says, is only the tip of the iceberg.

Now, Sri Aurobindo goes back to explaining the inner subliminal consciousness:

But the subliminal self has not at all this subconscious character; it is in full possession of a mind, a life-force, a clear subtle-physical sense of things. It has the same capacities as our waking being, a subtle sense and perception, a comprehensive extended memory and an intensive selecting intelligence, will, self-consciousness; but even though the same in kind, they are wider, more developed, more sovereign.

We have dealt at great length with the subliminal in the previous chapter, but here in a single paragraph, he gives us a kind of summary of the

subliminal self. It has the same capacities as our waking being, but their capacity is much wider, larger and almost cosmic. For example, it has the same five senses we have in our waking being, but they are much more extensive in their range and sensitivity; it also has a

28

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* vaster memory, intelligence, will, and self-consciousness.

And then he adds:

And it has other capacities which exceed those of our mortal mind because of a power of direct awareness of the being, whether acting in itself or turned upon its object, which arrives more swiftly at knowledge, more swiftly at effectivity of will, more deeply at understanding and satisfaction of impulse. Our surface mind is hardly a true mentality, so involved, bound, hampered, conditioned is it by the body and bodily life and the limitations of the nerve-system and the physical organs.

But the subliminal self has a true mentality superior to these limitations; it exceeds the physical mind and physical organs although it is aware of them and their works and is, indeed, in a large degree their cause or creator.

The major difference between the subliminal and the waking self is that the waking self is limited because of the physical form. The mind is conditioned by the body and bodily life. For example, if I am sick, or I have a severe headache, my thinking becomes foggy. If our body is in good condition, if we have no physical problems, no pain or suffering, then our mind also is more free and effective.

The body and mind are closely related. The mind is also conditioned by our vitality, for example, if we are tired, if we are anxious or depressed, we cannot think clearly. But the subliminal mind is not hampered by these limitations.

Then Sri Aurobindo again draws a contrast between the subliminal and the subconscious:

It is only subconscious in the sense of not bringing all or most of itself to the surface, it works always

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 29

behind the veil; it is rather a secret intraconscient and circumconscient than a subconscious.

We can almost make a dictionary of Sri Aurobindo's terms!

So many of these terms are new. We have seen now, one –

“the submental” – and now he coins in other terms like – the

‘intraconscient’ and the ‘circumconscient’. Sri Aurobindo says that this subliminal is not subconscious. The moment we think of the subconscious, we think of a consciousness that is below our thinking mind and out of its reach. But if we apply the word subconscious loosely, we may include and imply the subliminal consciousness also, but this is not correct. The word ‘subliminal’ does not mean below the thinking mind like the subconscious, but only that it is not in its normal awareness. He says that it is intraconscient, meaning it is ‘within’ our normal consciousness. We have seen that there is the outer being and then the inner or subliminal being, and yet deeper within, the three purushas, and then the innermost, psychic being.

We have also seen that the subliminal has the capacity of extending itself into the universal, the cosmic. My hearing can extend this far only, but the subliminal sense can go farther. Therefore, he also calls it “circumconscient”, meaning outside, like in the word “circumference”, which is the outer edge of a circle. In contrast, we have seen that the subconscious is the portico of the Inconscient, it is a lower consciousness. We use the same root word

‘conscient’ with different prefixes to describe the entire being: circumconscient is the outside, intraconscient is the inner being, superconscient is what is beyond mind, conscient is our own mental

consciousness, subconscious is what is below the mind, and the Inconscient is the lowest part.

30

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* In the last sentence of the paragraph, Sri Aurobindo introduces another complicated term: This description is no doubt truest of the deeper parts of the subliminal; in other layers of it nearer to our surface there is a more ignorant action and those who, penetrating within, pause in the zones of lesser coherence or in the No-man's-land between the subliminal and the surface...

He says that between the outer being and the subliminal, there is what he calls a "No-man's-land". It is a kind of vague place, incoherent, where we –

.... may fall into much delusion and confusion: but that too, though ignorant, is not of the nature of the subconscious; the confusion of these intermediate zones has no kinship to the Inconscience.

It is due to this region that we may fall into confusion regarding our inner experiences and tend to exaggerate them, or find in them some symbolism and give them fantastic explanations. Human beings like to flatter themselves with the sense that they have had great experiences and visions, heard voice, etc. The moment there is a little supernormal experience, they say it is the soul, or the Divine Shakti, or the Supermind that they experienced. More likely, it is this

"No-man's-land" between the outer consciousness and the deeper subliminal consciousness which we mistake as something higher and deeper. It is a big world of confusion, and we have no knowledge of what it is. We know very little, hardly ten percent of our being, and this ten percent makes up our history, civilisation, and the culture of the world. If in as little as ten percent of the total we have such great science, art and music, imagine how much there is yet to be known! That is why it is flabbergasting to see how

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 31

much the Rishis can reveal and what Yogins know. When Sri Aurobindo was asked why he did not write more, he said first try to understand what he has written. Obviously, it means that Sri Aurobindo knew much more than what he chose to write. And to read and understand even that much will take us lives.

Now, Sri Aurobindo after giving an overview of the various parts of the being brings in a new addition:

...for there is not only something deep within behind our normal self-awareness, but something also high above it: that too is ourselves, other than our surface mental personality, but not outside our true self; that too is a country of our spirit... which humanity speaks of vaguely as Spirit, God, the Oversoul: from these superconscient ranges we have visitations and in our highest being we tend towards them and to that supreme Spirit.

Sometimes, he says, visitations come from there, communications come from there. Of course, we do have inspirations, we do get something from the superconscient, but we are not aware of most of it which is seemingly unattainable and incommunicable. This again is one of the boundaries of our ignorance: we do not know the superconscient just as we do not know the Inconscient, the subconscious, the circumconscient, and the intraconscient.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

But with the extension of our knowledge we discover what this Spirit or Oversoul is: it is ultimately our own highest deepest vastest Self, it is apparent on its summits or by reflection in ourselves as Sachchidananda creating us and the world by the power of His divine Knowledge-Will, spiritual, supramental, truth-conscious, infinite.

32

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* That is the real Being, Lord and Creator, who, as the Cosmic Self veiled in Mind and Life and Matter, has descended into that which we call the Inconscient and constitutes and directs its subconscious existence by His supramental will and knowledge, has

ascended out of the Inconscient and dwells in the inner being constituting and directing its subliminal existence by the same will and knowledge, has cast up out of the subliminal our surface existence and dwells secretly in it overseeing with the same supreme light and mastery its stumbling and groping movements.

This is a marvelous description showing us that actually it is Sachchidananda, who has “descended into that which we call the Inconscient and constitutes and directs its subconscious existence by its supramental will and knowledge”. We know the supramental consciousness as one of the highest levels of consciousness, the truth-consciousness, but that same supramental Will and Knowledge are already functioning in the cosmic Inconscient and subconscious. Unless there is this supramental Real-Idea guiding the subconscious, the universe could not have progressed the way it has. He says that it is the Supreme Sachchidananda with its Supermind who is already existent in the subconscious – not only at the individual level but in the cosmic subconscious. He clarifies that it “...has ascended out of the Inconscient and dwells in the inner being constituting and directing its subliminal existence by the same will and knowledge...” Even the subliminal is guided by the same Sachchidananda.

What Sri Aurobindo tells us here is that this seemingly unattainable and incommunicable Sachchidananda is in reality the essence of our being; it is there in the Inconscient,

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 33

it is there in the subconscious, it is there in the subliminal, and it is there in our surface being “overseeing with the same supreme light and mastery its stumbling and groping movements.” Everywhere, it is the same supreme Sachchidananda who is evolving, who is getting the experience, who is expressing himself in multiple ways. This is typical of Sri Aurobindo that he brings towards the end the Vedantic concept that it is always the supreme Brahman, the supreme Sachchidananda, who is there in everything. He has given us so many distinctions about the various levels of our being, but then he wraps up the whole argument saying that it is all the same Sachchidananda.

If the subliminal and subconscious may be compared to a sea which throws up the waves of our surface mental existence, the superconscience may be compared to an ether which constitutes, contains, overroofs, inhabits and determines the movements of the sea and its waves.

Sri Aurobindo gives us a kind of comparative image that this ether of the superconscient is there around us and it is there within us. It is overarching and also penetrating.

Then he says:

Of this superconscient existence through which we can arrive at the highest status of our real, our supreme Self, we are normally even more ignorant than of the rest of our being; yet is it into the knowledge of it that our being emerging out of the involution in Inconscience is struggling to evolve. This limitation to our surface existence, this unconsciousness of our highest as of our inmost self, is our first, our capital ignorance.

Of all these ignorances, not knowing much of my conscient, my subliminal, my circumconscient, all that is still peripheral, the capital ignorance is of our own highest self. Not to know

34

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sachchidananda beyond nor Sachchidananda within, this is the essence of our fundamental ignorance. That is why Narada Muni had said, “Tell me of That by knowing of which, we can know all else”. Once we know the highest, deepest and innermost being, then all other ignorances vanish. When we know the highest, we will know the subconscious, we will know the subliminal, we will know the universal – everything. That is the secret shortcut. Instead of trying to know the world from outside, let us go to the point of “knowing which we know all else”. This is how Sri Aurobindo brings us back to the utmost necessity of realising our supreme Self; the rest of the things are peripheral, incidental.

For our real self in the cosmos is Superconscient which becomes the subliminal self and throws up this apparent surface self to act out the brief

and limited part assigned to it between birth and death as a present living and conscious self-formation of the being in the stuff of a world of unconscious Nature. The true being which we are no more dies by the cessation of one life than the actor ceases to exist when he has finished one of his parts or the poet when he has poured out something of himself in one of his poems; our mortal personality is only such a role or such a creative self-expression.

We have seen this analogy before – just because an actor plays the character of Othello in a play, it does not mean that after playing Othello he dies; later he may play Macbeth, he may play King Lear. These are only roles that the actor plays.

Similarly, our soul acts for a while for a number of years and then it changes roles. Just as the actor does not die after acting one role, so also we do not cease to exist because we have acted out one role. There is an infinite script in which there are small roles that our psychic being plays.

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 35

Whether or not we accept the theory of many births of the same soul or psychic being in various human bodies upon this earth, certain it is that our becoming in Time goes far back into the past and continues far on into the future. For neither the superconscious nor the subliminal can be limited by a few moments of Time: the one is eternal and Time is only one of its modes; to the other, to the subliminal, it is an infinite field of various experience and the very existence of the being presupposes all the past for its own and equally all the future.

It is indeed a strong argument in favour of the theory of rebirth. Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that neither the superconscious nor the subliminal can be limited by a few moments of time. The superconscious is eternal and time is only one of its modes, and for the subliminal, this time is its infinite field of experience. Again, it is the superconscious, who has become the subliminal and who, in the form of the psychic, takes many births. We have an eternal soul and an infinite subliminal and superconscious, which have imprints on each life. There is no end to this becoming; there is an eternal continuity.

Another kind of ignorance on the outer level that we do not know is about our past births. We think that our life is dependent only on this present existence. In reality, the past and the future are both here in the present.

Then there is our ignorance of the world. Sri Aurobindo says:

But even here the self-ignorance of man does not end; for not only is he ignorant of his superconscient Self, of his subliminal self, of his subconscious self, he is ignorant of

36

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* his world in which he presently lives, which constantly acts on and through him and on which and by which he has to act. And the stamp of his ignorance is this, that he regards it as something quite separate from him, as not-self because it is other than his individual nature-formation and his ego. So too when he confronts his superconscient Self, he thinks of it first as something quite other than he, an external, even extra cosmic God; when he confronts and becomes aware of his subliminal self, it seems to him at first another greater person or another consciousness than his own which can support and guide him.

We think that the world outside is separate from us, that it is the not-self. We feel that God, the Supreme Sachchidananda is different from us. Similarly, the subliminal consciousness also feels like it is a different world.

Even the physical world in which we live seems remote from us. As Sri Aurobindo says:

Of the world he regards only one little foam-bubble, his life and body, as himself. But when we get into our subliminal consciousness, we find it extending itself to be commensurate with its world; when we get into our superconscient Self, we find that the world is only its manifestation and all in it is the One, all in it is our self. We see that there is one indivisible Matter of which our body is a knot, one indivisible Life of which our life is an eddy, one indivisible Mind of which our mind is a receiving and

recording, forming or translating and transmitting station, one indivisible Spirit of which our soul and individual being are a portion or a manifestation. It is the ego-sense which clinches the division and in which the ignorance we superficially are

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 37

finds its power to maintain the strong though always permeable walls it has created to be its own prison. Ego is the most formidable of the knots which keep us tied to the ignorance.

We will lose his separation once we open ourselves or connect to or live in the inner being or the superconscient because it is there we experience oneness – the body, the mind, the vital, the emotions are all like little knots, or as we said, we are like the waves on the ocean surface. Ego is the most formidable of the knots. Because of this ego, the sense of separation remains with us. The animal and the tree do not have this ego. They never feel that they are separate; only human beings have the misfortune to think, feel, believe that they are separate from Nature and God.

As we are ignorant of our existence in Time except the small hour which we remember, so we are ignorant of ourselves in Space except the small span of which we are mentally and sensationally conscious, the single body that moves there and the mind and life which are identified with it, and we regard the environment as a not-self we have to deal with and use: it is this identification and this conception that form the life of the ego.

We do not know our past or future births. We are limited to the present time and are similarly ignorant of the space around us except for a small part of it – my body, my house, my little environment. We think all that is not a part of our self, and now as a reaction to that condition, we have this Green movement in which people are becoming conscious of the environment. In ancient times, we never felt different from Nature. We had the idea that “all this is verily Brahman”, that even Nature is an extension of our

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* self. Taking care of the plants and the animals was very natural and spontaneous. In this materialistic age, we have gone so far into our little selfish self that now everything is considered outside us. Materialism has done great harm to us, it has made us tremendously self-centred to the extent that everything is foreign to us, and everything is “not-self”.

We must come back to the realisation that everything is part of our being, the knowledge that was given to us in the Vedas so long ago.

Next Sri Aurobindo says,

Because that Conscious-Force concentrates in manifold bodies, lives, minds and the soul presides over one of them, therefore our mentality is concentrated in this and regards these as itself and all the rest as not-self, just as it regards its one life on which it concentrates by a similar ignorance as its whole term of existence cut off from the past and the future.

He says the reason that we consider ourselves to be only this body and mind and all the rest as not-self is because our soul has chosen this body and mind for its self-expression. It is like we have a watch that we have been using for a long time so we have a sense that the watch is ours. Similarly, when the soul is expressing itself through this instrumentation of our body and mind, we have the feeling that this body and mind alone are mine. If we have two watches, we still claim the one we use in particular as

“my” watch, not the other one. Whatever is my instrument, for that we have a sense of possession. So, he says it is understandable that the soul regards its instruments of body and mind as exclusively its own.

Yet we cannot really know our own mentality without knowing the one Mind, our own vitality without knowing

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 39

the one Life, our own body without knowing the one Matter; for not only is their nature determined by the nature of that, but by that their activities are at every moment being influenced and determined. But, with all this sea of

being flowing in on us, we do not participate in its consciousness, but know of it only so much as can be brought into the surface of our minds and coordinated there. The world lives in us, thinks in us, forms itself in us; but we imagine that it is we who live, think, become separately by ourselves and for ourselves.

This is a very crucial passage. Time and again he uses the example of the ocean because that is the clearest one. The whole ocean lives in its waves – they may be tsunami waves or they may be small waves, but the surface is constantly moving in waves. Similarly, the one Spirit, Sachchidananda is constantly creating waves called human beings, or the trees, or the butterflies, or the flowers. These are its continuous expressions. Just as the waves are withdrawn into the sea, so we and the butterflies and the trees are withdrawn into this cosmic ocean, while other waves continue. There is an eternity of self-expression. Is the wave separate from the ocean? The wave cannot live separately from the ocean. It is the same ocean. The colour and character of the waves are the same as that of the ocean. It is the world, which lives in us. It is a false notion we have that these waves are my ideas, my emotions, my desires, my love, my compassion, my anger. The truth is that we are only moulds into which consciousness, life and mind manifest.

Just as we are not conscious of Sachchidananda, similarly, we are not conscious of our cosmic self. We are not conscious because we identify with our individual ego. We are in the middle of this ocean and think we are separate. Thus,

40

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* A many-sided Ignorance striving to become an all-embracing Knowledge is the definition of the consciousness of man the mental being, —or, looking at it from another side, we may say equally that it is a limited separative awareness of things striving to become an integral consciousness and an integral Knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo does not say it is man who is ignorant; he says it is ignorance, which is man. We are so full of it! What is man? “A many-sided ignorance”! But he gives us a little pat on the back and says that we are striving irresistibly, eternally towards higher knowledge, towards an

embracing knowledge. We are a many-sided ignorance striving to become an all-embracing knowledge, or we are a separative awareness striving towards knowledge by identity. We are a formation of ignorance, and our only point of knowledge is our soul and the psychic being. We have seen now the depths, the boundaries and the vastness of our ignorance.

Now, we can see that compared to our ignorance, our knowledge is so little. We have our science, our technology, our philosophy, our poetry, but this is infinitesimal compared to what we don't know. Sri Aurobindo has put in front of us a very clear mirror showing us what we are.

The sum and substance of this chapter, I suppose, is that it brings us an utter humility. Next time we say "I know", let us remember the limitations of our knowledge. We have really no knowledge. Even the little that we claim to have is a shadow of ignorance, a wave of ignorance. The more we claim that we know this or that, the greater is our ignorance.

Personally, I feel very grateful to Sri Aurobindo, for when we read him, we get a little bit of knowledge, but what we gain most is humility; we come to know how ignorant we are. The more I read *The Life Divine*, the more I understand how little I

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 41

know. It is a wonderful experience to read him because it really humbles me, it puts me in the right place. When that happens, my admiration for Sri Aurobindo grows. In the beginning, we think, "I have read *Savitri*, I have read *The Synthesis of Yoga*, I have read *The Life Divine*, now I know! I am a PhD student in Sri Aurobindo studies, I am a professor of philosophy" –

these are pure ignorant utterances. That is the experience of humility we get when we stand in front of the Himalayas of knowledge, and we see that we are a tiny pebble at the foothills. But we are happy to be at the foothills of the Himalayas of Sri Aurobindo! That is our great happiness, that we are at his feet!

Lecture Notes

I. Ego as the Lynch-pin

In a human being it is the ego-sense that gives the first basics of coherence, what otherwise might be a string or mass of floating impressions. The ego is the lynch-pin invented to hold together the motion of our wheel of nature. Until the true self emerges, the necessity of centralization around the ego continues.

II. Ignorant of the Past Experiences When we study ourselves, we see that the self-experiences are only a small part of our working individual consciousness. Memory helps us in retaining a bit of the past and the rest seems to have been lost.

But this is not true: nothing of the past experiences has been lost; every experience is used to form the present. Nature wastes nothing; it stores up a large part of the forgotten past and uses it to mould us. We are an

"immense more, which we do not know". Our mind

42

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and ego are like the crown and dome of a temple that is submerged. Our inner being - sub-conscious as it is mistakenly held to be - retains everything that it has ever received and has it always ready at hand. It has a much greater power of knowledge than the surface mind, "To know our inner being is the first step towards a real self-knowledge".

III. Ignorant of the Surface Consciousness We may be conscious of our body but we are completely unaware of the constant movements of the organs, of the circulation of blood - at least as long as the body is healthy.

Our mind normally identifies or equates itself with surface mental awareness, so that all consciousness seems to be mental. But if we separate the mind as witness from these parts of us, we see that the vital and physical

parts have their own consciousness, which are in fact submental but not subconscious parts of our being.

The true subconscious is the Inconscient vibrating on the borders of Consciousness, sending up its motions to be changed into conscious stuff.

IV. Ignorant of the Subliminal

The subliminal self with the same capacities as our waking being is however more developed, wider and more sovereign. In the strict sense of it, it is not the subconscious. But rather a secret intraconscient and circumconscient for it envelops quite as much as supports the outer nature.

V. Ignorant of the Superconscient

Apart from the three elements—the submental and the subconscious which comprise the material basis and a good part of our life and body; the subliminal, which

The Boundaries of the Ignorance 43

comprises the inner being: the waking consciousness or the surface-consciousness - there is the supreme highest Reality or the Spirit or God or the Over Soul which is also ourselves. We are completely ignorant of this Highest self and that is our capital ignorance.

VI. Ignorant of the Time

Our surface mind is usually ignorant also of all the long past and the long future, aware only of the present life.

On the corporeal level there is birth and death. But it is not true of our real becoming in Time.

Our becoming in Time goes far back into the past and continues far into the future. But the past and the future are in us - the past involved and active, the future is ready to evolve in the continuity of the secret spirit. This is another limiting and frustrating ignorance.

VII. Ignorant of the World

Man regards the world as separate from him, as not - self because it is other than his individual nature - formation and his ego. But when we get into the superconscient self we find that the world is only its manifestation and that all in it is the One, all in it our self. It is the ego which keeps us tied to the Ignorance.

VIII. Ignorant of Space

As with Time, we are ignorant of Space—except the small span of which we are mentally and sensorially conscious. In reality the world lives in us, thinks in us, forms itself in us - we are thus ignorant of our universal self.

Thus man is a many-sided Ignorance striving to become an all-embracing or integral knowledge.

Chapter – XII The Origin of the Ignorance

Sri Aurobindo analyses the problem of Ignorance, because this is one of the essential, problems in every philosophy.

We usually put aside the question of Ignorance and accept it saying, we are in *avidya*, mankind is in Ignorance. One of the branches of Indian philosophy says that we are in an illusion, and a creation of Maya. One has to strive to come out of this illusion to realise the Brahman, which is the only reality. It implies that we are in Ignorance and to rise into knowledge we have to leave this world. This was advocated by Adi Shankaracharya and for more than a millennium it continues to be the aim of most individuals in India.

Now the question arises – how to get out of this ignorance?

There are many ways carved out by our saints and sages.

Some of them are Jnana yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga, Hatha yoga, Raja yoga, etc. Buddhism and some other philosophies say that ignorance does

not even exist, it is an illusion; do not bother about it. Sri Aurobindo does not accept such an easy stand; he sees it as a question that needs to be dealt with at its depth. The fundamental question he asks is this:

How could this manifold ignorance or this narrowly self-limiting and separative knowledge arise and come into action or maintain itself in action in an absolute Being who must be absolute consciousness and therefore cannot be subject to ignorance?

Sri Aurobindo said he was never a philosopher; he asks

The Origin of the Ignorance 45

questions like one. He deals with the same issue from many sides as a philosopher would. Sri Aurobindo says that if we base ourselves on the Vedantic vision that all this is Brahman, how can there be ignorance at all? We have also accepted that it is the Supreme Divine who has become this universe. If we must remember these two points, then the rest of the questions fall in line. Now if this is so, how can there be Ignorance? Ignorance is non-knowledge, non-awareness. If Brahman is Absolute consciousness, how can it be subject to Ignorance? It is self-contradictory.

Brahman is Sachchidananda, absolute Existence, absolute Consciousness and absolute Bliss. If this is our definition of Sachchidananda, how can there be anything unconscious here? Then he asks another question: How is even an apparent division effectively operated and kept in continuance in the Indivisible?

We say that Brahman is One and Indivisible. But Ignorance, or *avidya*, is divisible. *Avidya* is partial knowledge and therefore divisible, whereas Chit (Consciousness) is total knowledge. This partial knowledge comes from dividing the Indivisible, which is another paradox. And then there is a third problem:

The Being, integrally one, cannot be ignorant of itself; and since all things are itself, conscious modifications, determinations of its being, it cannot either be ignorant of things, of their true nature, of their true action.

The third question is that if we say Sachchidananda is an integral Consciousness, how can it not be aware of its own parts? For example, I am aware of the people in front of me, but I am not aware of my own heart-beat, or what is happening within my own body. That means I do not have an integral knowledge, whereas the Divine, Sachchidananda,

46

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is constantly in full awareness. Sri Aurobindo uses the phrase

‘absolute awareness’. Absolute means complete, total, to be aware in and out. That is the difference between the Divine and human beings: the Divine is constantly totally self-aware, whereas human beings are always, partially aware.

That is why we say we are in Ignorance. So, if the Divine is integral, he cannot be unaware of any part of his being. It is not that thinkers in India have not asked these questions; they have asked and came up with their own answers. Here is the question asked by Sri Aurobindo and one answer to it that has been suggested:

That the Jivatman or individual self is no other than the Paramatman, no other than the Absolute yet we are certainly ignorant both of ourselves and things, from which this contradiction results that what must be in its very grain incapable of ignorance is yet capable of it, and has plunged itself into it by some will of its being or some necessity or possibility of its nature. We do not ease the difficulty if we plead that Mind, which is the seat of ignorance, is a thing of Maya, non-existent, not-Brahman, and that Brahman, the Absolute, the sole Existence cannot in any way be touched by the ignorance of mind.

Now, some philosophers opine that ignorance is there because it is born in the mind, it is not born in Brahman.

And what is this mind? It belongs to Maya, it is an illusion, non-existent. Maya is not Brahman, it does not belong to Brahman. It is a very simple and perfect answer. There is no quarrel here. On one side we have

Brahman, and on the other side we have Maya. It seems like a good way of coming out of the problem. But is it the right way? Is there no loophole in that answer? Let us see what Sri Aurobindo says:

The Origin of the Ignorance 47

This is an escape which is not open to us if we admit an integral Oneness...

Adi Shankaracharya and other Advaitins hold that Maya

does not belong to Brahman, it is something outside of Brahman. But Sri Aurobindo argues, how can anything be outside of Brahman? It is not possible, because Brahman is the only Reality. If we accept that Brahman is the Reality then Maya or Illusion or Satan all have to be a part of Brahman. They may be in their character non-Brahman, but they still belong to Brahman. We cannot accept this answer if we admit that Brahman is an integral oneness; he is one and everything, so everything must belong to Brahman, including Maya. If Maya belongs to Brahman, then Ignorance also belongs to Brahman. If Maya is part of Brahman and if Ignorance is part of Maya, this means Ignorance is part of Brahman – it is a simple logic. But, how can it be? Sri Aurobindo explains:

If Brahman is the sole existence, Maya can be nothing but a power of Brahman, a force of his consciousness or a result of his being; and if the Jivatman, one with Brahman, is subject to its own Maya, the Brahman in it is subject to Maya.

The real meaning of Maya now comes out in the light of Sri Aurobindo: it is a power of Brahman. It is very interesting to see how Sri Aurobindo arrives at this conclusion that Maya is not the opposite of Brahman, but it is a power of Brahman. If we go to the root of the word Maya, ‘*Ma*’ in Sanskrit means to measure. What does ‘measuring’ mean in this context? For example I have a tape and I measure some material for my shirt. I may need three meters. I measure the three meters out of the whole roll, which may be a hundred meters. I measure only what is required to make my shirt.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Similarly, Maya is that power of Brahman which takes out only that much of Brahman needed to make this world; only one ray of its consciousness is needed to make this world. We also see that the word ‘*Ma*’ in Sanskrit means the Mother, Aditi, the one Consciousness-Force that has brought forth this Brahman out of universe. This is what is written in the book *The Mother*. She is the One, who is Consciousness and Power of the Supreme, who has manifested what is hidden in the Supreme by his fiat.

Now we understand the word ‘Maya’. In the Gita, Sri Krishna also says that he has created the world by his *yoga maya*, or as it is termed, *mama maya*. Thus, Maya is part of a power of Brahman. Therefore, whatever Maya creates, including bringing out Ignorance, is also part of Brahman.

Brahman cannot disown Ignorance. If Maya has committed a blunder, since Maya is his own power, he must take responsibility.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

Ignorance must be part of the movement of the One, a development of its consciousness knowingly adopted, to which it is not forcibly subjected but which it uses for its cosmic purpose.

The most crucial phrase here is ‘knowingly adopted’. The Supreme has knowingly adopted ‘ignorance’ for a cosmic purpose. For example, if a child is crying, the father may go down on his knees and tell the child, “come on my back, I will give you a horseback-ride”. He does this in order to entertain the child so that it stops crying. The father has

“knowingly adopted” a role as a horse so that the child is entertained. Once the child stops crying, he can resume a different role or become himself. In the same way, Ignorance is a role that has been knowingly adopted by Brahman. He is

The Origin of the Ignorance 49

not forcibly subjected to Ignorance but uses this role for his cosmic purpose. Sri Aurobindo does not just put his view first; he takes up different

views from the East and the West and analyses them and sees what is good in them, sees what is not suitable in them, and then gives forth his own integral vision. He takes out the essence and integrates that into his own vision, which he will explain more directly towards the end of this chapter.

Now Sri Aurobindo makes another argument: It is not open to us to get rid of the whole difficulty by saying that the Jivatman and the Supreme are not One, but eternally different, the one subject to ignorance, the other absolute in being and consciousness and therefore in knowledge; for this contradicts the supreme experience and the whole experience which is that of unity in being, whatever difference there may be in the action of Nature. It is easier to accept the fact of unity in difference which is so evident and pervasive in all the building of the universe and satisfy ourselves with the statement that we are one, yet different, one in essential being and therefore in essential nature, different in soul-form and therefore in active nature.

Sri Aurobindo rejects the argument that the Jivatman and the Supreme are not one. There cannot be a dual reality.

Before we proceed, we need to clarify the terminology, otherwise, we may get into further complications. We have on one side the concept that the Supreme Divine, which traditionally is called the Paramatman, and then on the other side we have the Jivatman, which is the individualized Divine. When this individualization begins, the process of this world begins. The Divine first individualizes himself.

So, there are many multiple Jivatmas, but there is only one

50

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Paramatman. But at the same time, we must not bring in the complication that the Paramatman divides himself into these Jivatmas. They are projected, for example in the sun, has many rays that are not different from it. Therefore, we call the Jivatman the individualized Divine.

Now, further we have the notion of the soul. The Jivatman is beyond evolution, but it sends its own delegate into the world by saying, "You go

and evolve in the world, take many births, rebirths and many forms and through that process transform matter”. It is through this scheme that Matter and the Supreme are connected. That is one of the purposes of rebirth: to inject divinity into Matter with each birth. These millions and trillions of births are not accidental; each time the soul takes a new birth, it means something of the soul-consciousness, of the divine Consciousness permeates Matter.

Sri Aurobindo looks at different schools of thought, and there is one that says that Jivatman and Paramatman are different. If they are different, the explanation for Ignorance is very easy: Paramatman is Knowledge, and Jivatman is Ignorance, finished. It is as if they are trying to save Brahman owing Ignorance. Nobody wants to say Brahman has Ignorance, except perhaps Sri Aurobindo and the Vedas. What is Sri Aurobindo’s objection here?

He says that this separation of Paramatman and Jivatman contradicts the supreme experience, which is that of unity in being. Sri Aurobindo says that philosophically one may argue lots of things, but it must stand the test of experience.

He says that no yogi, no rishi, no vibhuti or no Avatar has ever had the experience of separation between Jivatman and Paramatman. On the contrary, what is the essence of realisation? It is that you realise that the Paramatman and

The Origin of the Ignorance 51

Jivatman are one and the same, they are not different. That is the meaning of realisation. It means “I have realised God, the Paramatman”. Quality-wise, the sun-ray and the sun are the same. Quantitatively they may differ, but qualitatively they are one and the same. Therefore, experientially this argument does not stand true.

“It is easier to accept the fact of unity in difference...”

Sri Aurobindo argues that the Jivatman and the Paramatman are not different, there is a unity in difference: not unity alone, not difference alone,

but an essential unity underlying difference. The Paramatman is the transcendent Divine; the Jivatman is the individual Divine. The individual Jivatmas are like rays of the sun. They have an underlying unity of substance and reality, and yet they are different. He continues:

But we hereby only state the fact, leaving the difficulty raised by the fact unsolved, how that which belongs in the essence of its being to the unity of the Absolute and should therefore be one with it and with all in consciousness, comes to be divided in its dynamic form of self and its activity and subject to Ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo is brilliant in this explanation: he raises a question, answers it, and based on that answer, he raises another question and answers it again. Now he asks how is it possible that the moment the Jivatman comes into a body, it becomes a party to ignorance? Why does it not maintain its fullness of knowledge? Why is it that the Divine succumbs to Ignorance in manifestation, in form? That is the question he raises here, and then he says:

It is also to be noted that the statement would not be wholly true, since it is possible for the Jivatman to enter

52

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* into unity with the active nature of the One and not only a static essential oneness.

He says that the Jivatman is not limited to having the experience of essential Oneness and a dynamic activity of Ignorance, it is also capable of dynamic oneness in Knowledge. But just now that is a side issue; he is concerned with the question of how the Jivatman, being divine, can be subject to Ignorance. In an answer to this question, one school of thought opines that this question is not valid for the simple reason that the Paramatman is unknowable and the action of Maya begins there. We cannot know or explain the Paramatman and its processes. Sri Aurobindo lays out this position:

...above existence and its problems there is the Unknowable which is beyond or above our existence, and the action of Maya has already begun in

the Unknowable before the world began and therefore is itself unknowable and inexplicable in its cause and its origin.

The argument is that since Brahman is unknowable, anything that we say about it is stupidity; it is just a guess-work; the human mind cannot know this Unknowable.

This answer stops us, it does not allow us ask any question or answer any question about the Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo does not accept that this Unknowable is really unknowable:

The Unknowable, if it is at all, may be a supreme state of Sachchidananda beyond our highest conceptions of existence, consciousness and bliss; that is what was evidently meant by the Asat, the Non-Existent – of the Taittiriya Upanishad, which alone was in the beginning and out of which the existent was born, and possibly too

The Origin of the Ignorance 53

it may be the inmost sense of the Nirvana of the Buddha: for the dissolution of our present state by Nirvana may be a reaching to some highest state beyond all notion or experience of self even, an ineffable release from our sense of existence. Or it may be the Upanishad's absolute and unconditioned bliss which is beyond expression and beyond understanding.

What do we understand by this Unknowable? He says it is that point where our mind refuses or is unable to go beyond.

At that point is unknowable. It is the point from where we cannot proceed further, our mind refuses to go. It is not in its capacity. It is unknowable to your mind, but be careful, it is not necessarily unknowable with another instrumentation.

If we want to look at the landscape of the moon, and we look at it with our eyes, we cannot see the details. If we want to look at it closely, we use another instrument called the telescope. Sri Aurobindo's argument is exactly like that.

He says that this Unknowable is a non-existence or an unknowability for our mind, and that is what perhaps the Buddha meant when he propagated Nirvana. Nirvana is that state, which one cannot describe. Our 'Sat' becomes 'Asat'; we lose the sense of existence itself and feel non-existent. In the Upanishads it is called and experienced as absolute Bliss.

This Unknowable can also be an absolute state of Bliss, in which you also lose the sense of any differentiated existence, there is just utter Bliss.

Sri Aurobindo says that there is actually nothing that is unknowable, This unknowability, this non-existence, this absolute Bliss are all one and the same. They represent something that is inconceivable to our mind, but it doesn't mean they don't exist or can't be known. It is known to itself.

It is like somebody is behind a door and we cannot perceive

54

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* them and then they walk through the door into the room.

The moment the person walks in they are visible to our mind and sight, but the person existed before coming into the room; it was only that we could not perceive them. The moment the person comes in, they are experienced by us as having 'being', 'existence', 'Sat', and before coming in the person was experienced by us as 'non-being', 'non-existence', *Asat*. It is as simple as that!

Now, we come to the crux of the issue of Ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo says that the Unknowable is a positive state of existence, but it has an unmanifest status and a manifest status, which in appearance are different but in essence are the same. Then he takes up in the next argument a very important point also related to this question of *asat* or nothingness and non-being. Philosophers have argued differently, but Sri Aurobindo doesn't buy their argument.

He says:

But out of absolute Nothingness nothing can come, not even anything merely apparent, not even an illusion; and if the absolute Non-Existence is not that, then it can only be an absolute eternally unrealised Potentiality, an enigmatic zero of the Infinite out of which relative potentialities may at any time emerge, but only some actually succeed in emerging into phenomenal appearance. Out of this Non-Existence anything may arise, and there is no possibility of saying what or why; it is for all practical purposes a seed of absolute chaos out of which by some happy, —or rather unhappy, —

accident there has emerged the order of a universe. Or we may say that there is no real order of the universe; what we take for such is a persistent habit of the senses

The Origin of the Ignorance 55

and the life and a figment of the mind and it is useless to seek for an ultimate reason of things.

This is one more school of thought. It says that nothing can come out of nothingness. Something has come out –

the material world – and the very fact that we ask questions means that nothingness does not exist, it is not a truth.

Therefore, let us leave that argument of the nothingness because it is irrational and unrealistic. This school of thought then is not nothingness but “an absolute eternally unrealised Potentiality” out of which anything may arise and there is no possibility of saying what or why. This is a very clever answer. The Upanishads tell us that out of the non-existence came Sachchidananda but this school of thought says how can one be sure that it came from Sachchidananda? It could be a complete chaos! In this chaos, there could be the Divine and the devil, there could be ignorance, there could be knowledge, there could be anything. Why insist that Sachchidananda alone came forth out of this Potentiality?

In a chaos anything can happen, therefore there is no need to reconcile Ignorance and Knowledge.

Out of an absolute chaos all paradox and absurdity can be born, and the world is such a paradox, a mysterious sum of contraries and puzzles, or, it may be, in effect, as some has felt or thought, a huge error, a monstrous, an infinite delirium.

What is the conclusion of this argument? That out of chaos, anything can come, and we cannot explain it. Things are just happening, and there is no rhyme and reason to it; it is just a cauldron of confusion.

We may argue: “Sir, there is something called order in this world; there are four seasons, there exist night and day, there is a lunar month, there is solar month, we live in

56

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a world of laws and predictability”. In response, this school may reply that all this apparent order is nothing but a habit of the senses to organize the chaos of incoming sensations that there is actually is no order, it is only a figment of our mind. They delete all arguments of order. Sri Aurobindo leaves them at this because one can go on arguing forever.

Ultimately, he says:

All these opinions have been held by the human mind and in all there has been profit, even if we regard them as errors; for errors are permitted to the mind because they open doors upon truth, negatively by destroying opposite errors, positively by preparing an element in a new constructive hypothesis.

This is how the human mind grows; it cannot arrive at truth at a single effort, it has to try many things – good and bad, truth and error and so on. To err is much better than not to attempt because not to attempt leads to sluggishness and tamas. It is better to move, even if we fall on our nose, because then at least we can get up and continue to progress. If we sit static,

then we may become so tamasic and then there is no possibility of growth. Therefore, all these arguments which may be fallacious are good attempts.

Every time there is an error, or we get blocked somewhere, new possibilities come up in front of us. He leaves it at that.

However if one goes to the extreme like this argument of non-existence and absurdity and chaos, then it becomes unproductive also. We have to be careful. It is good to be adventurous, but if we push our negativity too far, we may fall into depression or confusion. Then the very purpose of philosophy, which is to find knowledge is lost. As he puts it here:

But, pushed too far, this view of things leads to the

The Origin of the Ignorance 57

negation of the whole aim of philosophy, which seeks for knowledge and not for chaos and which cannot fulfil itself if the last word of knowledge is the Unknowable, but only if it is something, to use the words of the Upanishad, which being known all is known.

This is a beautiful idea: philosophy is an eternal pursuit of knowing That, by knowing which you know all else. This is from Mundaka Upanishad: “Shaunaka, the great house-lord, came to Angiras in the due way of the disciple and asked of him: ‘Lord, by knowing what does all this that is become known?’ (CWSA 18: 131). Shaunaka says that he is a master in the scriptures, he is a master in the sciences, he is a master in the arts etc. Angirasa replied that still he does not have the true knowledge, still he does not know anything. Then he gives Shaunaka the lessons. This is the true pursuit of philosophy – that we want to find out that which is knowable and by knowing which, everything else is known. This way ‘my thirst for knowledge’ is quenched.

If somebody says, this is unknowable, Brahman cannot be known, the ultimate is non-existence, the ultimate is chaos, then why should we pursue knowledge? Then we all better sit at home, eat, drink, be merry and die. But by seeking for knowledge, even if it is not the ultimate, we discover technological knowledge, scientific knowledge, philosophical knowledge,

artistic knowledge. There is an eternal quest for knowledge, and if this quest was not there, man would be as good as an animal. It makes all the difference.

Sri Aurobindo says:

The Unknowable, —not absolutely unknowable, but beyond mental knowledge, —can only be a higher degree in the intensity of being of that Something, a degree beyond the loftiest summit attainable by mental

58

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* beings, and, if it were known as it must be known to itself, that discovery would not destroy entirely what is given us by our supreme possible knowledge but rather carry it to a higher fulfillment and larger truth of what it has already gained by self-vision and self-experience.

It is then this Something, an Absolute which can be so known that all truths can stand in it and by it and find there their reconciliation, that we must discover as our starting-point and keep as our constant base of thinking and seeing ...

The conclusion is that the Unknowable is unknowable only to mental knowledge but it is knowable through experience. The Divine cannot be known by our mind, but it can be known by inner experience. How is it that we can know the Divine by inner experience? We have an instrument called the soul, which already has the sense of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo has explained very beautifully that the one who chooses the Infinite has already been chosen by the Infinite. If we think of the Divine, it means there is something in us which knows the Divine. If I think of America, it means something in me knows something about America. I may not know a lot, but unless I know it exists, I cannot think about it. Similarly, if I think of God, that means that there is something within that knows God exists, though not necessarily all the details of God. He says: It is then this Something, an Absolute which can be so known that all truths can stand in it and by it and find there their reconciliation, that we must discover as our starting-point and keep as our constant base of thinking and seeing and by it

find a solution of the problem; for it is That alone that can carry in it a key to the paradoxes of the universe.

The Origin of the Ignorance 59

Sri Aurobindo concludes that there is one Supreme Absolute which can embrace all truths of existence, which includes ignorance, inconscience, Maya, illusion – everything is within the embracing consciousness of the Supreme, and there cannot be anything outside of the Supreme.

These are the four arguments that Sri Aurobindo has taken up from other philosophers. It is a kind of a survey of philosophic positions on the problem of Ignorance. Now, he will come to his own analysis. The concept he describes here as ‘This Something’. means ‘this Absolute’, and when it comes into manifestation, it is Sachchidananda: “This Something is, as Vedanta insists and as we have throughout insisted, in its manifest nature Sachchidananda, a trinity of absolute existence, consciousness and bliss." Beyond manifestation it was called non-existence, and in the Vedas it was called Tat, meaning ‘That’. Some call it non-existent, some call it *shunya*, others call it *Tat*. But in existence, in manifestation, it is called Sachchidananda.

It is from this primal truth that we must start in approaching the problem, and it is evident then that the solution must be found in an action of consciousness manifesting itself as knowledge and yet limiting that knowledge in such a way as to create the phenomenon of the Ignorance, — and since the Ignorance is a phenomenon of the dynamic action of Force of Consciousness, not an essential fact but a creation, a consequence of that action, it is this Force aspect of Consciousness that it will be fruitful to consider.

Sri Aurobindo here begins his own argument. He bases his argument on the fundamental Vedantic principle that the Supreme is manifested as Sachchidananda — Sat-Chit-Ananda — Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. Next, he says

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* that consciousness manifests itself as knowledge and limits itself to create Ignorance. In other words, the consciousness has the capacity of 'self-limiting'. This is crucial. When the manifestation takes place, it is the quantity that differs not the quality. Similarly, the divine consciousness has become this world through steps of self-limitation. What we call involution is nothing but the downward process of self-limitation. What do we mean by this 'downward process'?

There are steps of self-limitation – consciousness descends from the Supermind to the Overmind, to the Intuition, to the Mind, to the Vital, to Matter. There is a process of self-limitation at each level. The self-limitation reaches to the point that it becomes atomic matter, and then in the inconscient there is a complete torpor, or a complete trance of consciousness.

Involution is nothing but the process of self-limitation of the Chit, the Consciousness. From where does the Force

come in? Let me explain by an example. I am a consciousness standing here, but the moment I take a step forward, and then a second step, what happens? The consciousness itself is not moving, but there is an application of its force.

Consciousness itself does not move, but it brings forth what we call Tapas, force or energy. It is simple to understand. I can be static here, but unless I apply force or Tapas, I cannot move. The moment there is movement, there is Tapas. That is why Chit and Tapas are inseparable.

In the process of self-limitation, there is densification.

For example, H O can exist as vapour, as liquid water, or 2

as solid ice. Similarly, Consciousness, when it self-limits itself, changes from the subtlety of pure awareness to the density of gross matter. This is the process of involution and this is where Tapas comes in along with this densification.

The Origin of the Ignorance 61

There is also something else that happens: a focusing of consciousness. For example, when I read a book, I focus on a particular paragraph. By focussing my consciousness, I put a pressure or force of my consciousness – a force of attention, will, and concentration in reading. When I focus like that, then I am not aware of the rest of the world. I may not even be aware of people coming and watching me. Similarly, a musician becomes lost in playing music, an artist becomes lost in his painting. This losing of one's consciousness may be called ignorance. Why do we say so? Because, at that time, we are only aware of a partial thing, we shut ourselves off from the general awareness. Similarly, ignorance is nothing but partial knowledge. The definition of ignorance comes down to partial knowledge. How do we get to this partial knowledge? We get it through focusing.

Although focussing leads to ignorance, it is not necessarily a bad thing. Right from our student days, we are told that we must concentrate on our lessons, concentrate on what we are doing. If we do not concentrate, we cannot achieve, we cannot learn. There is almost a change in the definition of ignorance. If I did not focus on this chapter of *The Life Divine*, I could never talk to you about it. That means for the past three hours I have been willingly, happily, enjoyably in ignorance. Otherwise, I could not have taken this class at all. Suddenly, a new understanding comes and we say to be in ignorance is bliss! This is a common English idiom

– we say ignorance is bliss – but now it becomes a truth of philosophy. If ignorance is bliss, why should I come out of it?

Paradoxically, when we focus on a lesson, what do we achieve? We achieve Ananda and Knowledge. If Knowledge is my pursuit and ignorance the passage, I will go through it. Why should I curse my life and say, I have been born

62

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* into ignorance, I must escape from this earth. If to be in ignorance is the shortcut to find Brahman and Truth and Sachchidananda, I would love to be in this ignorance. I would love to come back to this world a million times because here I can find Brahman in Matter.

We may not reject ignorance because Sri Aurobindo has explained its right meaning and importance, – but do we have to be here forever in ignorance, or can we come out of it? And in what sense should we come out of it? Does it mean that we come out of life and the world itself, or that we come out of limited knowledge? Coming out of ignorance does not require going out of life, it only means that we do not want to be stuck in the limited knowledge, we want to go towards infinite knowledge. Secondly, we do not want to be restricted to our present means of knowledge, but move towards a higher form of instrumentation of knowledge the highest of which is “knowledge by identity”.

It is from this primal truth that we must start in approaching the problem, and it is evident then that the solution must be found in an action of consciousness manifesting itself as knowledge ... since the Ignorance is a phenomenon of the dynamic action of Force of Consciousness, not an essential fact but a creation, a consequence of that action, it is this Force aspect of Consciousness that it will be fruitful to consider.

Absolute consciousness is in its nature absolute power; the nature of Chit is Shakti: Force or Shakti concentrated and energised for cognition or for action in a realising power effective or creative, the power of conscious being dwelling upon itself and bringing out, as it were, by the heat of its incubation the seed and development of all that is within it or, to use a language convenient to our

The Origin of the Ignorance 63

minds, of all its truths and potentialities, has created the universe.

Sri Aurobindo, now describes the process by which this creation takes place. “Absolute consciousness is in its nature absolute power; the nature of Chit is Shakti”. Earlier, I clarified this point while I was explaining Sat, Chit, Tapas and Ananda. Tapas is nothing but Shakti, the force and energy of Chit. It is like when we human beings want to create something, for example, a beautiful piece of art we do not walk in the streets or play football, we have to sit at our table and in-draw ourselves, withdraw from outer activities and go within. We gather our consciousness, which was spread out to objects or people in the world, and focus it on our creation. In

this focussing, there is an energy that is built up. A good example of this is a magnifying glass.

We can focus the sun-energy into a single ray through it. It intensifies the energy so much that it can burn the object below the glass. Similarly, when we concentrate, there can be behind this concentration a will, a power. If we just concentrate our attention without a will or aim to achieve something, nothing may happen. We may just enter into a suspended consciousness. But the moment we focus with a will to achieve, we will see that energy is produced. The more we focus, the more we forget the world, the greater will be energy or Tapas that is produced. In our philosophic language, we call it Chit and Shakti going together.

Otherwise, Chit can be as it is, but when we apply Shakti, it becomes an effective consciousness. What happens at the level of Sachchidananda also happens to you and me. At the level of Sachchidananda, an infinite energy is produced, but with us a finite energy is produced; otherwise, the process is the same. It is the process of creation. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

64

Deliberations on *The Life Divine*

...if we examine our own consciousness, we shall see that this power of its energy applying itself to its object is really the most positive dynamic force it has; by that it arrives at all its knowledge and its action and its creation.

If we want to do anything creative and productive, we must put together Chit and Shakti . We cannot just say, I am trying hard, but I am not able to get it. That means there is some lacuna – either the consciousness is not full or the energy is not full. If both of them are together, there is nothing that we cannot achieve because this Shakti is ultimately a power that comes directly from the Supreme.

He says that this is the most dynamic and positive force that we have.

In one of her classes, the Mother explained the secret of this focussing. I was really amazed! She said that when we try to focus on a particular work

– whether we are a computer scientist, or a writer, or a dancer, or whatever, or even in meditation, in the beginning, we may not be able to focus. In the beginning, our focus is intermittent, it comes for a moment, and then we may hear a sound and our concentration goes off. The Mother said that we must practice this concentration regularly, keeping a regular time on a daily basis. At that time, we should apply our Shakti, our focus of energy and consciousness. What happens is that after a certain time, a kind of whirlpool of energy is created.

It is an occult truth. Musicians, dancers, painters have to follow some discipline, they have to practice regularly do that a whirlpool of energy is created this whirlpool creates a column of energy that rises up into the occult world. After all, music, poetry, literature, dance and other arts, all have their source in the occult world. There are pre-existent, different *lokas* or worlds from which descend their forces

The Origin of the Ignorance 65

upon us. Regular practice creates this column of energy, and then, after a certain point in our practice, we can connect ourselves with this world. Then we will see that a great inspiration comes, we get a lot of energy. That is because we have become a living link with that world and the things of that world descend into us.

Well, we have one of the most fantastic examples of this in Sri Aurobindo himself. When he was writing for the journal *Arya*, the whole writing came into his fingers and on to the typewriter. The Mother explained that the writing came straight into his fingers. Similarly, in his Uttarpara Speech, given after coming out of the Alipore Jail, he did not know what to speak at a public meeting. Then he prayed the whole speech came directly onto his tongue. Sri Aurobindo has given us examples of how this can happen. This can also happen to us that we become a channel of the higher consciousness and speak exactly what is to be spoken, write exactly what is to be written. Left with our own mind, we may struggle endlessly to produce two lines of good poetry.

The whole of *Savitri* was received like this, the lines came from above, and he just noted them down. However, after the lines came down, Sri

Aurobindo, the critic, came forward and when he read what he had written, he waited, went above to the higher consciousness and better lines were received. In that way, Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* was revised many times. For a common poet, what he wrote in the first draft itself might have been the greatest of poetry, but Sri Aurobindo was not simply trying to be a great poet. He says that *Savitri* was used as a process to help him ascend into higher levels of consciousness. As he rose higher, his expression became more powerful, he became a transparent instrument, and even greater lines came down.

66

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* We were explaining about focusing the consciousness.

This focusing of the consciousness is useful not only to pass tests but in everything. The more we develop concentration the more we can become a channel of the universal forces, and the more we become a channel of the universal forces, the more we can become creative. From the point of sadhana, creativity is something interesting and positive. Life is no more a dull, drab and monotonous routine. One may be going to the office or duty every day, or may be going to the puja room every day, but with concentration every day becomes a wonderful pilgrimage not a routine.

There are two places in which we can focus – one is the internal world, the other is the external world. When we focus, we may close our eyes and focus upon our inner being, or we may focus on an outside object, like we do in a class. We all have something called inner and outer, but Sachchidananda has only an inner because everything is within himself. This split consciousness of the inner and the outer does not exist on the level of Sachchidananda, it is one undivided consciousness. That is the one difference that we have with Sachchidananda in this act of focusing.

There is a second difference:

Secondly, in us only a part of the force of our being is identified with our voluntary action, with our will engaged in mental or other activity ... but in

Sachchidananda this division too and its consequences do not apply since all is his one indivisible self...

The human being focusses his partial consciousness, but Sachchidananda focusses his undivided total consciousness.

What is the meaning of partial focussing? For example, if I focus my mind on this text now, my emotions could be focused somewhere else. I am not an integral being; my

The Origin of the Ignorance 67

mind, my heart and my body are not one and indivisible consciousness.

There is another point that comes into picture: the issue of passivity versus activity. We have said that Tapas or the focussing of energy or force is what produces ignorance.

And Tapas, we have said, is Chit-Tapas or Chit-Shakti.

The next question is what happens to Tapas in the state of passivity? When there is focussing or an energy is applied, it is dynamic. If I am applying my force, that means, I am being dynamic. The very application of the force implies that I am being active. This is the question that Sri Aurobindo now takes up. He says there are two states – an immobile state and kinetic. What is the place and role of this force when all is immobile? We shall discuss it in the next talk.

Let's begin with the paragraph:

That which is passive in us produces no action or only an involuntary or mechanical action ... since there too there is the possibility of action or the emergence of an automatic activity, it must have at least a passively responsive or automatic conscious force in it... It may also be that there is a larger conscious force, power or will in our being unknown to us which is

behind this involuntary action, —if not a will, at least a force of some kind which itself initiates action...

We have a misunderstanding that if we cease from activity, we think we are entirely passive. When I am sleeping, when I am resting in my bed, is it that there is no force in me that is acting? Does the ceasing of the movement mean the stopping of energy and *Tapas*? When we are motionless, when there is a stone immobile, when the mountain is static, there is

68

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* also at the same time a tremendous energy that is moving and flowing in each of these. There is an intense motion at the atomic level. Actually, what seems to be immobile is not immobile at all, it is full of the dynamism of *Tapas*. We must understand that there is nothing that is entirely static, behind everything there is this dynamic *Tapas* and energy.

To continue:

There seem, then, to be an active consciousness in which consciousness works as an energy throwing up knowledge and activity out of itself and of which therefore *Tapas* is the character, and a passive consciousness in which consciousness does not act as an energy, but only exists as a status and of which therefore absence of *Tapas* or force in action is the character.

Ultimately, we may conclude that at the root of everything there is Consciousness and *Tapas*. If *Tapas* is always there, how do we explain this immobility? Let us take a simple example, When the horse race starts, the rider holds tight, the reins of the horse and in a split second, the horse leaps into action. Where did the energy to run come from? It was withheld. The only difference between immobility and mobility is that in one *Tapas* is withheld, is under control, and in mobility it is let loose. The energy is equal or even more in the static state than in the active state.

The more static we want to become, the more energy we require. When we try to meditate, we realise what energy and consciousness and force is required. If we want to walk in the garden, we do not require that kind of

energy and consciousness. The subtler the thing that we do, the greater the energy and consciousness we require. Yoga and sadhana, or engineering work or gardening require different intensities of energy. To do sadhana, we must tackle with the

The Origin of the Ignorance 69

invisible inner forces. For example, if we want to control our anger we need much more energy. When we want to control a naughty child, that also requires energy, but that is much easier to control than our own anger because the subtler the energy, the greater the consciousness that is required. That is why sadhaks and yogis meditate long hours because it is a great battle to get thoughts under control. One can control a horse more easily than the thoughts. Therefore, we must understand that just because we are quiescent does not mean that we do not have energy or focus of consciousness.

In fact, often a child is punished, is made to stand in a corner of the room and asked to keep quiet. That is a big punishment because to keep quiet requires more energy, more control than taking ten rounds of the playground.

Activity for him is joyful, to stand stable is quite difficult.

That is also why we have in India image of Shiva meditating upon the great Himalayas. He is usually in that state of immobility, but Shiva meditating has the greatest force and dynamic energy. In meditation, one gathers tremendous energy. It is also why in India some people practise *mauna*, keeping silent. Once that person, who has been keeping silent, utters something, it becomes a powerful voice. For those who keep babbling the whole day, their words may be empty and signify nothing. If one wants to be more effective, there must be a balance between quietude and activity. In the Ashram, the Mother would give periods of meditation and periods of dynamism. It is from the silence, the in-gathered energy, that must come out the activity. Otherwise, if we are all the time in work, it becomes meaningless, it becomes less powerful and effective. This is also why nowadays managers of some firms are suggesting that their workers begin the day with a short meditation.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Now, we understand more deeply the meaning of meditation, the meaning of keeping quiet. Even during our work, it is perhaps best to work outwardly while keeping an inner silence. That is the best balance, I suppose, but it is a difficult balance to achieve. This is the best balance because this is the status of Brahman himself. What do we mean by that? There is a dual status of Brahman, quiescent and creative, silent and dynamic – what we call in Sanskrit *Nirguna Brahman* and *Saguna Brahman*, the silent, featureless Brahman and the active Brahman with features. This is the dual status of Brahman himself. Sri Aurobindo says that this is a fact of spiritual experience. If this is Brahman's original nature, then human beings too have it. That is the best way to live in this world. Being over-active is not right, being always non-active is also not good.

Here, let us observe, first, that by this passivity in ourselves we arrive from particular and broken knowledge at a greater, a one and a unifying knowledge; secondly, that if, in the state of passivity, we open ourselves entirely to what is beyond, we can become aware of a power acting upon us which we feel to be not our own in the limited egoistic sense, but universal or transcendental, and that this power works through us for a greater play of knowledge, a greater play of energy, action and result, which also we feel to be not our own, but that of the Divine, of Sachchidananda, ourselves only its field or channel.

Here we are given a magnificent meaning to this kind of passivity or what we call in normal parlance 'meditation'.

What is the need and utility of this passivity or meditation?

Not only do we need to have balance between action and non-action, but at the time of our non-action, we have a

The Origin of the Ignorance 71

chance to connect with the universal forces, and that is something marvellous. Meditation is not just trying to keep our mouth shut, which is

speaking all other times, it is not trying to shut our mind, which is active all other times, but the benefit of it is that if we silence our mind, if we silence our speech, if we silence our energies, we have a chance to connect to the universal energies and knowledge.

Secondly, we can become aware of a power acting upon us, slowly become conscious that we are, after all, instruments of a higher power. It is this kind of experience we can gain.

When we are quiet like still water, we can reflect the higher consciousness.

The Mother once wrote to someone that we must quieten our mind, make it like a mirror and wait – for that universal knowledge to appear in us. In such a state we become good recipients for that grandiose divine power to send us messages and the guidance for what we should do and what we should not do. Then a dynamic guidance comes to us.

This meditation is not for *Shanti*, for quietness; it must be a purposeful meditation. If there is a dynamic meditation, that is more useful.

We can use Jnana Yoga to make our Karma Yoga more powerful. This is how we link meditation with work. If we connect with the universal forces, we realise that we are more or less an instrument of the divine power. That is actually the goal of the Bhagavad Gita: to be a conscious instrument of the Divine. This is where passivity can be of help. Passivity does not mean to meditate only at a given hour and then be over-active during the day. This passivity must intersperse with everything throughout the day. Whenever you have a moment, go inside and be a little quiet. Allow life to move between dynamism and passivity and we will understand

72

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* what is our greater purpose; then our day-to-day existence will become much more beautiful and powerful and we will have a constant guidance coming from within. Then, further down the paragraph, Sri Aurobindo writes: It is a concentration of energy of consciousness that sustains, while it lasts, all creation, all action and

kinesis; but it is also a concentration of power of consciousness that supports inwardly or informs all status, even the most immobile passivity...

It is reiterated that Tapas is behind both passivity and activity. When we are asked what we need to do in Integral Yoga, perhaps one of the things to do is to practice in our own way, in our own time, these passive and dynamic features, this concentration in knowledge and status and in work and creation. If we follow the passive aspect of the Brahman, we arrive at the Nirguna; and if we follow the dynamic aspect; we arrive at the *Saguna* Brahman. These can be two different focuses in our life. In one, we withdraw and become more ascetic and in the other, we launch into a dynamic life. We can move towards

...the poise of Brahman-consciousness in the world, where it is a fulcrum for the universal action, to or towards the poise of Brahman-consciousness beyond the world, where it is power for the withholding of energy from the universal action. Moreover, if it is by energy of Tapas that the dispensing of force of being in the world-action is accomplished, it is equally by the energy of Tapas that the drawing back of that force of being is accomplished.

Our movement towards one or the other also depends upon our own swabhava. We are passive or we are active not according to a mental choice but according to our

The Origin of the Ignorance 73

swabhava. Our outer nature consists of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, the three gunas. The Sattwic guna is passive and balanced, the rajasic guna is dynamic, and the tamasic guna is characterised by inertia. Depending on the particular combination of gunas in our nature, we move towards one or the other. In Sattwa, the mind is more active, and when the mind is active, we have a tendency to abstract ourselves from this world and therefore have a tendency to withdraw.

If we are more Rajasic, then dynamism is combined with desire, and we are more connected with action in the world.

It depends on our innate nature. That is why we cannot all choose to take up one or the other. We have to take into account the swabhava, the nature of the person.

If you see that your child is of a passive type, you should not force him to become an engineer. If he has poetic or philosophic tendencies to go towards art or literature you should encourage him to go towards these acts. It is not by chance that we call some colleges arts and sciences colleges.

Definitely, there are in human nature two sides of the brain

– what we could call a creative mind and a scientific mind.

The creative nature is one that is more inward, and the science nature is more outward. Parents and teachers, who see that their children have an inward tendency towards one or other, should not force on them the opposite tendency; that would be like killing their soul. This is where the Mother and Sri Aurobindo ask us to consult the child in its growth.

This is something that is to be taken into account in our education system.

Although we are speaking about the dual aspects of Brahman, the passive and the active, let us not conclude that Brahman is just these two qualities. Brahman is beyond the Nirguna and the Saguna. The Nirguna and the Saguna are

74

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* like the left hand and the right hand of Brahman – but these two hands belong to Brahman. Just like I am a person and am not defined or limited by my two hands, so Brahman is not defined or limited to his two aspects. It is the same underlying consciousness, which has these two poises. At one end is a state of self-reservation, and at the other end is a state of self-giving and self-deploying; the Saguna is self-giving, the Nirguna is self-reserving.

In fact, behind every activity there is and must be a passive power of being from which it arises, by which it is supported, which even, we see in the

end, governs it from behind without being totally identified with it...

In conclusion it may be said that behind all things, there is that single consciousness, which becomes self-reservation in Nirguna and self-deployment in Saguna. What is behind this self-reservation and self-deploying? The Tapas, the same energy is there in both. There is a beautiful line in one of Sri Aurobindo's poems:

The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven, Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl. (CWSA 2: 202) That same infinite energy is there in things big and small, there is the same fullness of consciousness. This is the beauty of this divine energy that it is equally everywhere, but we for our mental understanding divide it into Nirguna and Saguna.

The next paragraph is more or less a development of this same idea:

The passivity of Brahman is Tapas or concentration of Its being dwelling upon Itself in a self-absorbed concentration of Its immobile energy; the activity is Tapas of Its being releasing what It held out of that

The Origin of the Ignorance 75

incubation... There too is a concentration of force, but a multiple concentration, which seems to us a diffusion.

In the self-reservation, there is a single-pointed concentration and in the self-deploying, multiple concentration. This multiple concentration is there on individual forms, but at the same time, it is not a diffusion. For example, while giving a talk now, if I have to concentrate on something else, my concentration on the talk becomes less because it is divided – I am thinking of the talk and at the same time thinking of something else. But this is not the case for Brahman. He has multiple concentration in the self-deployment, but in each, the focus, the concentration, and the energy are the same. Brahman does not lose his concentration because there are infinite forms. Each has an equal amount of concentration. As illustrated in the line I quoted from Sri Aurobindo's poem, Brahman has the same concentration in fashioning a curl as in sending the planet Jupiter spinning through heaven. We have to take this ability for an equal multiple concentration into

account, and that is why there is the same conservation of Shakti in activity or in movement.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

Neither in fact is the sole absolute truth of Brahman's reality; their opposition is only true of It in relation to the activities of Its consciousness. When we perceive Its deployment of the conscious energy of Its being in the universal action, we speak of It as the mobile active Brahman; when we perceive Its simultaneous reservation of the conscious energy of Its being kept back from the action, we speak of It as the immobile passive Brahman, — Saguna and Nirguna, Kshara and Akshara: otherwise the terms would have no meaning;

76

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* for there is one reality and not two independent realities, one immobile the other mobile.

We have similar aspects in us too; we have sleeping and waking, passive and active states of being. I may sit quiet in my chair and get into action next moment. The difference between the status of Brahman and the status of human beings is that we alternate. We are either passive or active, we are not two together. That is the major difference. Either I am sleeping or awake, I am keeping quiet or speaking, but in Brahman there is no either/or, there is a simultaneous passivity and activity. That is, perhaps, the secret behind the mantra given by Sri Aurobindo:

Om Sri Aurobindo Mirra

Open my mind, my heart, my life
to your Light, your Love, your Power.

In all things may I see the Divine.

It is not Sri Aurobindo *and* Mirra. It is a single simultaneous consciousness. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are this dual consciousness, which is dynamic and passive, mobile and immobile, *kshara* and *akshara* – they are its two aspects. But they are together all the time constantly in oneness. I often quote the Mother's message where she said that when you see Sri Aurobindo you also see me and when you see me you also see Sri Aurobindo indivisibly without separating us; then you are opened to the supramental force. It is a consciousness, which sees Purusha and Prakriti, Ishwara and Shakti, the passive and the dynamic as one. Such a consciousness is a higher than that of the mind. The mental consciousness always sees the Mother *and* Sri Aurobindo, but the supramental consciousness would see Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as one. Sri Aurobindo wrote in a letter:

“Mother and I are one but in two bodies.” (CWSA 32: 82)

The Origin of the Ignorance 77

When we go to the higher consciousness, we lose this sense of difference between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Here, he is explaining how they not two independent realities –

one immobile and the other dynamic, but they both exist simultaneously.

In the ignorance we identify ourselves with only a partial consciousness, mental or spiritual-mental in its nature, which becomes nescient of its self of status by movement; in this part of us, when we lose the movement, we lose at the same time our hold on our self of action by entering into passivity.

This is the 'either/or' condition of human beings. When we relate to the Brahman in a condition of passivity, we lose the connection with the world of movement, and when we are involved in the world of movement, we lose the connection with the passive aspect of the Brahman. We can only shift our consciousness between the two but not experience both simultaneously. It is not so with the Brahman, or with the supramental consciousness. There is a verse in the Gita in which Lord Krishna says, if I were to stop my activity even for a split second, the world would collapse. Lord Krishna has to be dynamically active all through in this world as well as in the other worlds – that simultaneity of passivity and activity must be there. He does not say he has involved himself in the world, and therefore, he has left his place in the transcendent Purushottama. This is a basic concept in Indian philosophy that the Supreme is Transcendent, Universal and Individual all at the same time. He has all the three poises, not alternately but simultaneously.

By an entire passivity the mind falls asleep or enters into trance or else is liberated into a spiritual silence; but though it is a liberation from the ignorance of the

78

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* partial being in its flux of action, it is earned by putting on a luminous nescience of the dynamic Reality or a luminous separation from it: the spiritual-mental being remains self-absorbed in a silent essential status of existence and becomes either incapable of active consciousness or repugnant to all activity...

Again, this is the nature of the spiritual mind's realisation of Brahman – we have either activity or silence; we either lose this world or we lose the silent status of the Brahman.

That is why Sri Aurobindo is not much in favour of samadhi because in samadhi, which has been the aim of Patanjali's Yoga, one enjoys the static condition of Brahman, but one loses this world. Sri Aurobindo would call it a negative state of consciousness because for him one has to be active in this world while at the same time have that passive meditative poise.

In the next paragraph, we have the conclusion: Integral Brahman possesses both the passivity and the activity simultaneously and does not pass alternately from one to the other as from a sleep to a waking...

Interestingly, here he gives us a new term: “Integral Brahman”. We have had till now in the old philosophies the Nirguna Brahman, and the Saguna Brahman, but now we have the Purna Brahman. Purna is integral – Integral Brahman. By coining this phrase, Sri Aurobindo has solved the age-old problem of philosophy and religion in which either the active or the passive way is sought after. It creates a divide between the followers of different paths.

When we get the integral knowledge and the integral liberation of both soul and nature free from the disabilities of the restricted partial and ignorant being,

The Origin of the Ignorance 79

we too can possess the passivity and the activity with a simultaneous possession exceeding both these poles of the universality...

We have been told that we should live in this passive and active consciousness simultaneously like the Brahman. But how is it possible? This is possible when we get, as he puts it here, the liberation of both the soul and nature. Till now, we have been concentrating only on the liberation of the soul – what we call *mukti*. Nobody has spoken about the liberation of nature. We have always rejected nature, and therefore, we have always had a kind of partial liberation.

That is why we could never realise this Integral Brahman.

What is the meaning of ‘liberation of nature’? Nature is this outer personality – not just Prakriti that we see outside of us with the mountains and trees and animals – that is one part of nature. But we are talking about the liberation of my individual human nature, the mind, the emotions and the body. All the other yogas have told us to liberate the soul; they sacrificed the nature saying that Nature can never be changed, can never be transformed, so reject it. The body, life and mind must be rejected. Sri

Aurobindo attacks the problem from the other end. He says that nature also is a part of the Divine. But it is only if we get the supramental realisation that we can have the simultaneous realisation of the passive and active Brahman, and with that comes the liberation of Nature also.

The supramental consciousness is the only consciousness, where one can have a simultaneous vision of the One and the many – of the passive and the active, of the single concentration and the multiple concentration, of this world and the other worlds. The supramental consciousness is that which can synthesize the opposites – the higher and the

80

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* lower, the One and the many, the passive and the dynamic.

All these so-called opposites that the mind has divided the Reality into, they get synthesised into one vision at the level of the Supermind. These days we have peace-marches and harmony-runs etc. – all kinds of gimmicks. It is good, perhaps the world needs gimmicks to entertain itself, but nobody is talking about the real change of consciousness. Do you think by running two miles in the city with 50 people one can have peace? They will have a little fun and drinks and dance and then run to finish the race. They get a few advertisements in the paper, on the TV, but, does it produce the change of consciousness that can take us beyond these conflicts? One line I remember from the Mother is that if we want peace in the world, we first have to have peace within ourselves; if we want unity in the world, we first have to unite with ourselves.

Next, Sri Aurobindo clarifies that the Brahman is not the sum of the two poises of passivity and activity: For obviously we do not mean, when we speak of his possessing them simultaneously, that he is the sum of a passivity and an activity, an integer made of those two fractions, passive with three-fourths of himself, active with one-fourth of his existence.

When we say integral, do not think that $2+3 = 5$; it is not this kind of addition. It is a different consciousness that puts them together. Integral is not a sum total of the divisions of the numberless multiplicities. All this put

together is not Brahman, he is always beyond, even beyond this multiplicity.

It is a different concept altogether. He says that if Brahman were made up of a combination of two things like this, then, Brahman the sum might amount to something quite different from his two fractions, something, as it were,

The Origin of the Ignorance 81

up and aloof, ignorant of and irresponsible for anything which some mystic Maya was at once obstinately doing and rigidly abstaining from doing in the two fractions of his existence. But it is clear that Brahman the Supreme Being must be aware both of the passivity and the activity and regard them not as his absolute being, but as opposite, yet, mutually satisfying terms of his universalities.

These two conditions, passive and active, are not oppositions; he calls them “mutually satisfying terms”. They are complementary, mutually inclusive, and comprehensive.

Now, we come into a slightly different argument in the next paragraph. In fact, we return to our main theme of the origin of Ignorance.

There necessarily follows an important first result, that the Ignorance cannot have the origin of its existence or the starting-point of its dividing activities in the absolute Brahman or in integral Sachchidananda; it belongs only to a partial action of the being with which we identify ourselves, just as in the body we identify ourselves with that partial and superficial consciousness which alternates between sleep and waking: it is indeed this identification putting aside all the rest of the Reality behind us that is the constituting cause of the Ignorance.

To recapitulate, we analysed that these passive and active poises of Brahman are not opposites but complementary. As human beings, we have a similar situation of sleeping and waking. When we are partially aware of

ourselves, when we are focusing our partial being on a certain thing, we call it ignorance. This identification with a certain thing puts aside all the rest of Reality. When we put our Tapas, will, energy,

82

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* concentration, consciousness on one spot, we are producing ignorance because we are putting aside our awareness of the rest of our being. This is not to say anything negative about ignorance, but let us be pragmatic about it. Pragmatically, are we in ignorance or not? Yes, because ignorance means focussing on a partial object. Elsewhere, Sri Aurobindo says that when we focus on a form we enter into ignorance. That leads us to the conclusion that the moment we focus on any object, be it a beautiful object in the supermarket, or a flower in the garden, we are in ignorance. This is because the moment we focus on that object, we have rejected the rest of the reality; it means that we are having partial knowledge and this is the definition of ignorance. Ignorance is not non-knowledge. We are all in ignorance and the more we concentrate on forms, the more we are ignorant because we become more and more partial, more and more limited, more and more self-restricted.

What should I do if I want to come out of this ignorance?

I take my focus away from the object, from the form. When I see and worship the form of Sri Krishna or Lord Vishnu, I am still in ignorance because I am worshipping a form of the Divine. The moment I realise the real Sri Krishna behind the statue I have been worshipping, then I have Knowledge. A *bhakta* realises the real Sri Krishna behind the idol and not the idol itself. Religion will not get us out of this ignorance; spirituality is the only way out because it shows us the way towards the formless.

Sri Aurobindo also had asked the disciples not to get stuck to the form but to realise the Mother behind. That is why he wrote the book *The Mother* to explain who it is behind this form called Mirra Alfassa. Otherwise, just to worship the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's outer form alone we get

The Origin of the Ignorance 83

stuck in ignorance and are bound to create another religion and creed. We must realise the real Sri Aurobindo, the real Mother. The danger of creating a new religion is there within us, not with them. They never said worship us as the be-all and the end-all. Worshipping them or going to them is perhaps a gateway to the formless. They are not simply the form – we must realise this.

We now have to see how the formless and the form, knowledge and ignorance are combined, we have to see that ignorance comes from this focusing and belongs only to a partial action of consciousness that rejects the Reality. It is not an element proper to the absolute nature of Brahman, or Its integrality; there is no original and primal Ignorance. All that belongs to Brahman has an original eternal status, but Ignorance does not have that eternal primal status. It is not there in the being of Brahman, it comes in the becoming.

What comes in the becoming cannot be called a primary and original part of Brahman. It comes in the process of becoming, and this process can be withdrawn. Whatever is in the outer movement can be withdrawn. Similarly, Brahman does not have Ignorance in him, but Ignorance comes in the process of manifestation.

A question then arises whether Ignorance is something inherent in the multiplicity of souls? Our souls are part of the manifestation. Is it the case that Ignorance is created when souls are produced, when there is a becoming of souls? This is a question that will be tackled more at length in the next chapter, but here, Sri Aurobindo touches upon it in brief.

He says that Ignorance is not inherent in the multiplicity of souls. He attributes it to nature, starting with Matter. He says that let us look at our body:

Body is the outward sign and lowest basis of the

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* apparent division which Nature plunging into ignorance and self-nescience makes the starting-point for the recovery

of unity by the individual soul, unity even in the midst of the most exaggerated forms of her multiple consciousness. Bodies cannot communicate with each other except by external means and through a gulf of externality; cannot penetrate each other except by division of the penetrated body or by taking advantage of some gap in it, some pre-existent division; cannot unite except by a breaking up and devouring, a swallowing and absorption and so an assimilation, or at most a fusion in which both forms disappear.

In the manifestation of the world, the body is the basis of the apparent division. Each body is separate from the other; it unites with others only in certain circumstances, like when we eat a fruit. Then the body of the apple enters my body.

When there is an opening in my body in the mouth, the apple can enter into that opening. Otherwise, two bodies cannot penetrate each other. Because of this separation at the physical level, ignorance in the body is maximum. Ignorance is a focus of Tapas and Consciousness, and the body is the densest form of consciousness and force. We normally think that the body, that Matter has nothing of the Spirit, nothing of consciousness, but actually it has a tremendous force and consciousness. Just like in the atom there is a tremendous energy that can be released, Sri Aurobindo is trying to release the consciousness and force that is densified within the body. Humans have played mischief with the atom and utilised its energy for destruction, but this also has showed us how much energy is there in a single atom. That is due to its compactness, it has the utmost focus! It is a miracle to think that a tiny atom can release such a great amount of energy. Similarly, our body seems to be full of mortality,

The Origin of the Ignorance 85

full of disease, but what Sri Aurobindo is doing is to release the same Tapas, and expose its supramental consciousness.

The body also has a divine consciousness. The Mother has brought out the hidden consciousness and force which is also an immense energy, even more than atomic energy, but this hidden consciousness will not harm, it is there as a positive creative force.

Sri Aurobindo says that the body has been a source of division. If we eat an apple, then we are devouring it.

Similarly, on the vital level, on the emotional level, there is also a kind of devouring of others. Similarly, on the mental level, there can be a desire to influence and possess others with our mental ideas. Minds can unite better, but they also have this problem of possessiveness. But it is different for the soul:

When we get back to soul-consciousness, the obstacles to unity lessen and finally cease to exist together. The soul can in its consciousness identify itself with other souls, can contain them and enter into and be contained by them, can realise its unity with them.

Ultimately, when there is unity of souls, we come out of ignorance because there we have total awareness, a total unification. Sri Aurobindo brings this in only to conclude: Therefore ignorance and self-limiting division are not inherent and insuperable in the multiplicity of souls, are not the very nature of the multiplicity of Brahman.

In other words, Brahman, in his unity of spirit, is aware of his multiplicity of souls and in the consciousness of his multiple souls is aware of the unity of all souls.

Sri Aurobindo brings in this concept of the souls only to emphasise the fact that the multiplicity of souls is not the

86

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* source of ignorance. Mind, vital and body are the sources of ignorance but not the soul. The soul has a unifying effect; it leads to togetherness, a global vision, a global knowledge, and to *less* ignorance.

The concluding paragraph is a kind of a summary of what he has been explaining that ignorance is nothing but the focussing of consciousness which comes in the process of manifestation. It is a focus on the form. Sri Aurobindo asks: But what is the form? It is, at least as we see it here, a

formation of concentrated energy, a knot of the force of consciousness in its movement, a knot maintained in being by a constant whirl of action; but whatever transcendent truth or reality it proceeds from or expresses, it is not in any part of itself in manifestation durable or eternal. It is not eternal in its integrality, nor in its constituting atoms; for they can be disintegrated by dissolving the knot of energy in constant concentrated action which is the sole thing that maintains their apparent stability.

This is an idea we need to clarify in greater detail. We said that ignorance is concentration on form, and form is a concentration of energy and consciousness. A form is a densification of the divine consciousness, but it is not eternal because it is only a knot of energy, and it can be dismantled. When it gets dismantled, it also releases energy and consciousness, but the form is not something permanent. The energy is permanent, the consciousness is permanent, and when the form is destroyed, the energy gets dispersed and may be taken up by other forms. That is why when human beings die, their death is not the end.

The energy, the consciousness that is there to maintain the body goes out and makes other bodies. What dies is the

The Origin of the Ignorance 87

form. We have seen clay models made by children! They make a horse, show it to the teacher, get praises, and then they may dismantle the form and make a cow out of the matter. Similarly, when we die, it is only this formation that is dissolved; the consciousness, the energy, the force passes on to other bodies or formations. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo tells us that the form is not eternal.

The origin of the Ignorance must then be sought for in some self-absorbed concentration of Tapas, of Conscious-Force in action on a separate movement of the force; to us this takes the appearance of mind identifying itself with the separate movement... So it builds a wall of separation which shuts out the consciousness in each form from awareness of its own total self, of other embodied consciousness and of universal being. It is here that we must look for the secret of the apparent ignorance of the embodied

mental being as well as of the great apparent inconstancy of physical nature.

We have arrived at the simple truth that ignorance does not belong primarily to Brahman. Why does it not belong?

The Purna Brahman takes two poises, Saguna and Nirguna.

In Nirguna, there is oneness of consciousness and in Saguna there is multiplicity of consciousness – in the first, there is oneness of concentration and in the other, multiplicity of concentration. It is in the latter that ignorance comes, especially when there is a concentration on form. When the consciousness concentrates on a form, it forgets all other forms because the concentration is so intense, so deep, so focused! Once the soul comes into matter, the focus is so intense that we tend to forget all other realities. Ignorance does not belong to the oneness of Brahman, it belongs to the process wherein the Chit-Tapas focuses upon form. Why

88

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* does it come? Is it necessary? Why is there this exclusive concentration? These are questions that will be answered in the next chapter, which will make the picture complete.

Lecture Notes

I. We need to consider the problem of Ignorance from the point of its pragmatic origin, the process of consciousness which brought it into existence.

How could Ignorance arise in Brahman, the absolute consciousness? How can the Being be ignorant of itself?

Such questions need to be addressed in order to solve the problem of Ignorance.

II. Different theories to explain this paradox: a) Mind is the seat of ignorance and a part of Maya, not Brahman, he is not touched by the ignorance of the mind.

b) This is an escape which cannot be considered because if Brahman is the sole existence, Maya can be nothing but a power of Brahman.

c) Jivatman and the Supreme are eternally different and it is Jivatman which is subject to ignorance. This argument is not acceptable as it goes against the concept of the Unity of Being.

d) The theory of the Unknowability of the Supreme also cannot be accepted as it is but mind's refusal to pursue the subject right up to its proper solution: even this sense of impotence is permitted. It cannot be applied to Jivatman, The Unknowable—

not absolutely unknowable, but beyond mental knowledge— can only be a higher degree of the intensity of being of that something, that Absolute.

e) A school of thought upholds Asat or non-existence as

The Origin of the Ignorance 89

the seed of absolute chaos out of which the universe has emerged by accident. Therefore, the world is a paradox, a mysterious source of contraries and puzzles. Hence ignorance and inconscience could be the source in this world. All these erroneous views have had their own role, negatively by destroying opposite errors, positively by preparing an element in a new constructive hypothesis.

III. Absolute consciousness in its nature is the absolute power; the nature of Chit is Shakti. The Chit manifests itself as knowledge by 'the heat of its incubation'. But for a Divine purpose, Tapas or concentration of Force restricts itself, its power, giving rise to Ignorance. This Tapas is there in man also, but man can act on his internal world and external world. This distinction cannot apply to Sachchidananda as it is an integral consciousness—there is nothing external to the Divine consciousness.

Secondly, in man only a part of the Force is identified with the voluntary action, but in Sachchidananda it is one indivisible consciousness, such a division is not possible.

IV. In man, Nature and Existence, there is a passivity along with activity, immobility as well as kinesis. In this case

'what is the role of Tapas?' we may ask. Apparently, no activity or energism can be there in passivity and Tapas has no role at all.

But, in truth, behind all apparent immobility there is Tapas that controls or suspends or withdraws its own energism. The concentration of the power of consciousness is behind both passivity and activity,

90

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* V. a) Brahman too has the dual status of the quiescent and the creative Brahman, but it must be noted that it is the same consciousness—at one end in a state of self-reservation, at the other cast into a motion of self-giving and", self- deploying—like the static river bed and the flowing waters.

b) Thus there is only one Reality — the 'Kshara-Akshara', 'Saguna-Nirguna' are not two independent realities.

c) These two states of passivity and activity are not two alternative states — but they are eternal. It is the humans who because of their part involvement alternate between sleep and waking.

d) If Brahman were to — pass from one status to another, there would be utter dissolution or absolute immobile stillness. Integral Brahman possesses both the passivity and the activity simultaneously. The Supreme exceeds both the mobile and immobile selves.

VI. Thus, Ignorance is not an essential or primal fact, nor is it in the absolute Brahman. It belongs only to a partial action of the being with which we identify ourselves. It has intervened as a minor and subsequent

movement, partial and relative. When we get into the subtler and deeper consciousness, we will not find any ignorance.

The body is the basis of division. Mind is more subtle and can interchange and unify itself with other minds.

In the soul-consciousness, the obstacles to unity lessen and finally cease to exist giving place knowledge. Our superficial consciousness, identified with body, life and mind, is ignorant; but that also can be illumined and made aware.

The Origin of the Ignorance 91

VII. Ignorance comes at a later stage in evolution, when mind is separated from its spiritual and supramental basis.

Hence, the origin of ignorance must be sought for in some self-absorbed concentration of Tapas which builds a wall of separation, exclusively, shutting each form of consciousness from the total consciousness of Self.

Chapter – XIII Exclusive Concentration of

Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance In the previous chapter, we established the fundamental fact that the origin of Ignorance cannot be in the integral Brahman. Whatever else may be the cause or the reason for ignorance, we know its *locus-standi* is not in Brahman.

We have seen arguments that the integral Brahman is all-conscious at all times and is integrally conscious of both the Nirguna and the Saguna aspects, both the silent and the active or dynamic poises. The very definition of the integral Brahman is total awareness and that of Ignorance is only partial awareness. Therefore, Ignorance cannot be a part of the Integral Brahman.

Brahman has two poises – the One and the Many. As One, Brahman is eternally aware of himself totally. But it might be that in the Many, in the manifestation, Brahman is not fully aware of himself. Could it be that Ignorance came at the level of the Many? First, we need to understand the meaning of the term ‘Many’. Is it the many bodies, the many forms, or is it the many selves? When we say ‘many’, there are two aspects to it – one is the self or the soul and the other is the form and the outer personality. Which of these is the

‘Many’ that we are speaking of? In the second paragraph of this chapter, Sri Aurobindo gives us an answer. He writes,

...by the Many we mean the same divine Self in all, individualised indeed, but still one is conscious being

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 93

with all in a single universality and one too with the original and transcendent Being.

Although we say ‘your soul’ and ‘my soul’, these are not really separated. When I say ‘you’ and ‘me’, what is the difference that I am making? Normally, where there is a sense of separation, there comes with it the question of

‘Many’. Where does this separation come from? Usually, it is our outer being that creates this division.

Soul is integrally connected with the Self, the Transcendent, so it is united and very conscious of the Supreme Divine that it never feels the sense of separation. However, our mind, life and body are not necessarily in connection with the self and therefore, they always feel the ‘other’; they create division.

For example, consider a family – there are husband, wife, and two children, but we call it one family because of their intimacy, closeness and emotional bond. Although they are four different bodies, it is one family because of the oneness of feeling. Souls have more than a feeling of oneness they have

a greater identity with each other. But we can say that a day will come when even the outer bodies can say that they are one – it is when they are transformed into the Supramental body.

However, the question remains: what is the source of ignorance? Sri Aurobindo answers,

Ignorance is therefore not the natural character of the consciousness of the soul, even of the individual soul; it is the outcome of some particularising action in the executive Conscious-Force when it is absorbed in its works and forgetful of self and of the total reality of the nature.

Ignorance does not belong to Brahman or Atman or

94

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Jivatman, it comes in by the “action of the executive Conscious-Force when it is absorbed in its works and forgetful of self”. We have discussed these ideas in the previous chapter. By recapitulating them, Sri Aurobindo establishes a link between the two chapters. When Chit-Tapas focusses on something, when it is in the process of creating or becoming the individual, it is there that ignorance sets in. Actually, it is not just focusing on a particular thing that creates ignorance, it is when this focusing on certain things becomes exclusive that results in forgetting other things.

Ignorance is Nature’s purposeful oblivion of the Self and the All, leaving them aside, putting them behind herself in order to do solely what she has to do in some outer play of existence.

This phrase ‘purposeful oblivion’ implies that Nature forgets oneness purposefully. Please remember that behind Nature there is the Supreme Consciousness. Nature is not bereft of Consciousness, it is not left to itself without the Superconscient behind it. Nature is one of the levels of Chit-Shakti. The highest poise of Chit-Shakti is that of Brahman-Maya. The second level is that of Ishwara-Ishwari; the Lord, the Universal Divine is called Ishwara and the Universal Consciousness is called Ishwari. The third level is Purusha-Prakriti. Here, Prakriti is the executive force of the

conscious Being, Purusha. When we speak of Prakriti, it has behind it Purusha and Ishwari and Maya. So, Prakriti is not without the Consciousness of the Divine behind it.

When Sri Aurobindo says “Ignorance is Nature’s purposeful oblivion”, it means that the Divine Conscious-Force or Chit-Shakti has purposefully set its consciousness away from its action; it has forgotten the Self and the All. It has put them

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 95

behind its executive force of Prakriti in order to do what she has to do in some outer play of existence. It means that ignorance has been ushered in by the Divine Shakti for a particular purpose in the process of evolution. We will come to know that purpose later, but for now, what we understand is that Ignorance has not come accidentally. Nothing in this universe can be accidental; it has come about with the consciousness and approval of the Supreme Sachchidananda.

Sri Aurobindo takes us a little further from what we have discussed earlier. He says that this Consciousness-Force is the Tapas, and it has four levels.

1. Self-Absorption

First is the level of the Superconscious where Tapas is one in which there is a luminous and self-oblivious self-immersion. On this level, it is self-immersed, and it is completely lost in itself. In Sachchidananda, consciousness is still, self-absorbed. Similar self-absorption is also there on the level of the Inconscious. The term Self-absorbed implies focusing on itself, and it is there on both the Superconscious and the Inconscious levels. What is the difference between this self-focusing on the level of the Superconscious and the Inconscious? On one level it is luminous; it is, we can say, self-aware. It is aware that it is in self-immersion. But the Inconscious is self-oblivious, it is not self-aware and, it is not aware of its self-immersion. Otherwise, there is a totality of Sachchidananda in the Inconscious too.

This makes the concept of evolution and involution extremely interesting and powerful because all that Sachchidananda can do in the Superconscient, it can also do in the Inconscient. We should not think of the Inconscient as something to be rejected. On the contrary, from the creative point of view, it has the same creative capacity as that of the

96

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Superconscient. The same Sat and Chit and Ananda are there in the Inconscient too. Just as in sleep I am not aware of the existence of mind, life and body, so this the Inconscient is unaware of its path. But even in my sleep, when I am not aware of myself, I have lovely dreams, my mind is active, it goes into different worlds, and my emotions are active. The only difference is that I am not aware in the same way as I am aware in wakefulness.

The grandeur of this state of Tapas is that they are both equally creative and powerful. We can say so because if the Inconscient was not as powerful as the Superconscient in its creative aspect, there could not have been any evolution.

Evolution would have been impossible if the same Existence, Consciousness, Force and Ananda were not embedded in it. Just as involution has been a product, in a sense, of the Superconscient, evolution is the product of the Inconscient.

That is why they are equal in their manifestation, in their self-execution. Therefore, we need to remember that the same Tapas is there in the Superconscient and the Inconscient.

2. Supramental Connection

Now comes the second level, that of the supramental consciousness, or the supramental concentration. Here, there is an integral concentration. What is the difference between the integral concentration of the Supermind and the luminous self-immersion of the Superconscient and the Inconscient? These descriptions themselves describe the difference. We need to remember that at this level, there is no differentiation of manifestation or creation. The

Inconscient is self-immersed or self-oblivious in its own oneness. Similarly, the Superconscient is lost in its own oneness. But in the supramental level there is an integral

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 97

concentration, and the word 'integral' implies multiplicity.

There is already the beginning of the multiplicity, but it is not yet divided, the consciousness is still integral. That means the totality is maintained.

3. Global Overmental Awareness

The third level of concentration of Tapas may be called Overmind; Sri Aurobindo calls it the "global overmental awareness". Now, what is the difference between the supramental concentration and this global overmental concentration? He says that the latter is a "total-multiple or a part-multiple concentration". It may be totally aware of the multiplicity or partly aware of it, but this awareness is not fully integrated with the awareness of oneness. We can see a difference in its Tapas. First, it was self-absorbed, then it was integrally concentrated, now it is "total-multiple" and

"part-multiple concentration", and finally there is the fourth level, a separative concentration which is completely divided and which is the characteristic nature of Ignorance. That is, we can say, it is an exclusive multiplicity, and we can call it for our understanding the mind's concentration.

To recapitulate, the four levels of the concentration of the Tapas First, Transcendental or what we call the Superconscient; the second one is the Supramental, the third is the Overmental, and the fourth is the Mind. On the superconscient level, there is a total self-absorption, on the Supramental, there is total integrality, on the Overmental, there is "total-multiple or a part-multiple concentration", and in the mind, there is only a separative multiple concentration.

Having read about the four levels of concentration, we may now locate the beginning of Ignorance. The Overmind is

98

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* fully or partly aware of the multiplicity and is not integrally aware of the oneness and the multiplicity. Division becomes absolute on the Mental level. Therefore, the beginning of Ignorance is at the Overmind, and its end is on the level of the mental consciousness.

Next paragraph is an elaboration of the same idea.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

An exclusive concentration on or in a single subject or object or domain of being or movement is not a denial or departure from the Spirit's awareness, it is one form of the self-gathering of the power of Tapas. But when the concentration is exclusive, it brings about a holding back behind it of the rest of self-knowledge. It may be aware of the rest all the time, yet act as if it were not aware of it; that would not be a state or act of Ignorance...

We see that Tapas, or Energy, or the Conscious-Force can gather itself into a single point, but without a denial of the spirit's self-awareness, or losing awareness of the total knowledge. Gathering into a point or a subject or an object or a form or a consciousness or a movement need not be an act of Ignorance. Then when does it become Ignorance?

As we have said already,

...if the consciousness erects by the concentration a wall of exclusion limiting itself to a single field, domain or habitation in the movement so that it is aware only of that or aware of all the rest as outside itself, then we have a principle of self-limiting knowledge which can result in a separative knowledge and culminate in a positive and effective ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo explains that concentrating at one point or one form is not necessarily ignorance, but when this

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 99

gathering involves building “a wall of exclusion limiting itself to a single field, domain or habitation in the movement”

then it becomes ignorance. When we think that I am in this body and this body is separate from all others, then there is ignorance.

In contrast, when we concentrate on our soul or the psychic being, it has an expansive impact. Concentration on the body or the mind or vital alone brings division – it builds a wall between individuals. It becomes an effort to break and define oneself as separate from the continuity of space, time and consciousness. Concentration of the psychic being or the soul naturally leads us to connect with other human beings, nature, animals, plants, etc. It becomes an all-embracing movement. So, it is clear that there are two types of Tapas – one builds a wall and separates, and the other unites and breaks all barriers. Therefore, focusing by itself is not the cause of Ignorance where we focus is what makes the difference.

Now, how do we overcome Ignorance? It is by a simple means. In many forms of material arts, the strength of the opponent is used to defeat him, similarly, here also, by shifting the focus of concentration, Ignorance can be overcome. In practical life, Sri Krishna and the Mother have given us a simple solution – “Remember me and offer.” While doing works in this world, if we can offer our works constantly to the Divine, if we concentrate only on the Divine’s work then we are in the process of shifting our consciousness from finite to the Infinite. There is then a constant movement between the finite and the Infinite, between time and eternity, between Ignorance and Knowledge. Essentially, the method of overcoming ignorance is to focus; it is just that we need to shift the object

100

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of concentration from the external to the inner, from the finite to the Infinite.

...we must note that what we mean ordinarily by the man is not his inner self, but only a sum of apparent continuous movement of consciousness and

energy in past, present and future to which we give this name.

If we look closely into our own mental consciousness, we see a continuous movement; we are never stationary at one single thought, we can never arrest ourselves. We are in a continuous flux – moving from past to the present to the future or we keep shifting from one thing to another in the present. There seems to be, what Sri Aurobindo would call, a “temporal stream of inward and outward workings”. There is a continuous movement of consciousness and energy in us. Sri Aurobindo says,

It is this that in appearance does all the works of the man, thinks all his thoughts, feels all his emotions. This energy is a movement of Consciousness-Force concentrated on a temporal stream of inward and outward workings.

Both Heraclitus and the Buddha told us that we can never step into the same river again, it is always changing. We are like the river – a river of consciousness. It may be fast or slow, but we do not find a stability. We tend to forget that there is a stable river-bed binder this river. We are perpetually self-lost and self-oblivious, thinking all the time of action and movement, of thoughts and feelings and work. Do we ever dip into the river-bed? Our movement is never towards the river-bed, it is always in the stream of changing time. That is why Sri Aurobindo calls it “a temporal stream of inward and outward workings”.

We need to stop, dive deep and discover that under this

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 101

stream, there is a whole sea of consciousness of which we are not aware. We are swimming in innumerable waves but under those waves is the vast calm and quiet sea. That is our inner being. It consists of the subliminal, the superconscient and the inconscient. Sri Aurobindo would even call them the subconscious, the intraconscient and the circumconscient part of this ocean within. The mystery of man is that we take only the superficial self as our entire being. Do we ever tell ourselves, “I am the ocean”? No, because we have never felt it as our own. We have always said, “This is my idea, this is

my feeling, this is my history, this is my circumstance, this is my doing”. These are all temporal, *kshanbhangur*.

Strictly speaking, there is no present if we go by watch-time. Can we catch the present? Never! We live in this perpetual stream of consciousness, but we never dip into the ocean which is so vast – from the superconscious to the inconscient, intraconscious to the circumconscious, from the subliminal to the psychic being. We have been told that our conscious being is only 1/10th of our true being and 9/10th is submerged. Now we can understand the truth of that. What we see outside is almost insignificant and unfortunately, our ignorance keeps us bound to this smallness. Sri Aurobindo says that unfortunately –

The stream is the natural, the superficial man. In this superficial man Tapas, the being’s dynamic force of consciousness, is concentrated on the surface in a certain mass of superficial workings; all the rest of itself it has put behind and may be vaguely aware of it there in the unformulated back of its conscious existence, but is not aware of it in this superficial absorbed movement in front. It is not precisely, at any rate in the back or in the depths, ignorant of itself in any essential sense of

102

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the word... Yet it is really the hidden sea and not the superficial stream which is doing all the action...

The first ignorance is that man thinks this surface 1/10th of his being to be his real being. The second ignorance is that he thinks that all he is doing, all his actions and inspirations and achievements and successes and failures belong to this 1/10th. What he does not realise is that 90 percent of his actions, thoughts, emotions, movements, inspirations, genius, success and failure have their source in this hidden sea and not in the superficial stream on the surface. It is the ocean that throws up the waves, the waves cannot be born of themselves. All the brilliant ideas and intuitions we claim to be ones are thrown up by this ocean within. But we do not realise that. We think that it is ‘I’ the surface being who came up with the idea. The truth is that the ocean of being is the source of all our actions and movements. To summarize what we discussed, – we are superficial waves of consciousness

which are not aware of the ocean; the second is that the superficial consciousness thinks that it is the source of all its actions which is again wrong because it is the ocean that is the source of all that is happening in the waves.

Further, Sri Aurobindo says:

It is the sea that is the source of this movement, not the conscious wave it throws up, whatever the consciousness of the wave, absorbed in its movement, living in that, see nothing else but that, may think about the matter.

And that sea, the real self, the integral conscious being, the integral force of being, is not ignorant; even the wave is not essentially ignorant ... but it is self-oblivious, absorbed in its own movement, too absorbed to note

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 103

anything else than the movement while that continues to preoccupy it.

Now, we come to another type of Ignorance. Sri Aurobindo, in another chapter, discusses the seven-fold ignorance or seven types of ignorance, but here, he is discussing it from a psychological perspective, not from a metaphysical one.

So too we see that man, though a really indivisible stream of Tapas, of conscious energy in Time, capable of acting in the present only by the sum of his past force of his working, yet lives absorbed in the present moment, lives from moment to moment, and is therefore in this superficial action of consciousness, ignorant of his future and ignorant of his past except for that small part of it which at any moment he may recall to him by memory. He does not, however, live in the past; what he recalls is not the past itself, but only the ghost of it, a conceptual shadow of a reality which is now to him dead, non-existent, no longer in being.

This next ignorance is that we live in momentary time and are ignorant of our past and future. We are completely ignorant of our future, and retain only very little of our past in memory, and even of that little we recollect

only a vague idea. For example, if there was a tragedy in one's family, one may look back, remember a few instances, but cannot re-live those moments exactly as they happened then. That is why Heraclitus and the Buddha said that you cannot step into the same river twice. In the stream of consciousness we are continuously moving forward, it is never the same consciousness, you cannot recover that earlier consciousness that you had in the past the very substance of our consciousness has changed. We can

104

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* get only a photograph of that, a vague impression. Next, Sri Aurobindo explains,

The true consciousness within is not unaware of its past; it holds it there, not necessarily in memory but in being, still active, living, ready with its fruits, and sends it up from time to time in memory or more concretely in result of past action or past causes to the superficial conscious being, —that is indeed the true rationale of what is called Karma.

Here, we get the true rationale of Karma. Generally, we are told that Karma means to reap the fruits of all we have done in the past action. As you sow, so shall you reap.

Normally, we have a narrow understanding of Karma, that it applies only to the prosperity of the person! It is very non-philosophical to suggest this argument, as if God is nothing but a good accountant! He keeps on recording our credits and debits, and in the next life he ensures that the balance sheet is maintained. Has he no grace, no compassion, nothing more? Sri Aurobindo says this is just a popular idea.

To a common man, this philosophy cannot be explained.

And religion has used this very effectively to control people, saying if you do not come to the church on Sunday or do not come to this Puja, in your next life you will be born as a poor person. We are all afraid of poverty. If somebody says you will be ignorant, you will be illiterate, we do not bother, but if they say you will be poor, then we obey.

Now, what is the rationale for Karma, what is its metaphysical truth? Sri Aurobindo has written much on Karma and rebirth, but this sentence speaks volumes. We were discussing that our external consciousness cannot go back into the past nor into the future, we have only a temporary present knowledge.

However, we forget that there is a deeper consciousness, a true

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 105

consciousness within and beyond us. We have been referring to it as the ocean, and we said that it includes the subliminal, the psychic being, the circumconscient, the subconscious, and the superconscient. All can imagine how tremendous its magnitude is! Everything that I am doing now is sinking into that ocean of my own being. My past is not erased because of its infinite capacity; it can keep everything of the past, present, and future. It is because my surface mind is limited that I cannot see the future. This vast Consciousness can see the infinite future and the infinite past. That is the greatness of this inner ocean. Sri Aurobindo tells us: The true consciousness within is not unaware of its past; it holds it there, not necessarily in memory but in being, still active, living, ready with its fruits, and sends it up from time to time in memory or more concretely in result of past action or past causes to the superficial conscious being...

This ocean contains everything not as memories but as living acts. I can give you a mundane example. Suppose you watch a cricket match on the TV in the morning and see somebody getting knocked down and then in the evening they show a replay, in the replay you feel you are once again back into the past because the whole action has been so well recorded that you do not feel the difference between what you saw at in the morning and at night. This ocean of being is that kind of a replay, everything is active, alive, whereas our memory selects one or two points, remembers those, and the rest of the details are forgotten. The replay has the full details, it is living, no more a faded memory. It is because it is an alive consciousness, it throws up waves on the surface being and these waves sometimes are the

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* products or results of particular incidents that happened. I will quote Sri Aurobindo's words. He says:

...and sends it up from time to time in memory or more concretely in result of past action or past causes to the superficial conscious being...

These waves which we experience in the present are sometimes connected to what has happened in the past, it replays that which is still there in the depth of our being.

One of the things these waves have brought up is our present life. Let us compare what happened in our previous lives with our present life. Both are waves of the same infinite universal ocean. My present life is a wave that carries something from the ocean of experiences of all my previous lives. All my previous lives are recorded – nothing is lost in this ocean. We normally think that based on what I do in one life, I reap the fruits of that in the next life, and what I do in that life, I get the results in the life after that, but that is not the way it works. To give a very crude example, suppose a person murdered somebody in one of his previous lives, it does not mean that he will be punished immediately in the next life. That act of murder has become a part of the oceanic consciousness, and in the next life, he may not necessarily get its result. Instead, he may reap the fruits of what he did in an earlier life, when he did lot of good things, and therefore the next life after the one in which he committed murder might still be a good one in every manner. The results do not necessarily come consecutively. That is one of the major mistakes we make. The consequences that we reap in this life can be connected to any one of our previous births. What happens is that all these previous acts are stored, but their

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 107

consequences may not come back in their full strength in the next life.

Secondly, even if one has done something wrong, it may be pardoned, it may be absorbed, it may have been something necessary for one's own growth. If in my previous birth I was a beggar, it may be because my soul

wanted to be a beggar in order to get that kind of experience. It is not all the time the karmic law that gets applied, it could be also the soul's choice. The soul chooses to be a king, or a pauper, or a professional, or a layman, or an ugly person, or a beautiful one. It is not always the karmic law that governs our lives. If it were just the karmic law, then the world would be nothing but a super accountant's creation. There is also the divine Grace, *kripa*, and divine Compassion, *karuna*. The world is multi-tiered, and it is not simply moving from karma to karma. In fact, in one of the letters, Sri Aurobindo says that there are three tiers – *kripa*, *karuna* and karma. The karmic law can be erased by *kripa* and *karuna*. Grace is the highest as it can change our destiny. Let us not think that there is only the karmic law which controls our life.

The true consciousness within is not unaware of its past; it holds it there, not necessarily in memory but in being, still active, living, ready with its fruits, and sends it up from time to time in memory or more concretely in result of past action or past causes to the superficial conscious being...

Coming back to this sentence quoted above, we can say that what we do today, on one level goes into the past as a memory and gradually fades away. That is what we normally call the past. But all that we do also sinks into the ocean of being where there is no forgetting. It is there eternally alive.

These incidents from the past get mixed with other forces

108

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and energies and come up into our life sometimes. When and how they come up, cannot be explained by a systematic logic. It is difficult to really know the meaning of our life's events and circumstances, they may be due to various factors. They are not necessarily based on our acts in the previous life. To truly know their meaning and place in our evolution, we have to enter into that oceanic consciousness, into our inner depths, into the superconscious or the psychic being or soul. Then we can get an understanding of all our past births because they are stored indefinitely. Once we go into the psychic, as the Mother said, we will have the whole book open to us, everything is there in

its record. It is like opening a file on our computer. The complete record is there; but this record is open only to the psychic vision, not to the mind.

We may have a fancy that I was this or that in my past life, or when I entered that place perhaps I felt a vibration from one of my past lives. This may be a kind of fantasy; one would love to have lived in those great palaces of Rajasthan!

It is only the psychic consciousness that can see the truth of the past lives.

This throws a new light on the source of karma originating in our inner being and it tells us that there are other forces that govern our lives other than the karmic law. The past is the direction which our soul has taken for its evolution, but it is moving towards the Infinite. How many lives will it take, that we cannot say. These matters are person-specific and depend upon our inner growth. Let us go to the next sentence:

It is or can be aware too of the future, for there is somewhere in the inner being a field of cognition open to future knowledge, a prospective as well as a retrospective

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 109

Time-sense, Time-vision, Time-perception... Here, then, in this habit of living in the present, we have a second absorption, a second exclusive concentration which complicates and farther limits the being, but simplifies the apparent course of the action by relating it not to the whole infinite course of Time, but to a definite succession of moments.

This inner being has the *trikaladrishti*: it has Time-sense, Time-vision, and Time-perception of the past, present and future. The surface consciousness has only the single perception of the present time. The inner consciousness is one and integral that there is no division either of time or space. There is a totality of oneness of space and time. This is another aspect of our ignorance, we are absorbed in the present moment and cannot see its unbroken connection with the past and the future.

The same argument continues, that while we live in the superficial consciousness and being we are bound to the present and live in the ignorance.

Therefore in his superficial consciousness man is to himself dynamically, practically, the man of the moment, not the man of the past who once was but is no longer in existence, nor the man of the future who is not yet in being; it is by memory that he links himself with the one, by anticipation with the other: a continuous ego-sense runs through the three times, but this is a centralising mental construction, not an essential or an extended existence containing what was, is and will be.

An intuition of self is behind it, but that is an underlying identity, unaffected by the changes of his personality.

We are aware that biologically we are constantly changing; every seven years all the cells in our body change completely,

110

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the old cells are no more there, we have a new body. Our personality also changes because there are so many incidents and events happening to us every day. And yet, we keep saying, we are the same Mr. X. What is it that gives us the sense of continuity? We have discussed this question before.

I shall repeat it in brief. Buddhism teaches *kshanikavada*, momentariness of this world. They believe that every second every *kshna* we are changing. If it is so then who is this 'I'

In Hindu philosophy, we say this 'I' is the soul, the psychic, the Atman, and that there is a continuity of the true 'I'. But in Buddhism, there is no psychic being, no Atman, no God.

So, when we ask them the question, why do we have this sense of continuity, they say it is only an impression. As Sri Aurobindo describes it here, a continuous ego-sense runs through the three times. It is a kind of an impression that carries over through time. I have an impression of who I

was or what I was, but it is not a solid reality. It is more of an impression that I was. I can sort of visualise myself walking through the gate, going up the stairs, taking off my slippers, coming into the room and sitting here. I carry some snapshots. On a reel of a film, there is no continuity, there is a series of static pictures. These snapshots, when moved fast, give impression of movement and continuity. Similarly, according to the Buddhists, that is how we have a sense of continuity of being. In Hinduism, we have the intuition of the underlying I, the psychic being, the Atman.

If somebody falls into a coma, he may forget all these incidents of the last five years, but he still has a sense of who he is. It is because, the eternal, the essential being, the atman gives us our own innate intuitive sense of identity.

Sri Aurobindo describes that there is “an intuition of self”
behind the changing personality.

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 111

In the previous chapter, ‘Knowledge by Identity’, we saw that we have a knowledge by identity as well as a separative knowledge. There are different levels of knowledge that we have. ‘Knowledge by identity’ is the highest level it is where we know the thing by identity and not by mind or thought or emotions or analysis or any other means it is a knowledge with something with which we identify. There is no knower separate from what is known, they are one.

Whereas in separative knowledge, the knower and the known are separate. Our sense of ‘I’ comes from the Atman, and even though we have not realised it we have a feeling, a sense, an experience of someone within, an intuitive sense of the Atman’s presence. That underlying identity is unaffected by the change of personality. Now, how does this sense of the inner being enter into ignorance? How does Sri Aurobindo connect them? He says: Yet all the time this existence in the moment is not the real or the whole truth of his being, but only a practical or pragmatic truth for the purposes of the superficial movement of his life and within its limits. It is a truth, not an unreality, but a truth only in its positive part; in its negative

parts it is an ignorance, and this negative ignorance limits and often distorts even the practical truth, so that the conscious life of man proceeds according to an ignorance, a partial, a half-true half-false knowledge...

The knowledge by identity is real knowledge; it is complete and integral. This separative knowledge in which the knower and the known are separate is a partial and superficial knowledge and therefore, it is ignorance. Sri Aurobindo is looking at this point of ignorance from different angles. We are tied with the superficial knowledge to the present and the

112

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* surfaces of things, yet all that we forget is contained, present and effective in the all-retaining integral consciousness within us. All that we think is gone, is past, is not gone at all. It is all there within us in that ocean of the inner being; only we are not aware of it. Still, this inner knowledge does come up in our dreams, sometimes in our life as incidents.

We may wonder, why has this incident come upon me?

How is it that I have met this person at this time who has taught me something I just needed this moment in my life?

Rationally, we cannot explain it. These things come because they are all there within us, and they are thrown up to the surface when it is needed according to our soul's need and development.

Next, we have an argument in which Sri Aurobindo gives us an example of the human being in action. Until now, we have learned a little theoretical knowledge of what is Ignorance. But, in actual action, what happens to us?

The superficial man living from moment to moment plays, as it were, several parts in his present life and, while he is busy with each part, he is capable of an exclusive concentration, an absorption in it, by which he forgets the rest of himself, puts it behind him for the moment, is to that extent self-oblivious.

This is the greatness of the human beings – we play these different roles. In our daily life we have to play many roles.

In each of these roles as a teacher, administrator, father, I get deeply involved with that one part of my being. When I am a teacher, it is only this intellectual consciousness that comes forward, the emotional and the physical and the vital are kept away. If I am playing the role of a father or uncle, emotion come forward, the mind takes a backseat. We have so many parts and divisions within us which come to the

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 113

foreground leaving the rest behind. We are fantastic actors: every moment we are enacting some role or the other. And just as an actor on the stage forgets himself while playing that particular role, so do we. When I am a teacher here, I forget completely my role as an administrator. I have to put that consciousness behind, otherwise I cannot teach. For the time being I forget, I am self-oblivious of all the other roles. Sri Aurobindo tells says:

Not only is he apt to deliver himself up to this exclusive concentration in a part of himself for the time being, but his success in the action very largely depends on the completeness with which he can thus put aside the rest of himself and live only in his immediate work.

We all know that if we do not concentrate on the work that we are doing, it is not done well. This is why we train, we are taught to concentrate right from our childhood.

Typically, in our Indian education, we emphasise on memory, learning things by heart. But that is not such an important faculty. It is useful to have a good memory, but the faculties of concentration, discrimination and analysis are more important. These are the faculties that are useful throughout life. One may memorize a lesson reproduce it in the examination, which may fetch him good marks, but he may remain as dull as ever. If children are not trained to concentrate at a young age, it becomes a difficult task afterwards to develop this faculty. How successful we are depends on how much we can concentrate and forget ourselves in our action. That is very important. When we are distracted, our attention is

directed in different places, and we are not able to focus on one thing. And if we do not focus, our work is not done well.

What is it that we are missing if we do not focus? Focus

114

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is the concentration of consciousness. When we have this focus, we not only have concentration of consciousness, we also have Tapas. Consciousness or Chit always goes along with Tapas. Consciousness comes with the force, or energy and this together brings knowledge. If we do not have concentration of consciousness, the singular loss is that we do not have knowledge. It may be knowledge of anything and everything. It can be the knowledge of a computer, a tree, a flower or oneself. Concentration is necessary not only to in-gather ourselves, but in this condition of in-gathering, Tapas or force can be applied, and when force is applied, then knowledge bursts forth. Therefore, the best way of getting knowledge is to concentrate. That is why the first moments of meditation should be that of concentration. Once the being is concentrated, then the expansive movement of meditation can begin. Let us now continue with the text Sri Aurobindo writes:

Yet all the time we can see that it is the whole man who is really doing the action and not merely this particular part of him... The present actor, poet or soldier in him is only a separative determination of his Tapas; it is his force of being organised for a particular kind of action of its energy, a separative movement of Tapas, which is able... to absorb itself in that particular working to the temporary self-oblivion of the rest of itself... This active self-oblivion of the man in his work and the part he plays, differs from the other, the deeper self-oblivion, in that the wall of separation is less phenomenally and not at all enduringly complete.

He gives the example here of the actor, the poet and the soldier. It can be as dynamic an action as that of a soldiers, or as quiet and in-drawn as the action of the poet; each focuses,

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 115

concentrates on their work to the extent of forgetting the rest of himself. However, Chit-Tapas is linked to Sat and Ananda. It is intricately linked and is inseparable. Therefore, in each of our small actions, if we want joy, we must have concentration, we must focus our energy, and we must exist and be present in that. Students often complain that they get bored in the class. It will be boring, it will not have ananda, if either this concentration or this presence of ourselves in the action is absent. That shows how important concentration is in our life it is even liked with our experiencing joy in life. If one wants to enjoy a class or other activity without Chit-Tapas, one cannot. It is only with Chit-Tapas or concentration and Ananda or joy can be experienced, not otherwise.

In discussing this, I may refer to talks the Mother had with the Ashram children. This question of concentration came up because children routinely blamed the teacher for boring them. She would say that you can make any dull thing interesting if you concentrate. Here, we can take an example of the workplace. We may go to work on time and perform because the boss demands so. In such a case, we cannot concentrate much and therefore, we don't get the joy in the job. It becomes boring. But if one goes to work to learn something, one focuses, then one succeeds and derives joy out of the smallest work done. One has to involve oneself fully in the work.

Let us go on to the next sentence in the text: This active self-oblivion of the man in his work and the part he plays, differs from the other, the deeper self-oblivion, in that the wall of separation is less phenomenally and not at all enduringly complete; the mind can dissolve its concentration and go back from

116

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* its work at any time to the consciousness of the larger self of which this was a partial action. The superficial or apparent man cannot so go back at will to the real man within him; he can only do it to some extent abnormally or super-normally in exceptional conditions of his mentality or, more permanently and completely, as the fruit of a long and arduous self-training, self-deepening, self-heightening, self-expansion. Still he can go back; therefore the difference is phenomenal

only, not essential: it is, in essence, in both cases the same movement of exclusive concentration...

Sri Aurobindo draws our attention to a different kind of focus. We discussed that when one plays one role, one becomes oblivious of other roles. However, there is another level of self-oblivion which is much deeper. It is possible for our mental consciousness to focus on something and then break or shift the concentration. However, it is not the same with the self-oblivious soul of man. We came upon this earth with a purpose. The soul wanted some experiences.

However, the moment we enter this physical body, we forget the real person within. Sri Aurobindo says that as it is possible to shift attention from one field of life to the other, it is not possible to shift attention so easily from the outer consciousness to this inner. It can be made possible only by “long and arduous self-training, self-deepening, self-heightening, self-expansion.”

These are essentially the four essential concepts or practices of Integral Yoga. This is the whole process of yoga.

We must keep this as the target at every moment. We must be aware that we have to expand our mental and emotional consciousness, we have to deepen and heighten them. It is

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 117

through this process that we can get rid of our self-oblivion of the psychic being.

It is not just a question of doing meditation or this or that; it is a question of being, it is a question of living it out.

How will you expand your consciousness if you are not in contact with the other people, if you become an ascetic and meditate in the mountains. Of course, you can expand by contact with Nature, but living with the others in society is perhaps the best way to expand your consciousness, because you get contact, you get opposition, as the Mother would say, you get your own mirror in other people. That is why we are asked to do the yoga in a

collective atmosphere, because each one acts like a mirror to each other. My own problems I see in others. That is a very interesting thing: when I see a defect in another person, it is actually a reflection of myself that I am seeing; the problem is within me. In the beginning it is difficult to admit it, but if I look at it carefully, I have seen that it is true, I have experienced that it is true. Usually, whatever is within us, we see that defect outside and blame the other person for it. Later, we see that same thing was a hidden defect in us! The defects that are not within us, we don't see in others. It is very strange but true! If the defect is not within us, we will never criticise another person for it. Of course, one must be awakened to sadhana to see this.

The old adage is true that when you point at another person to blame them, there are three fingers pointing at yourself and only one points at the other. It is a truth of psychology.

It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo's philosophy does not remain just theoretical knowledge, it leads to psychological insights and even to practices of yoga. It is always linked to a psychological process; and does not

118

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* remain metaphysics per se. In philosophy, one can say that these are interesting concepts, and we may agree or disagree with them. But we cannot refute Sri Aurobindo's arguments because they are an inseparable part of our existential problems and their solutions.

For example, he says that when we take a particular action of the soldier or the poet, we become that action. We lose ourselves in the action. As Sri Aurobindo puts it:

...he identifies himself for the time being with the form of character and action which the name represents and so completely as to forget the real man who is playing it. So the poet forgets himself, the man, the worker, in

his work and is for the moment only the inspired impersonal energy which works itself out in formation of word and rhythm...

We need to understand the deeper meaning of this sentence on the psychological level. Let us take the formula of Sat, Chit-Tapas and Ananda. When we forget ourselves, we forget the Sat, the existence. To take an example, if I am playing the role of Macbeth or King Lear as an actor, I become a better actor if I forget myself while playing the role. Why is it so? Psychologically, when I forget my own self, there comes in me an inspired impersonal energy. The personal gets connected with this impersonal universal energy. Why is it that we are asked to involve ourselves in work? It is because when we forget ourselves in work, we become channels of the universal forces. As long as we are saying this is Mr A. who is teaching here, the ego is at the forefront. It will be the ego speaking. And how much does the ego have to speak about? As much as it has gathered in memory by some knowledge gained from books here and there. However, it is limited, because the ego itself is

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 119

a limited instrument. No ego can be universal. Ego means an individual, personal, limited force and consciousness.

So, as long as ego is there, my capacity to express the Truth is limited. But the moment I am self-lost in the work, and the ego takes a backseat, the impersonal comes forward.

When the impersonal comes forth, the infinite comes in, the unlimited comes in because the impersonal universal energy is not limited. Nolini Kanta Gupta says, "The greatness of a person is the greatness of the impersonal in him"(*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta* 5:3) When an artist loses his individual limited self in his creative work then he becomes great.

This is connected with yoga. Yoga helps us to become less egoistic. In any yogic discipline, one is asked or required to reduce this personal ego. However, how many really manage doing it is another question. However, we do not want to be egoless in order to become a saint. We want to be

egoless for some specific purposes. First, it is to become an instrument of the universal energy. Sri Krishna asks Arjuna to arise and fight because he is with him and wants the latter to be his instrument. But in the beginning, Arjuna is confused.

He defends himself by saying that he does not want to fight because on the other side of the army there are his uncles and his own his teachers. Not only that, he says that what will happen to the woman-kind if all these men are gone, only the women will be left, and if only women are there, society will disappear. We will end up in a kingdom without a king.

He asks, what will he do with a kingdom without people?”

This great despondency is a sign of intense ego. We pity Arjuna but it is not just despondency, it is egoism. In truth, he is a Kshatriya whose aim is to establish law and justice and goodness in the society. He did fulfil his *swadharma* very

120

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* well till the beginning of the war. Until then, he was fearless.

But now, before the start of the war, he is overcome by acute ego, and he becomes a weak man. However, Sri Krishna convinces him, and Arjuna becomes His instrument. When we are asked to do yoga to become egoless, it is to be done for the sake of becoming more efficient instruments of the Divine in the world for his supreme will.

I would like to read here of a conversation between the Mother and her disciple to bring home this idea of becoming an instrument:

One day I said to Mother, “I have been doing the yoga for many years, but I am not absolutely certain how to do the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. I read all the books and try to do the yoga, but I am not certain how far I have progressed.” I asked her to help me.

“You are doing it all wrong,” she said.

“What shall I do?”

“I will do the yoga for you.”

I was thrilled.

“What do I have to do?” I asked.

“Give yourself over to me and I will do it for you.”

“How do I surrender?”

“Do you sincerely want to?”

“Yes, certainly Mother.”

“When you get up in the morning what is the first thing you do?”

“I brush my teeth, and as a matter of course I am thinking of all kinds of things and not at all consciously.”

“Try and think of me while you are brushing your teeth,” Mother said.

“Talk to me keeping fully conscious

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 121

while you wash your face and brush your teeth. When you eat, that is the time you must be very conscious of me. Feel that I am eating with you and talk to me and enjoy your food. Let all the parts of your being remain conscious of me. Eat every mouthful with me and you will find that things taste so much better when you enjoy the food with me. When you go to sleep, that is the time when you should be very conscious of me. Let me put you to sleep and then the whole night you will have a conscious sleep. When you awaken and begin your day, you will then begin it in a more conscious way.”

Since that conversation, I have sincerely tried to make this effort. It may not always be complete and whole, but I make the effort to remain fully conscious of the Mother’s presence in all my actions and activities. (An

interview with Udar Pinto by Anie Nunnally, *The View from Nine Decades*, II)

Here we understand that we have to let the Mother work in us and for us. We only need to make efforts to become a perfect channel of the Mother. Instead of performing karma, we have to call the Mother ‘*Kar-ma*’. For each one of our actions, we need to call her and ask her to take over the work as she wishes. But it is not so easy. We forget her easily and always say ‘I’ have done this work. Every time the ego comes forth, if we become a channel of the Divine – then all goes well. This is *living* sadhana, not just *doing*.

This single phrase inspires me very much, that we become “an inspired impersonal energy”. When we become this energy, there is no tiredness, no exhaustion; we have tremendous energy – mental, vital, and physical. The moment we do a thing for ourselves, we get tired. After a few hours, we get exhausted. It is because we use up our limited

122

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* energies, we do not refuel ourselves. If we become a channel of the infinite force, our energies become endless. That is the secret, writes Sri Aurobindo, of the poet who connects with that energy which works itself out in the formation of word and rhythm, and in many different ways. This is the most effective way of living. Otherwise, life is full of problems, and we don’t have energy to solve them.

We have been speaking about the inspired impersonal energy which is the positive side, but there is also a negative side to the story. Sri Aurobindo writes: He does forget himself, forgets all the rest of himself with its other impulses and powers of self-restraint and self-direction, so that he acts simply as the energy of the passion which preoccupies him, becomes that energy for the time being. This is as far as self-forgetfulness can go in the normal active human psychology; for it must return soon to the wider self-aware consciousness of which this self-forgetfulness is only a temporary movement.

When we forget ourselves we also lose, as he puts it,

“self-restraint and self-direction” – we can become an instrument and victim of negative energy. For example, when one becomes angry, we become anger, we forget who we are. At that time, we are just the impersonal energy called anger. When we have passion, we forget our entity, our individuality, we become passion per se. And at that time when we are no more ourselves, we may lose control over what we do, the way we do it – people even kill each other in these moments. So in self-forgetfulness, there is an advantage but also a disadvantage, that we may lose self-control and self-direction which can lead to violence.

Next, Sri Aurobindo takes us into a different dimension

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 123

altogether. He says that this universal or impersonal energy can go to its absolute point. That means, it is not just acting in the human being, it can act on a universal level. And what is that absolute point?

...there must be a power of carrying this movement to the greatest extreme possible for any relative movement to reach, and this point is reached, not in human unconsciousness which is not abiding and always refers back to the awakened conscious being... but in the inconscience of material Nature.

This is the point that we are going to discuss in the next couple of paragraphs. Sri Aurobindo clarifies:

...this inconscience is no more real than the ignorance of exclusive concentration in our temporary being which limits the waking consciousness of man; for as in us, so in the atom, the mental, the plant, in every form of material Nature, in every energy of material Nature, there is, we know, a secret soul, a secret will, a secret intelligence at work...

On the level of the inconscient, how does this reawakening to self-consciousness come about? There is, of course, a force called love. It is love alone that can reawaken the psychic being in Prakriti, in the outer nature. If, for example, a child grows without much love from the parents and teachers, then the psychic being remains unopened. It is like a bud of rose – it needs the sunlight of love. If there is no sunlight, it does not open,

it does not manifest and dries up. The same phenomenon is there on the universal, cosmic level. In Book I, Canto I of *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo describes how the grace of the Divine Love penetrates this Inconscient. It is with the touch of Divine Love that the Inconscient begins to respond.

124

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* There is a beautiful story in the Vedas. One morning, Brahma wakes up and realises he is very dull, has no energy and that something has happened. He looks around for the reason and sees that his wife Brahmajaya is not there. He feels dull without his wife and wonders where has she gone!

He sends god Sarama, who represents the intuitive power, to find Brahmajaya. Sarama comes back and tells him that his wife, his Shakti has gone into the inconscient and hid herself there. Then god Agni is sent to bring her back. Agni goes and pleads with Brahmajaya, and she accepts to come back.

What does Agni represent? Aspiration. Her consciousness is reawakened by aspiration, but at the bottom of aspiration there is love. We aspire for the Divine because we love the Divine. So, Brahmajaya accepts to come back, and this coming back is nothing but evolution. She cannot come back quickly. She has to break out of the bondage of the inconscient into Matter, and break out of matter into Life, to Mind, to Supermind and slowly would journey back. The inconscient evolves and finally liberates the Spirit.

And here is the crucial sentence I wanted to read out: Essentially, in the universal order of things, the inconscience of material Nature is the same exclusive concentration, the same absorption in the work and the energy as in the self-limitation of the waking human mind, or the concentration of the self-forgetting mind in its working; it is only that self-limitation carried to a farthest point of self-forgetfulness which becomes, not a temporary action, but the law of its action.

There are good chances that we come out of our self-oblivion easily, but with the Inconscient, it is difficult because it has become a basic law of its

action. Let me give a mundane example to explain this point. If from my early

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 125

childhood I have become used to taking a particular kind of food, say, spicy food, it becomes a fixed habit of my tongue. I can come out of this habit, though it may not be easy and it may take some time. Similarly, on the level of the Inconscient, it becomes very difficult to change the law one can recover self-awareness only gradually after much effort.

The Inconscient has this law of slow change, the law of wear and tear ending in death. These laws have been there for so long that they have become almost impossible to overcome. But the Mother has said that death is only a bad habit. It has become a law because it has a long history of action. Death is only a strongly formed habit. It is a law of action, but it is only a long-established habit which could be changed. Death can be overcome; it is not an eternal truth.

This law of action of the Inconscient has been for the first time challenged by Sri Aurobindo. We are not concerned about the success or failure to overcome Death, but the very fact that somebody has stood against this sempiternal habit of the Inconscience is unimaginable. He continues: Nescience in Nature is the complete self-ignorance; the partial knowledge and general ignorance of man is a partial self-ignorance marking in her evolutionary order a return towards self-knowledge: but both are and all ignorance is, when examined, a superficially exclusive self-forgetfulness concentration of Tapas, of the conscious energy of being in a particular line or section of its movement of which alone it is aware or which alone it seems to be on the surface.

There is another point which I would like to bring out in our discussion. What do we do when we are in ignorance?

What is the psychological process? When we are in ignorance, we focus on something with our consciousness

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and energy, and as a result we get some joy and delight. Say, we totally concentrate and focus on something like writing a poem and we experience joy in that concentration. Similarly, the Divine, Sachchidananda also focuses on certain things in order to experience Ananda. Sri Aurobindo has given such wonderful parallels between metaphysical principles and our human experience! In focusing on the Inconscient, it becomes a creative energy. That is why Sachchidananda went into its very opposite: to start the evolution.

If this involution were to stop at the level of mind, then the self-losing would be incomplete because mind is still self-conscious. It is partly conscious of itself and the environment. It is like I am reading *The Life Divine* and at the same time I hear some music. If I am fully focused and completely unaware of my surroundings, then I can understand and fully enjoy it. This is a crucial argument and very novel. Sachchidananda went to the very opposite in the Inconscient, so that he could rediscover the fullness of himself and could be exclusively concentrated. He went to the very opposite end which means he completely forgot himself. That is exactly what we do to derive full enjoyment of something. What does Sachchidananda get? He gets the joy of reunion, and this joy of reunion is greater than the static Ananda of Sachchidananda. That is the secret.

When we speak of reunion, obviously we have to speak of separation before it. That self-division is the Inconscient.

From there, Sachchidananda starts recovering himself and proceeds towards reunion. Sri Aurobindo continues: The ignorance is effective within the bounds of that movement and valid for its purposes, but phenomenal, partial, superficial, not essentially real, not integral. We have to use the word “real” necessarily in a quite limited

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 127

and not in its absolute sense; for the ignorance is real enough, but it is not the whole truth of our being and by regarding it by itself even its truth is misrepresented to our outer awareness. In that true truth of itself it is an involved consciousness and Knowledge evolving back to itself, but it is dynamically effective as an Inconscience and an Ignorance.

Ignorance is real even though it is temporary. It is a self-limited part of Reality, so it is fundamentally real, but it has lost conscious touch with the totality of the Reality, so it is real only in a limited sense. The moment we get disconnected with the total Reality we are in Ignorance.

That is why all spiritual teachers teach us to be self-aware.

The moment we try to become more and more conscious of our thoughts, emotions and actions, we become more connected with our inner self, our true self. And our own true self is nothing but the total Reality. Therefore, to become self-aware, it to come out of ignorance more and more. We are self-focusing in this Ignorance for a limited time and for a particular purpose, and once we have completed, that we can return to our source, to the Reality.

We come now to the next paragraph, which in fact is the most crucial one:

This being the root-nature of the Ignorance, a practical truth of a phenomenally but not really dividing, of a limiting and separative conscious energy absorbed in its works to the apparent forgetfulness of its integral and real self, we may answer the questions that arise of the why, the where and the how of this movement.

Sri Aurobindo comes to the main questions of why, where,

128

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and how of the Ignorance. On the cosmic level, why has it come into being?

The reason for the Ignorance, its necessity, becomes clear enough once we have seen that without it the object of the manifestation of our world would be impossible, could not be done at all, or not completely, or not in the way in which it should be and is done.

Very emphatically he says that without the Ignorance,

“the object of the manifestation of our world would be impossible” ...The old yogas and religions condemned the Ignorance, but, for the first time it is being justified on a metaphysical level. It is an absolute necessity. Now the question arises, what is this object of manifestation? He writes that it “could not be done at all, or not completely, or not in the way in which it should be and is done”. He suggests that the Ignorance is a tool, a necessary instrument of the Divine knowledge.

Now what are the reasons for the Ignorance? Let me start with a few of the arguments here:

Man, living in his timeless being, could not have thrown himself into the stream of Time with that movement of subjection to its flux from moment to moment which is the nature of his present living.

There is a grand plan! The transcendent Divine is represented in a human being by the Atman, the universal Divine is represented by the subliminal, and the individual Divine is represented by the outer personality and body. The three statuses of the Divine are all represented in him. We in a sense are a replica of the Divine. But can the Atman or subliminal consciousness be asked to become an instrument of the Divine and involve himself in time? If one is used to

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 129

living a luxurious five-star life-style and is asked to go and live in a hut, he/she will refuse. So also, the timeless Atman and the universal subliminal being would not consent to come down into the earth and into time. Why should he come? Therefore, the Divine introduces the element of the Ignorance. What does it mean? It means a full or partial involvement of its consciousness in a particular movement of its being, a partial knowledge, a partial self-forgetfulness, a self-oblivion. With this one element of the Ignorance the Divine has introduced human beings to this partial knowledge and the involvement in time. Now we are all living from moment to moment.

It is like the famous story of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda was experiencing the Brahman consciousness and was

really lost in that; he did not want to come back to earth. Then it was Sri Ramakrishna who pulled him back and said “I will stop all those experiences, I have blocked you, the *chabi*, the key, is with me.” He said “If you have the Brahman consciousness, you will not be here and I need you here for my work.” These are in his exact words. This is also the case with human beings.

If we realise that we are really the Brahman, we may want to leave this earth. Therefore, the Brahman has put on us these special poise called Ignorance. Now, we have fallen in love with earth, we want to be in space and time to work here.

And work at what? To work out the Divine’s plan for transforming this earth. Brahman needs human beings and utilises the Ignorance in order to transform the earth.

It is quite paradoxical and a bit difficult to understand, but that is the truth. In fact, it is said that the knowledge of the future is kept away from us because otherwise we would never act in the present. Our ignorance of the future is a

130

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* great blessing because if we knew the future new creation that is coming, we might just relax and not act to help create it. The foreknowledge is kept at bay so that we act and live in the present world. This is the first of four arguments for the why of the Ignorance that Sri Aurobindo gives: that the timeless man needs the veil of Ignorance to enter into time to work out the aims of the manifestation.

The Upanishads called this a golden lid that keeps us away from the supramental consciousness. Later on, Sri Aurobindo says that humanity at present must live in mind and not in the Supermind. There is so much meaning in every instant of this world; it is as if the Supreme is looking after all of us every day, he is planning each day for us. We are all hungry for the Supermind, but the Divine didn’t want the Supermind to come till now; he didn’t want it – I am purposely using these words. We had to be in mind, developing this world of mind, life and body. If we suddenly leap

into the infinite consciousness, we would hate to be here. First, we are required to fall in love with this earth, then we can have the Supermind. Then the lover and beloved would not be separated. We will still be with the beloved and bring the greatness of the Supermind to her. This earth seems to be the weakness of Brahman; he has fallen in love with this earth. He is using humanity to change this earth and make it into a heaven. Sri Aurobindo says that heaven and earth must become one, just as the Vedas have told us.

This is a magnificent vision, that to change earth he has used ignorance as a means.

To recapitulate the first argument – if man were left only to his timeless being and had not descended into Ignorance, he could not have entered into the flux of time to work out the gradually unfolding manifestation. Once he tastes the

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 131

timeless, he would want to live in it – that's what a man in the state of samadhi does. He experiences, he enjoys the timeless so much that he doesn't want to return to earth, and spends as much time as possible in that Samadhi state.

This is a common experience among yogis.

Now we take up the second argument: Living in his superconscious or subliminal self, he could not have worked out from the knot of his individual mentality the relations which he has to ravel and unravel with the world about him, or would have to do it in a radically different fashion.

Sri Aurobindo says that if human beings lived only in the superconscious or in the subliminal, the inner being, then we would not form relations with other human beings and other things in the world. In order to have these relations we must have what he would call the knot of our individual mentality. This knot of the individual mentality is the ego.

If we lived only in the superconscious and the subliminal, then we would not have this ego, and it is the ego which has relations with other people and the physical world. A sadhu or sannyasi would say he has no relations, he has neither mother, nor father, nor teacher. Everyone is the same for him because his ego's knot is very weak.

Whenever we have a big ego, it manifests in possession.

Relations often suffer because of this over-possessiveness.

Greater egoism leads one to become more possessive —

about relations, about religion, about caste, creed etc. If I am a fundamentalist Hindu, Muslim or Christian, it is an expression of ego. The more we become egoless, all these attachments, all these possessions – be it individual, the nation, caste, creed, or religion – melt away. Auroville has the ideal of becoming an international town, there one

132

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* cannot be a French, a British, an Indian, or a Russian per se.

One can have a Russian or German cultural pavilion, which showcases a certain variety of divine expression, but if one constantly takes pride in belonging to a particular nation or culture, then he/she is not fit to be in Auroville. In order to be an internationalist, per se, one has to go beyond the nation-ego.

Despite the problems created by ego, if this knot had not been developed at all by nature, our relations with other human beings also would not have been developed. Today we are asked to become egoless, but yesterday's world needed the ego, because it was the world of the Overmind, where the relations between individuals, nations, religions, caste and creed had to be developed to their utmost. "Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar" (CWSA 13: 199) writes Sri Aurobindo. Yesterday ego was the helper, and we all took pride of being an Indian or an American or a French or a Christian or a Muslim, but today ego is the bar. If we think of ourselves as being Hindus

or Muslims or Indians or French or Germans we become a hindrance to the internationalism that is taking shape, and will take the place of those limited identities tomorrow. It is because Auroville wants to move towards an international spirit and human unity, national-ego becomes a bar.

Living in the universal self and not in the egoistic separative consciousness, he could not evolve that separate action, personality, outlook from himself as the sole or the initial centre and point of reference which is the contribution of the ego-sense to the world-workings.

This is exactly what we were discussing. If we always live in a universal consciousness, we cannot live in this ego-sense.

If we do not live in this ego-sense, we cannot have the initial

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 133

centre and point of reference, and if there were no initial point of reference, we cannot evolve our own personality independently. Sri Aurobindo justifies logically the necessity and the need of the intervention of the Ignorance. If there wasn't this kind of Ignorance, humans would have a consciousness of the timeless. They would not participate in Time. If humans lived in the Superconscient, they would not come down into the individual consciousness. If humans lived in the universal consciousness, they would not have developed the ego-sense. And if they had not developed the ego-sense, they would not be party to the time flux, would not be party to individual development, and the world would not have been developed at all. There have been great poets and musicians and great scientists. All of them had the sense of ego, that they had a unique identity and work to do in the world, and that was important for the development of the world. Today the 'I' is no more needed, is no more important, it is the 'we' that is important. That is why there is an emphasis on the collectivity. Ignorance was needed to create this ego for the evolutionary purpose.

He has to put on the temporal, the psychological, the egoistic ignorance in order to protect himself against the light of the infinite and the largeness of the universal, so as to develop behind this defence his temporal individuality in the cosmos.

In fact, ignorance is like a protection for the individual to develop. When we plant a sapling, we put a fence around it. Is it not? We want to protect it – against winds, against too much sun, against goats and other animals and human beings. We protect the sapling until it grows strong enough to defend itself. This protection is not always beautiful; it may be coarse, it may have thorns, but the purpose is to

134

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* protect the sapling and allow it to grow untouched by the dangers of the outside world. Similarly, the individual has to grow undisturbed by the universal existence, and the Ignorance is its protective shield. It protects us from the universal, the transcendental and the subliminal so that our ego-sense can develop. Child -education has been developed to protect the child in the same way, to provide a loving and safe environment in which the child can grow protected from harmful from outside influences. Unfortunately, today TV exposes children to everything – it is a window of exposure to the harsh realities of world. Still, we try to be protective of what children watch, because we want them to grow up properly and safely. Once they become adults we allow them to go out into the world. Similarly, human beings have now reached a certain adulthood after all these centuries of development protected by the windshields of the Ignorance and have reached a level of maturity at which the Divine says that we don't any more need the protection, we may expose ourselves to the universal consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo has taken away the golden lid of the Overmind and the whole world is exposed to the golden light.

It is wonderful to know that we can now come out of Ignorance. The shield of Ignorance is no more required, the age of ego is over. If we want, we can become cosmic beings.

If we choose to remain in Ignorance, it is our choice. But at least now the doors have been opened, and Sri Aurobindo says, we don't have to live in this Ignorance any more, we can go out. But for going out, we need a bit of strength and preparation. We still need to discipline ourselves and do

sadhana. However, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have opened the doors of the world to the Infinite.

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 135

This is a marvelous justification Sri Aurobindo has given for the Ignorance. The Divine has put on the temporal, the psychological, the egoistic Ignorance in order to protect himself against the light of the Infinite. Nowhere else will we read this kind of explanation that we needed to be protected against the light of the Infinite and the largeness of the universal consciousness. As a result, we have fallen in love with the Ignorance. To everything we add the word

‘my’: my sisters, my brothers, my family, my house, my self, my dress, my jewelry. That is why we don’t want to come out of it. We have fallen in love with it and it has been indeed very helpful.

He has to live as if in this one life and put on the ignorance of his infinite past and his future...

Even the idea of rebirth can be a drawback. If I know that I am going to come back in a future life, that can be a deterrent to my growth in my present life. If I am ignorant that I had an infinite past and I have an infinite future, then I concentrate on my present life. That is why God does not give us that vision. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and some yogis know the infinite past and future. We live in a stream of consciousness on the surface of existence, but below is the ocean of the divine consciousness of which we do not know. We seem to have only this life – 70 or 80 or 90 years. We have an impetus to grow, to achieve, to be active and not waste our time:

...for otherwise, if the past were present to him, he could not work out his present selected relations with his environment in the way intended; his knowledge would be too great for him, it would necessarily alter the whole spirit and balance and form of his action.

In a way, forgetting the past and not knowing the future

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is a great blessing, because we are unburdened of this knowledge, for us to know about the future would be a great anxiety. To give an example from daily life, suppose an astrologer tells a person about his/her impending doom, the person becomes extremely anxious. He may not know what the doom is like, but his tension would be very high.

To give a very small but real example: yesterday I received a phone call from one of the government offices, and they said the Secretary would like to meet you at 11.30 on Monday.

As soon as I came to know about it, I was hit by anxiety. I began to wonder “why is he calling me, I have nothing to do with the Government Secretary. I called him up twice, thrice, four times at home, he was not available. I finally reached him at night at 9 o’clock.” So Sri Aurobindo says it is good that we do not have the burden of the future. There is also a burden of the past, past of this birth and past births. He says, He has to live in the mind, absorbed by his bodily life and not in the supermind; for otherwise all these protecting walls of ignorance created by the limiting, dividing, differentiating power of mind would not be built or would become too thin and transparent for his purpose.

Until man develops what he is supposed to develop he must remain in the Ignorance. What is he supposed to develop while being in Ignorance? He has to develop his own personality, he has to develop his relations with the world, and he has to work out his individual projects in the world

– whether caste, creed, nationality, religion or anything else.

All these individual plants in the garden have to be taken care of and very well fenced off and then only the gardener can take out the fences. Until that time we have this self-limiting consciousness, for otherwise we cannot develop

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 137

our individuality. If suddenly we were given the Supermind and we were living in the transcendental consciousness or universal consciousness, we

wouldn't bother even a little to develop this world. So we are condemned to live in the mind and its ignorance, and until the right maturity of the mental consciousness is reached, Supermind will not be given to us.

It is not that Sri Krishna could not have brought down the Supermind, but at that time the human mind was not mature. The Vedic rishis were tremendously developed in their consciousness, but they were a handful. They did not perhaps have the same divisive mental consciousness as we have today. They had only an intuitive and revelatory consciousness. But that intuitive cosmic consciousness had to be broken down into smaller units. Hundred years back, a doctor was a physician who diagnosed our whole body, but today we have eye specialists, ENT specialists, heart specialists, and so on. This was necessary because after the total view it was necessary to go into the individual details, which meant to develop the mental consciousness to its extreme. The Vedas knew about the atom by intuition, but not by mind. Mind itself had to be given the full extent of its development before the Supermind could come.

Therefore, Sri Aurobindo writes here that humanity must live in the mind absorbed by its bodily life and not in the Supermind. What we have done without our knowledge has been perfectly done, because somebody else is guiding this evolutionary movement. When Sri Aurobindo came it was time for humanity to be taken to the Supermind. But which human beings? The Mother and Sri Aurobindo foresaw the coming of the Supermind, but there was a need for the call from humanity. These are two essential things – the call

138

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* from humanity and the grace from the Divine. The grace doesn't come until there is a call.

There were earlier pioneers who aspired for the Supermind, but the Mother would say that was a call which got lost over the ages. A call was first given in the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads, but after that the call receded.

It took a long time for the humanity to get ready to call the grace. Even though the Rishis knew and aspired for it, the Divine as if said, "Hold on,

your aspiration is genuine, but the time has not yet come. That time would be when the body and the vital and the physical are fully developed”.

Developed doesn't mean becoming muscular, but able to be fully open to higher consciousness. Through these centuries of evolution and culture and civilisation throughout the world – not just in India – the mental consciousness has matured, and therefore, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother could bring down the Supermind now.

This is the story of how Ignorance was a helper and is a bar. Today, Ignorance is a bar, till yesterday it was a helper.

And between today and tomorrow when the Supermind manifests in humanity, perhaps there will be 200 years or perhaps there will be 2000 years more – we don't know. But, definitely, today Ignorance is a bar, it is no more necessary.

The next paragraph is an important one, a turning point in this chapter:

That purpose for which all this exclusive concentration we call the Ignorance is necessary, is to trace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery for the joy of which the Ignorance is assumed in Nature by the secret spirit.

In the process of involution the superconscient at each stage loses a bit of its consciousness. It loses it in the sense

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 139

of becoming a little more unaware of some part of itself.

This losing of self-consciousness occurs at every level of the involution until it reaches ultimately the inconscient level, where it becomes completely self-oblivious. Now, Sri Aurobindo says, humanity goes through this exclusive concentration, this Ignorance, only to retrace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery for the joy of which the Ignorance came in. Just as the Supreme got into this Ignorance, into his self-oblivion, similarly man also has to go through the whole cycle of self-discovery. This is a

wonderful process that is taking place. What took place on the cosmic level is now repeating itself at the level of the individual human being. I am sure that nobody in the world has given this reason for the Ignorance, that the whole cosmos is repeating itself in the human evolution. We are all made to get into this Ignorance fully and thoroughly.

And what are the means of getting into this Ignorance?

Our body is the means of self-forgetfulness. When our entire consciousness is focused on the physical, its beauty, its strength, its capacities – when we look into the mirror and say “this is me”, that is the greatest ignorance! It starts with that. The body and the inconscient are related. The inconscient wakes up a little bit in the evolutionary process and becomes Matter. We start with the body and wake up the vital consciousness and then there is a gradual growth to the mental consciousness. We are gradually awakening from this Ignorance to the true knowledge which is within us, to a true knowledge of the soul.

There are two evolutions taking place, one is on the individual level and the other is on the cosmic level. These two are parallel movements. Of course, we have many junctions to cross before we go to the Supermind, but we are now moving from the Mind to the Supermind. On the

140

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* individual level this means we must move from the mental to the psychic with the help of Integral Yoga. The movement to the psychic and the movement to the Supermind is the same movement. The meeting point between the psychic and the Supermind is the transformed body. When these two movements culminate, they will culminate in the transformation of the physical.

Here Sri Aurobindo says that the individual goes through the same process of self-oblivion as did the supreme superconscient when it came down to the inconscient and then started going back. Although I am not too sure, a doctor may be able tell better, but there appears to be a similar process in

the birth of the child also. That is, the fetus goes through the entire evolutionary process in the womb. On the individual level there is the same evolutionary movement because we are only reflecting the macrocosm in the microcosm. Sri Aurobindo continues: It is not that all cosmic manifestation would otherwise become impossible; but it would be a quite different manifestation from the one in which we live; it would be confined to the higher worlds of the divine Existence or to a typical non-evolving cosmos where each being lived in the whole light of its own law of nature, and this obverse manifestation, this evolving cycle, would be impossible.

This is the beauty of evolution. In the womb, we have the whole evolutionary process that repeats itself, and in man's life it repeats itself again. If we read *The Human Cycle* we will see the same process. It's a magnificent cycle.

The whole evolution is really a wonderful pattern. We say that Brahman is in each atom, so in the atom there is also

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 141

the same movement. I am really amazed at this beautiful structure of the universe – the womb and the individual human being and the cycles of human society all go through the same process! As societies develop, we develop first physical people, then vital people, then mental people, and eventually will evolve the spiritual people. The time-spirit is moving towards that on the cosmic level, on the international level, on the national level, on the individual level and on the physical level. If we are in tune with this philosophy, we can see a pattern, and we also can guide our own lives by that pattern.

Sri Aurobindo writes that if the involution did not go all the way down to inconscient matter, but got arrested at the level of the mind or the vital, then this evolution could not have occurred in the same way. It would have been a static world. It might be an Indra-loka or Yama-loka or Agni-loka or some other loka – all of them are wonderful but all are static and stereotyped forever. He says we would have had a non-evolving cosmos, where each being lived in the light of its own law of nature and this evolving cycle that we have would have been impossible. Evolution becomes possible only at

the level of Matter. To put it in a different manner: Not to return as speedily as may be to heavens where perfect light and joy are eternal or to the supracosmic bliss is the object of this cosmic cycle, nor merely to repeat a purposeless round in a long unsatisfactory groove of ignorance seeking for knowledge and never finding it perfectly ... but to realise the Ananda of the Self in other conditions than the supracosmic, in cosmic being, and to find its heaven of joy and light even in the oppositions offered by the terms of an embodied existence...

142

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Of course, we have seen this explanation before, that this inconscience is a veil that Sachchidananda puts on himself.

He hides himself behind a veil and becomes nescience or inconscience, where there is no knowledge, a state of complete self-oblivion. From that state, we have seen, he is advancing step by step in the evolutionary process. This we understand, but the important thing he brings out here is this point: “Not to return as speedily as may be to heavens.” Returning quickly is not the objective. We may wonder, “Why is it that the Divine is not speeding up this process?” We can accept that we have to go through the Ignorance, but why does it have to last for 20,000 years?

Why can't the gracious God be a little more merciful on human beings and say, “I will hasten this process for your sake.” Sri Aurobindo emphasises that it is not the objective of the Divine to return hastily. He will say that God is not in a haste to return to the heavens where perfect light and joy are eternal. Why? God says, “I could have speeded it up, but unfortunately you human beings are not allowing me to do that.” It is not that he doesn't want to go faster, but we are not giving him the opportunity. We must remember that we are this evolutionary journey.

Evolution is taking place in you and me and we are responsible for our own evolution. We can't blame God.

Until the coming of human beings, Brahman could have been asked, “Brahman, why are you going so slowly?” But as nobody was there to question Him, he took millions of years. Now that we are here to question

him, he says, “I am not responsible, the whole evolutionary process is in you. It is for you to evolve from the physical to the vital to the mental to the psychic, and in order to help you, I have brought you the supramental!” The hastening process,

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 143

the rapidity of the evolution now depends on humanity.

The Avatars have brought in the necessary force and consciousness and left it in front of our door. So he says,

“I am not in a hurry.” And then Sri Aurobindo says that it is not the aim to realise the Ananda in the supracosmic or in the cosmic, but rather by struggle the Divine wants to move towards it because, as he says here:

...by struggle therefore towards the joy of self-discovery, would seem to be the true object of the birth of the soul in the human body and of the labour of the human race in the series of its cycles. The Ignorance is a necessary, though quite subordinate term which the universal Knowledge has imposed on itself that that movement might be possible, —not a blunder and a fall, but a purposeful descent, not a curse, but a divine opportunity.

These are the concluding lines. The Ignorance is not a curse upon humanity, it is a divine opportunity. We have seen how it is a divine opportunity not to move too swiftly, because the Ignorance has really protected us, it has brought us to the level of mind and brought us the maturity of the mind. Now, he says, move on to your Spirit, now the fences are no more required. But this is because the Ignorance has protected us and enabled the process of growth to take place, the cosmic powers have not invaded our being and prevented our growth. All these storms that would have come down and killed the growing plant have been kept out. We have been given a divine opportunity to grow; let us not grieve thinking that God has left us in Ignorance and that this it is a curse and a suffering. Sri Aurobindo says, To find and embody the All-Delight in an intense summary of its manifoldness, to achieve a possibility

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of the infinite Existence which could not be achieved in other conditions, to create out of matter a temple of the Divinity would seem to be the task imposed on the spirit born into the material universe.

The entire *raison d'être* of Ignorance has been to build out of Matter a temple of Divinity. What this means on the individual level is that out of matter, a temple of divinity will be born, that is, the transformed body, the new body. This new body will be the centre of the temple where matter itself becomes transformed. How does that happen? We have seen that the meeting of the psychic and the Supermind will result in the transformation of the physical. As Sri Aurobindo has poetically described in *Savitri*, “The Spirit shall look out through Matter’s gaze / And Matter shall reveal the Spirit’s face”, and “Out of the wood and stone of our nature’s stuff /

A temple is shaped where the high gods could live” (*Savitri*: B-VII, C-V). These lines tell us the same truth. This is the wonderful secret, that the purpose of Ignorance is to build the temple of the Divine in Matter.

The ignorance, we see, is not in the secret soul, but in the apparent Prakriti; nor does it belong to the whole of that Prakriti...but arises in some development from its original integrality of light and power. Where does that development take place, in what principle of being does it find its opportunity and starting-point? Not, certainly, in the infinite being, the infinite consciousness, the infinite delight which are the supreme planes of existence and from which all else derives or descends into this obscurer ambiguous manifestation. There it can have no place. Not in the Supermind...

We have seen what the Ignorance is, why it is there and how it is justified. Now we have to see the point where it

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 145

has intervened – the exact point of its incoming. He says here that it cannot be in Sachchidananda, nor can it come in the Supermind. Ignorance comes in on the plane of mind.

He says, “It is on the plane of mind that this putting back of the real self-consciousness becomes possible”. The mind is a completely separative Consciousness. It has partial knowledge. The mind cannot deal with total concentration or total knowledge; it does not have that capacity. This is where ignorance is most effective; he calls it a “positive and effective ignorance” and a “practical and pragmatic”

ignorance. The reason he describes it like this is that: If by any chance this supporting sense of unity could be drawn back, —it is possessed by mind not in its own separate right, but because it has the supermind behind it ... if a veil could fall between mind and supermind shutting off the light of the Truth or letting it come through only in rays diffused, scattered, reflected but with distortion and division, then the phenomenon of the Ignorance would intervene.

In Supermind there is total concentration and the sense of unity, but in Overmind there is multiple concentration, both unity and multiplicity, and at the level of the mind there is only exclusive multiplicity. What has happened between these last two levels? The ‘unity’ has been lost. The oneness, the togetherness, the totality is completely lost on the level of the mind. Therefore, he says, there is a veil between the mind and the Supermind because of which we lose the sense of unity. Sometimes it trickles down through intuition, through illumined mind, through higher mind, and suddenly one feels a great sense of oneness; but otherwise, he says, it doesn’t come in. This is what he calls a veil, which covers the Supermind or divides it from the mind, and it is this veil that

146

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Upanishads call the “golden lid”. Therefore, they were always prayerful that this lid, this veil be broken and taken away so that the Supermind could be seen, envisioned and brought down. And then he says, it does exist: Such a veil exists, says the Upanishad, constituted by the action of Mind itself: it is in Overmind a golden lid which hides the face of the supramental Truth but reflects its image...

This is a beautiful description. It hides the face of the Truth, but it reflects its image. It is not an opaque lid which does not allow anything to be seen. It hides the Supermind but we may be able to see its image. There is a reflection. We can perhaps see as if from a glass which is separate from the Supermind. What these Vedic Rishis saw was this image of Supermind. Sri Aurobindo has removed this golden lid and did not only see the image but he entered into the Supermind. This is the difference between the Vedic rishis and Sri Aurobindo. The former could describe the Supermind but not as vividly as Sri Aurobindo did. They could see the principle of Supermind more as an outline. To have the consciousness of Supermind, one has to remove this veil. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo could enter and live in the Supermind; they could give us not only an image but the reality and consciousness of Supermind. Then he says, That action is the absorbed looking downward of Mind on the diversity which is its characteristic movement and away from the supreme unity which that diversity expresses ...

The mind basically expresses the diversity and multiplicity while losing the sense of unity.

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 147

This is the last stage of the descent of consciousness, an abysmal sleep, a fathomless trance of consciousness which is the profound basis of the action of material Nature.

He continues in the next paragraph: It must be remembered, however, that when we speak of a partial movement of Consciousness-Force absorbed in its forms and actions, in a limited field of its working, this does not imply any real division of its integrality. The putting of the rest of itself behind it has only the effect of making all that rest occult to the frontal immediately active energy in the limited field of movement...

Then he goes on to say,

It is to be noted also that in order to remove the veil of the Ignorance the conscious Force of being in us uses a reverse action of its power of exclusive concentration..."

This is where the argument continues. We said that there is the golden lid of the Overmind between the Supermind and Mind, and to remove this lid, this veil of Ignorance as he would call it, there is needed a reverse action of exclusive concentration. How do we do that? He says, It quiets the frontal movements of Prakriti in the individual consciousness and concentrates exclusively on the concealed inner being...

This is the secret to remove Ignorance. We have discussed how we have used Ignorance to focus on the outer, the Prakriti, the form. Now, instead of focusing on the Prakriti, we focus on the Purusha. The Purusha is the formless, Prakriti is the form. The Divine has given us a wonderful method by which we can use concentration as a double edged sword. If we focus on the form, we enter into

148

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Ignorance, but those of us who would like to come out of this Ignorance, we must go within from the physical to the vital to the mental to the psychic. This is now the time when we have to move into the psychic being in accordance with the need and spirit of the evolution itself.

Until yesterday, the old wall was there, the Divine allowed an exclusive concentration on the Prakriti, because it was needed. But now, since 29th February 1956 the new world is born, a reverse action must start. If we do not do it for the next 500 years, it's up to us, but they have inaugurated this movement. It also does not mean that there were no people before who have not seen the Purusha. But now it is an evolutionary movement involving all of us. Those cases were exceptions to the broad evolutionary movement. In evolution there are always people who realise the future in the present, but it is more on the individual level. Now this movement of the reverse action has become a cosmic process. This cosmic process is also hastened by those individuals who move towards the psychic. The reverse process here means that we concentrate on the Purusha or, as we say, on the psychic being. Sri Aurobindo says that we don't have to negate this earthly life and escape it. If the problem is on the earth, the solution is also here. Where there is this dramatic, exclusive, great suffering of Ignorance, in that is the key. Remember the line from *Savitri*?

Life is a paradox with God for key. (*Savitri*: B-I, C-IV) The key is embedded in the same Ignorance, not up in the heavens, it is here on earth. And not only on earth, it is there in our own ignorance, which for the past thousands of years we have been trying to remove by escapist methods, by going into Brahman consciousness, by going into Nirvana. But the key is right there within us. It is a process of reversing the

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 149

action of the Ignorance Sri Aurobindo wants us to develop and go towards the Atmashakti. He says, This is what can happen when the Consciousness Force in our being decides to raise its evolution from the mental to the supramental level. In each case it is Tapas that is effective, but it acts in a different manner according to the thing that has to be done, according to the predetermined process, dynamism, self-deploying of the Infinite.

In the next paragraph he sums up the whole thing: This Ignorance is, as we have seen, really a power of the Knowledge to limit itself, to concentrate itself on the work in hand, an exclusive concentration in practice which does not prevent the full existence and working of the whole conscious being behind, but a working in the conditions chosen and self-imposed on the nature.

All conscious self-limitation is a power for its special purpose, not a weakness; all concentration is a force of conscious being, not a disability.

Now he is linking up the Ignorance with the Supreme himself, saying that Ignorance is not an evil thing, not a weakness, not a black spot in the consciousness of the Supreme.

It is true that while the Supermind is capable of an integral, comprehensive, multiple, infinite self-concentration... it is true also that it creates perverse as well as partial and, in so far, false or only half-true values of things: but we have seen the object of the limitation and of this partiality of knowledge; and the object being admitted, the power to fulfil it must be admitted also in the absolute force of the absolute Being. This power of self-limitation for a particular working, instead of being incompatible with

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the absolute conscious-force of the Being, is precisely one of the powers we should expect to exist among the manifold energies of the Infinite.

That is the grand conclusion: the Ignorance is a power of self-limitation. It is a self-limitation for a particular purpose in the world. We all know that in our own life we self-limit ourselves in order to achieve some kind of result.

We must concentrate for a while to achieve a particular object, whether playing music or writing an essay. We say, “let me please concentrate for the next hour because I want to finish reading this chapter. Please do not disturb me.” When we concentrate, there is an objective. We don’t just concentrate for the sake of it, but with an objective to be achieved. This concentration which is an ignorance of the larger self is a power of self-limitation for a particular objective of the Divine. We would never blame ourselves and say, “I was totally concentrated on what I was doing, how stupid of me!” On the contrary, the more we concentrate, the more we like the power of concentration. If we do not blame ourselves for our ability to concentrate on our own level, then why should we blame the Divine for the power of concentration which is called Ignorance? Sri Aurobindo says that this divine capacity for concentration, for this Ignorance, is not incompatible with the Divine, it is precisely one of the powers we should expect to exist among the manifold energies of the Infinite. If we say that the Infinite can have bliss, peace, harmony, why should we deny Him the capacity to concentrate exclusively and enter into the Ignorance of its larger Self? Why get into this paradox arguing that Ignorance should not be a power of Brahman, there should only be compassion and light etc. He says that the Infinite also has the power, the capacity to concentrate, the capacity to self-limit. If we say the Infinite is infinite in his capacities, can we

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 151

put in parentheses “except to self-limit himself”? If we do so it would be paradoxical! We give the Divine all potentiality, all omnipotence and then say, “Sorry, but you cannot limit yourself”, then that is a wrong definition of Omnipotence.

Sri Aurobindo tells us,

The Absolute is not really limited by putting forth in itself a cosmos of relations; it is the natural play of its absolute being, consciousness, force, self-delight. The Infinite is not limited by building up in itself an infinite series of interplaying finite phenomena; rather that is its natural self-expression. The one is not limited by its capacity for multiplicity in which it enjoys variously its own being... So too the Ignorance, considered as a power of manifoldly self-absorbed and self-limiting concentration of the conscious being, is a natural capacity of variation in his self-conscious knowledge, one of the possible poises of relation of the Absolute in its manifestation, of the Infinite in its series of finite workings of the One in its self-enjoyment in the Many... But neither really limits the integral self-aware existence of Sachchidananda which is superior to these apparent oppositions; even in their oppositions they help to express and manifest the Ineffable.

This is the grand finale, the last lines of this Chapter 13.

What we see in these beautiful words is that this power of

“self-limiting concentration of the conscious being, is a natural capacity of variation”. It is just like my capacity to concentrate, to imagine, to discriminate, to reason— which are the natural capacities of my mind. In fact, we say a person is mentally undeveloped if he cannot concentrate, a imagine, or reason. The Divine also should be able to concentrate, he should be able to self-limit, and he should be able to

152

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* create. The difference between us and the Divine is that these faculties in us are limited and partial. When we engage these faculties, we identify with them, we become them. In contrast, the Supreme has an infinite multiplicity, but it is not the sum total of this multiplicity, he is always beyond.

He can have multiplicity, he can have the concentration, he can self-limit himself, but he is not exhausted by this multiplicity, he is always still

conscious of Himself beyond these things. This is why Sri Aurobindo says that “even in their oppositions they help to express and manifest the Ineffable”. They do not limit the integral self-aware existence of Sachchidananda. Sachchidananda is always beyond his own creation. Whatever he creates, it is his natural aspect.

But he always stands beyond.

These two chapters of 12 and 13 make one continuous series, because the first raises the problem of the Ignorance and the second gives the solution. These are two of the most magnificent and crucial chapters of *The Life Divine* because not many philosophers or spiritual teachers have dealt with this question of the Ignorance so vividly, so squarely. People have tried to avoid it by giving some false or partial or side explanations; but here is someone who has faced the problem squarely, dealt it with from different angles and ultimately convinces us that the Ignorance is one of the natural faculties and capacities of the Divine.

Lecture Notes

I. Integral Brahman cannot be the source of the Ignorance because its integrality is in its very nature all-consciousness. The Many cannot be ignorant of the One or the others because the Many, though individualised indeed,

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 153

is the same Divine Self. Hence, Ignorance cannot be in the Many either.

Ignorance is the outcome of some particularising action in the executive Conscious-Force when it is absorbed in a superficial or partial action of the consciousness.

Ignorance is nature's purposeful oblivion of the Self and the All, leaving them outside, putting them behind herself in order to do solely what she has to do in some outer play of existence.

II. Tapas or the concentration of consciousness, which is inherent in Consciousness-Force, and which, in fact, brings about Ignorance has however four different states of concentration:

a) The superconscient silence or the inconscient = a luminous or else self-oblivious self immersion
b) The supramental concentration = a total multiple concentration

c) The global overmental consciousness = a part multiple concentration

d) The separative concentration = a single-pointed concentration in one centre

III. As such, an exclusive concentration is not a denial of the spirit's awareness—it is one form of the self-gathering of the power of Tapas.

But, when the concentration is exclusive and brings about a holding back of the rest of self-knowledge, then it is a positive and effective ignorance.

IV. By understanding the working of ignorance in human consciousness, we may understand the nature of exclusive concentration of the Divine consciousness.

a) What we understand by human consciousness is that

154

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* it is only a sum of apparent continuous movements of consciousness and energy in past, present and future. It is a temporal stream of inward and outward workings.

b) But behind this stream is the sea of consciousness consisting of the subliminal self, the subconscious, the intraconscient and circumconscient being, of which the stream is not aware. It is this hidden sea which is the source of all our action. It is this absorption on the superficial which is one of the causes of Ignorance.

c) Man is, at the same time, as an action of the superficial consciousness, aware only of the passing present and not of the past or the future. This

forgetting of himself in the present is the second absorption, a second exclusive concentration leading him to Ignorance. “Yet all that he forgets is contained, present and effective, in the all-retaining integral consciousness within him”.

V. This power of exclusive concentration extends to a complete self-forgetfulness in the particular action. In fact, this capacity, though not universal in all, is what brings man his success in work.

This complete self-absorption leading to a complete self-forgetfulness makes man for the moment an instrument of an inspired impersonal energy which works itself out in formation of work and rhythm. So, man often at such times becomes the energy of the passion which preoccupies him—becomes that energy.

VI. On the universal this phenomenon of self-forgetfulness or exclusive consciousness is absolute, just as temporary

Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance 155

ignorance is the result of man's exclusive self-absorption.

So Inconscience of Matter is the result of an exclusive concentration of the Universal consciousness. Similar to man's example of creativity in the state of exclusive concentration, Inconscience too is a state of divine creation. Because behind this Inconscience, there is also the same ocean of the All-conscious.

The only difference between the action of Ignorance and Inconscience is that the former is temporary and the latter turns into a law of action.

VII. a) This being the root nature of Ignorance, the reason for the Ignorance, its necessity “becomes clear enough once we have seen that without it the object of the manifestation of our world would be impossible, could not be done at all, or not completely, or not in the way in which it should be and is done.”

b) Had it not been for ignorance, man living in his timeless being could not have thrown himself in the stream of Time. Living in the universal consciousness, man could not involve himself in the separate action and personality.

c) Otherwise, if the Infinite and the Eternal were around him all the time, he would not have worked out his present relations with the world. For the present he has to live in the mind absorbed in this bodily life and not in the Supermind.

d) The purpose for which all this Ignorance is necessary is to trace the cycle of self- oblivion and self-discovery for the joy of which the Ignorance is assumed in Nature by the secret spirit.

e) Without this pattern, manifestation and evolution

156

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* would not have been the same as it is now. It would have been confined to the higher worlds of the Divine Existence, and this evolving cycle would be impossible.

f) Sachchidananda has put on the Lila of finding himself in the apparent opposites of His Being. And in the process of self-discovery, which seems to be the object of this evolution, there is no haste, for longer the separation the greater the delight of reunion.

VII. Ignorance thus does not belong to the whole of Prakriti, not to the Purusha, nor to Supermind. It is only on the plane of the Mind that there is this putting back of the real consciousness. It is so because a veil has fallen between Mind and Supermind shutting off the light of the Truth. This veil is in Overmind—it is the golden lid described by the Upanishads.

VIII. Ignorance can be removed by a reverse action of the consciousness—instead of concentration on the surface, in certain superficial workings, we must concentrate exclusively on our concealed psychic being. This would bring in integral or global consciousness which include both the Purusha and Prakriti—the soul and its instruments.

In each case it is the Tapas that is effective—to conceal or to reveal the Truth.

IX. Ignorance is therefore “really a power of the Knowledge to limit itself, to concentrate itself on the work in hand...” So Ignorance is not incompatible with the absolute Conscious-Force of that Being. It is a natural capacity of variation in his self-conscious knowledge, one of the possible poises of relation of the Absolute in its eternal manifestation. ***

Chapter – XIV

The Origin and Remedy of

Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil This chapter “The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil”, continues with the same theme of the previous one, but applied on a different level. In the previous chapter, Sri Aurobindo discussed the meaning of Ignorance, which is a fundamental concept, and has said that it is “a self-limiting knowledge oblivious of the integral self-awareness and confined to an exclusive concentration in a single field”.

Ignorance is only a self-limitation of Knowledge; it is not absence of knowledge. This self-limited knowledge is focused on a particular area – that is “a concealing surface of cosmic movement”.

We are all students of philosophy, and we may agree with Sri Aurobindo’s definition of the Ignorance. But then the question arises as to what about evil, falsehood and error?

We can accept a philosophic answer to Ignorance, but evil, falsehood and error impact our day-to-day life much more. We cannot have a philosophic attitude towards these. Whether we know the definition of Ignorance or not it would not affect our day-to-day life. But if somebody throws a bomb, or we have had an accident and are suffering physical pain, or some people are harassing us, these things affect us intimately. We read in the newspaper or watch TV and we see terrorism all around us – that is falsehood and evil! If I say that person is ignorant of the Vedas, it doesn’t bother me. But if someone says a terrorist has been

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* arrested, it draws my attention. Sri Aurobindo would ask us here whether we can accept evil with the same kind of detachment that we accepted Ignorance? That is the first question he has raised in this paragraph.

Sri Aurobindo says that we can imagine that Ignorance was necessary in this creation because the Divine wanted to focus upon certain things to develop them. Just as we focus upon certain things in order to understand them better so does the Divine. The divine consciousness self-limits itself in order to focus and work upon something that is intended in the evolution. We can accept that it was necessary, but if I say that evil also is necessary, then we feel disturbed.

We ask, is all this terrorism necessary? Is all this falsehood and killing and violence necessary? Somehow we cannot mentally accept this because it impacts our day-to-day living Sri Aurobindo says:

...the necessity of falsehood and error, the necessity of wrong and evil or their utility in the workings of the omnipresent Divine Reality is less easily admissible

...For in the complete and inalienable self-knowledge of the Brahman which is necessarily all-knowledge, since all this that is is the Brahman, such phenomena cannot have come in as a chance, an intervening accident, an involuntary forgetfulness or confusion of the Consciousness-Force...

If we say that the Divine is all-knowledge, how can He admit this falsehood and evil knowingly? We have a different image of God or the Divine! Is it that the Brahman or Divine doesn't know about this falsehood and evil? But don't we say that he is the all-knowing? How is it that knowing the dangers of this evil and falsehood and its impacts on the human consciousness he has admitted it? Or is it as some

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 159

people say, “this falsehood and evil is a mystery, don’t put the blame on Brahman, we cannot really understand it, let’s avoid the question”. Or else, some people would say that it is a kind of an accident in the evolution. But can we really accept this concept that there can be anything in this universe and world that comes as an accident without the knowledge of Brahman? That’s not possible. These are different possible answers that people have given – “an intervening accident, an involuntary forgetfulness, a confusion”. It is because we are not able to explain the origin of falsehood, people have come out with all kinds of solutions.

Sri Aurobindo, being a philosopher *par excellence*, a philosopher who always tried to find out the root cause of everything – be it illusion, ignorance, knowledge, or falsehood – and has always gone to the very depth and root of all problems, he does not accept these arguments. In the second paragraph, he lays down three main arguments that he will discuss in this chapter. Referring to the problem of falsehood and evil, he says:

This problem may be taken up from three points of view,

—its relation to the Absolute, the Supreme Reality, its origin and place in the cosmic workings, its action and point of hold in the individual being.

These are the fundamental questions. The entire chapter is divided into these three fundamental questions, and obviously we are all interested in knowing this. First, does falsehood and evil come from the Absolute? We have first to clarify this question. If we say that everything comes from the Divine, from Brahman, from Sachchidananda, from the Absolute, then falsehood and evil also come from the Absolute. Is it so? If so, how? If we say, no, the Brahman has nothing to do with falsehood and evil, then we have already

160

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* discussed that this argument too is unacceptable as He is all-knowing. We will see how Sri Aurobindo tackles this issue.

Second, what is the origin of falsehood and evil and its place in the cosmic workings? Our Shastras, our ancient scriptures, have talked about Rakshasas and Pisachas and the gods, and Christianity has talked about Satan and God.

We have always talked about falsehood and evil as cosmic powers, and we say that there is a universal Asura or a cosmic Satan. What is the truth about this origin that is in the scriptures? What is the relation of falsehood and evil with the cosmos?

Third, we have the question of what is the influence of falsehood and evil on us individual beings, and how does this falsehood come upon the human consciousness? Is it inevitable? We see that there are three aspects to the problem, transcendental, cosmic and individual. Sri Aurobindo deals with the question on these three levels.

Now, taking up the first question of the relation of falsehood and evil with the Absolute, Sri Aurobindo writes: It is evident that these contrary phenomena have no direct root in the supreme Reality itself, there is nothing there that has this character; they are creations of the Ignorance and Inconscience, not fundamental or primary aspects of the Being...

He says that there cannot be falsehood and evil in Brahman – it is not possible. This is our first reaction. The Divine is pure Sat, Chit, Ananda. There cannot be anything wrong, there cannot be anything evil in it. But if it is not in the Divine Supreme, where is it? What could be the source, the seed of ignorance and falsehood and error? Obviously, they must be there in the Ignorance and in the Inconscience.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 161

But this is based on spiritual experience, we have not yet given a rational argument about it. If the evil is not there in the Brahman, then the evil is there in the Inconscience, in the Ignorance.

It is sometimes reasoned that as Truth and Good have their absolutes, so falsehood and evil must also have their absolutes. The first assertion is based on spiritual experience, but then some philosophers argue that in the

same way there may be an absolute evil. We speak of God and Satan, we speak of the great Asuras. If there is an absolute good, there must be an absolute evil also. If evil is not in Brahman, and evil exists, it must be outside Brahman, and therefore, it could be due to a godhead called Satan. Christianity answers this question of why is there evil by creating Satan. Why is there love? Well, there is Christ, the good, compassionate divine Being, it comes from him. All good things in human beings belong to Christ and all bad things belong to Satan. There is a very clear division with no unanswerable philosophical issues involved in it.

Unfortunately, Indian philosophy is in trouble because we say that everything is in Brahman. Regarding the idea that falsehood and evil are also absolutes like the Divine Being, Sri Aurobindo says:

But this is not the fundamental truth of the relation of these opposites; for, in the first place, Falsehood and Evil are, unlike Truth and Good, very clearly results of the Ignorance and cannot exist where there is no Ignorance: they can have no self-existence in the Divine Being, they cannot be native elements of the Supreme Nature.

If, then, the limited Knowledge which is the nature of Ignorance renounces its limitations, if Ignorance

162

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* disappears into knowledge, evil and falsehood can no longer endure...

Indian philosophy tackles the problem differently. It says that everything is in Brahman. But at the same time, evil cannot be in Brahman. Then where does it come in? It comes with the Ignorance and the Inconscience. And where does the Ignorance come from? It is the self-limitation of the Brahman's own consciousness. It is so wonderfully said! We said that the Brahman is the Absolute, who self-limits himself in creation, and this results in Ignorance, and at the extreme level becomes the Inconscience. That is the structure of this Creation. Sri Aurobindo and our ancient philosophy tell us that evil and falsehood belong to Inconscience and Ignorance.

Sri Aurobindo holds to the Vedantic formula: Everything is in Brahman
Good is in Brahman, evil is in Brahman.

But he does not say that evil is in the original Absolute.

In the Absolute Brahman, there is no evil. It comes in the manifestation of Brahman – in time and space. In the Absolute Brahman, there is nothing except Truth, Consciousness, Existence and Bliss. But as Brahman comes into the process of involution, which ends in the Ignorance and Inconscience, somewhere along the line of this process there is the birth of falsehood and evil. The rest of this chapter is going to deal with where exactly they come in. The first point, however, is that they do not come in the Absolute itself. They indirectly belong to Brahman, not directly. They come indirectly because it is, after all, Brahman who has become the Ignorance. We can conclude this part by saying that falsehood and evil exist not in the Absolute Brahman, but in Brahman in its manifestation.

Do falsehood and evil come in as an accident? No. As

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 163

a chance? No, because Brahman is all-knowledge. They come in by his own knowledge. It is a knowledge which is purposeful. That is the beauty of Indian philosophy, that there is an intention in this evil and falsehood. They are not there *per chance*. They do not come into Brahman from the back door without the knowledge of the Brahman. Evil, falsehood, error and Ignorance come in with the complete consent and intention of Brahman.

If it is coming with the intention of Brahman, then can this falsehood and evil disappear? That's the next question.

Can we say that there will be an end to Ignorance? Can we say that there will be an end to falsehood and evil? If there is to be an end to falsehood and error, it can only be when there is an end of Ignorance and the Inconscience. They were born in Ignorance, and it is only when Ignorance is abolished that falsehood and error will be over, not until then.

Now, there is a third question: how do we get out of the Ignorance and Inconscience? That is the last question that Sri Aurobindo is going to deal with. We see that it is a wonderfully structured argument. Because it's a long chapter, we tend to lose our path; so we should keep in mind that Sri Aurobindo would be answering these three fundamental questions. He says:

...if Ignorance disappears into Knowledge, evil and falsehood can no longer endure: for both are fruits of unconsciousness and wrong consciousness and, if true or whole consciousness is there replacing Ignorance, they have no longer any basis for their existence.

When Ignorance is replaced by Knowledge, then there is no falsehood. We see it in our normal life also. In Ignorance, we commit errors. When we come to know the truth of a thing, we don't commit mistakes. If one operates a computer

164

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* without having its knowledge, one makes mistakes. But if one goes to a computer class and learns about it, then he/she would not commit the same mistakes. It is the same thing in evolution; when Ignorance is replaced by Knowledge, then falsehood goes away. But we may ask when will the Ignorance be replaced by Knowledge? It will be replaced by Knowledge when there comes in the supramental consciousness. Now, we understand why Sri Aurobindo wanted to bring in the Supermind with the great tapasya that he did.

Sri Aurobindo was working on the cosmic level for the liberation of humanity forever and for good. So we can imagine the work that he did. He brought in the Supermind to replace this Ignorance. When the Supermind manifests actively, Ignorance will disappear gradually, and thereafter falsehood too will disappear. To realise this is the work of an Avatar. All the other things are steps to concretise this consciousness on the material level. Auroville and Ashram and all the centers in the country and in the world are tiny footstools on the way of manifesting that Truth, because even for the Supermind to hold onto the earth it requires a base.

Let us continue with our reading:

...the relativity of truth and error, good and evil is a fact of our experience, but it is similarly a bi-product, it is not a permanent factor native to existence; for it is true only of the valuations made by the human consciousness, true only of our partial knowledge and partial ignorance.

Evil and error are only by-products of Ignorance, and they do not belong to the Absolute. Truth is relative to us because our knowledge is surrounded by Ignorance.

Our vision stops short at outside appearances which are

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 165

not the complete truth of things, and, if we go deeper, the illuminations we arrive at are guesses or inferences or intimations, not indubitable realities. We can understand why truth is relative because each one of us thinks that we are correct. Each religion says that it has the greatest truth.

Why? It is because, Sri Aurobindo observes, we focus on the outside appearances which are not complete truths. With our limited experience we infer, we guess. Most of our concepts are guesses and inferences.

Even when we think we understand the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, we don't understand them at all. We have a little drop of love for them, an iota, and from there we expand this concept of the Mother's consciousness in our imagination. We have all read the small booklet *The Mother*.

Do we really understand it? Well, mentally we may be able to explain it, but when Sri Aurobindo says that the Mother is the Supramental Mahashakti who has come down upon earth, who has delimited herself so that human-kind can really know her, how much do we really know of her?

Nothing. In fact, what we should realise is that we hardly know anything because it is not an experiential knowledge for us. It's all inferences or intimations. We get some intuition perhaps. When we sit near the Samadhi, we may get a bit of inspiration; but that is such a small idea that we can't really understand the real nature of the Mother. It is only Sri Aurobindo who realised the fullness of the Mother, and vice versa. To capture that

large consciousness that is the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, we need to have a container which can contain that infinity. We are finite little beings, how can we contain the Mother in our consciousness?

That is why we have so many misunderstandings, misjudgments and misinterpretations of Sri Aurobindo

166

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and the Mother. People have started coming out with their own interpretations. Even I am now projecting my own understanding and inferences. There is no absolute truth in any one of us, and that should humble us. What I am saying is just a mere farfetched reflection of a truth. What we have is a relative truth:

...our conclusions are partial, speculative or constructed, our statement of them, which is the expression of our indirect contact with the reality, has the nature of representations or figures, word-images of thought-perceptions that are themselves images.

He goes into the details to tell us that much of what we say, what we think to be right, and our judgements are far off the mark because we depend on images and reference points. We even depend often on things like “somebody told me this about that person”; this is all such an indirect knowledge. In one word it is all ‘hearsay’. All our knowledge is a hearsay and ultimately turns into heresy because it is so lopsided. Sri Aurobindo says:

It might almost be said that no mental statement of things can be altogether true; it is not Truth bodied, pure and nude, but a draped figure... But this character does not apply to truth perceived by a direct action of consciousness or to the truth of knowledge by identity; our seeing there may be limited, but so far as it extends, it is authentic, ...error may attach itself to a direct or identical vision of things by a mental accretion...

Hence, all this indirect knowledge is untrue. In simple words, a simple conclusion is anything indirect is untrue.

It is only when there is a directness that we can have the authenticity of experience; this directness alone leads us to truth. That is the conclusion we can draw here.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 167

Ignorance in its origin has not this self-existence or this authenticity; it exists by a limitation or absence or abeyance of knowledge, error by a deviation from truth, falsehood by a distortion of truth or its contradiction and denial.

Please mark the definition of error here, – it is “a deviation from truth.” This is a very clear and crisp definition. We have said that ignorance is a self-limitation of knowledge, and now, error “a deviation from truth”, and that falsehood is “a distortion of truth”. We can see how falsehood is more dangerous than error. If I say that I saw three persons sitting there but there were really four persons, that is an error, and it is a deviation from the truth. But if I say that there were three persons and they were all sleeping, that becomes falsehood because I am not only saying something wrong but I am distorting the truth. That become dangerous.

Falsehood brings in a malicious intention.

Again, of good and evil it can be said that one exists by true consciousness, the other survives only by wrong consciousness: if there is an unmixed true consciousness, good alone can exist; it is no longer mixed with evil or formed in its presence.

This brings into focus one of the important points that we often discuss in our daily life about good and evil. Sometimes we may ask, why is it that this man is suffering of cancer? All his life he has been a saintly person, and he has not harmed anybody. And then we say, look at that politician, he is a complete crook, and yet he is rich and seems to live happily with good health! We sometimes see evil people enjoying good fortune and good persons falling victim to evil. To such pertinent questions, Sri Aurobindo gives a wonderful answer here. First, he says:

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Human values of good and evil, as of truth and error, are indeed uncertain and relative: what is held as truth in one place or time is held in another place or time to be error; what is regarded as good is elsewhere or in other times regarded as evil. We find too that what we call evil results in good, what we call good results in evil.

Before we can answer why good people suffer and evil ones are happy we have to understand what is the definition of “good” itself. It is something relative; there is no permanent good. What is good for one may not be good for the other and what is good for one today may not be good for him/her after three years. “Good” keeps changing its meaning. To have a car, for example, may seem good for me, but when suddenly there is a petrol hike, the same car may become a burden. It is a very mundane and simple example, but we can apply this principle in all walks of life. What is good in one place may be bad in another. For example, in the West, eating food made of refined flour may be good. The weather conditions may permit it but in Indian weather conditions it is not recommendable. So, what is the definition of good? It changes by time, it changes by place.

We have to be clear that there is nothing permanently good, nor anything permanently evil. So, first of all, Sri Aurobindo breaks our notion of good and bad.

Once we are liberated of this definition, then only we can answer the second part of the question – why is it that sometimes we have untoward outcomes of good resulting in evil. Sri Aurobindo says:

But this untoward outcome of good producing evil is due to the confusion and mixture of knowledge and ignorance, to the penetration of true consciousness by wrong consciousness, so that there is an ignorant

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 169

or mistaken application of our good, or it is due to the intervention of afflicting forces. In the opposite case of evil producing good, the happier and contradictory result is due to the intervention of some true consciousness and force acting behind and in spite of some wrong

consciousness and wrong will or it is due to the intervention of redressing forces.

This is one of the most beautiful explanations we have to this eternal problem. Sometimes, I wanted to do some good, but unfortunately because of a wrong consciousness or a wrong execution or application, it ended in an evil result.

As a parent you may want to do something good for your child, but because of ignorance, or a confused mixture of knowledge and ignorance, it goes wrong. For example, you give your daughter in marriage to a boy in America, thinking your daughter will live happily ever after, but unfortunately within three months, you find that her husband is corrupt and unworthy of your daughter. Then you say, “What has happened? I wanted to do good to my daughter, and now she has landed up in trouble.” There are many such cases.

Sri Aurobindo says that behind your intention of doing good there was also a mixture of ignorance; you thought that money would bring happiness to your daughter, that America would be better than India! You thought that materialism is the source of happiness and not spirituality.

You have brought in that suffering upon your daughter because you had the wrong values, because you are confused in your values due to your ignorance your good intentions may lead to evil results.

Now, the opposite may also happen – evil sometimes brings good. You chuck your son out of the house saying, you are not a good son, you are not behaving properly. Then he goes out, stands on his feet, gets a knock from the society,

170

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and his innate capacities come forth. How does that happen?

Sri Aurobindo says, “in spite of wrong consciousness”, there is “the intervention of some true consciousness and force acting behind”. Although

you sent your child out, in the depth of your heart you felt, “Oh Lord, may my son be happy”. There was a true consciousness, a good prayer, something positive. Although you sent him into problems, goodness was there within you, that prayer went out, and there was an intervention of a higher force which made something good happen.

This is a philosophical clarification of this eternal question.

Especially, when people become very ill, I have heard dozens of people saying, “He has been such a wonderful person, why did God punish him?” It is no punishment, God never punishes. That is not an enlightened understanding. An enlightened bhakta will never say, “God punishes me”; it is the ignorant bhakta who thinks that God will punish. This is a crude religious belief. As religious beliefs and as human knowledge increases, we see that God does not punish.

Through evolution, our conception of God also evolves.

In the beginning, we had a God who punishes and who is always watching whether we are doing good or bad and keeps track of all our good and bad deeds, and they are all judged at the end. That is because human consciousness was at a very basic level. But as human consciousness evolves, these ideas of punishment become redundant. Also, we should not in our own way bring in this old idea into our conception of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo saying, “The Mother will be unhappy, she will punish me.” We should not think of such things in relation to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Otherwise, we are dragging them into an old, age-old, pre-historic religion almost, like when they said that

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 171

Indra is angry and he is sending you lightning, or Varuna is angry and is releasing all those storms.

Another important point made in this paragraph is about the relation of physical evil with ignorance. Sri Aurobindo write: It might be objected that

physical evil, such as pain and most bodily suffering, is independent of knowledge and ignorance, of right and wrong consciousness, inherent in physical Nature.

We can understand that falsehood and evil are connected with ignorance but when we are in pain, when we get a bad stomach ache, is it also because of ignorance? Can we think that it is because we are in inconscience that we are getting a stomach pain? Sri Aurobindo suggests that in case of physical pain and suffering, this philosophy seems to be off the mark. Sri Aurobindo asks – how can we connect this issue of falsehood and error and ignorance to pain and physical suffering? But both Sri Aurobindo and Vedanta stick to the same argument. The Buddha might have said to take the injured bird to the healer, but Vedanta says that you can take him to the healer, but for this cruelty on birds not to be repeated, you have to do something about it. The healer may help in this individual instance, but it will not take away pain forever. Sri Aurobindo is going to deal with the physical pain of humanity, not only of an individual.

Why is there this physical pain and suffering in humanity?

He says:

...fundamentally, all pain and suffering are the result of an insufficient consciousness-force in the surface being which makes it unable to deal rightly with self and Nature

172

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* or unable to assimilate and to harmonise itself with the contacts of the universal Energy...

Here, he gives us one conclusive sentence; that fundamentally they “are the result of an insufficient consciousness-force in the surface being which makes it unable to deal rightly”

with outside things. It means that our body or physical consciousness is unable to receive Sachchidananda’s Force.

I will give a very crude but real example. Sometimes when we sit for meditation for a long time, our feet become numb.

We all have experienced this? From the knees downwards it becomes so numb that we can't get up immediately after the meditation. At that time, if we touch our feet, press them, we experience pain. We can't even rub our feet very hard but have to do it gently so that the blood circulation comes back.

If we hold them hard, we see that there is tremendous pain.

That means, our feet, which have become numb, are unable to support a conscious touch. My hand is conscious. When it touches the feet, which are numb, it gives pain, because the feet are not able to take that consciousness upon themselves.

It is a simple example of our body-consciousness becoming incapable of receiving a touch of the Sachchidananda-Force, so it reacts in pain. Why does a Yogi get less pain in the body? Because his body-consciousness is receptive to this touch of Sachchidananda. He does not feel the pain. This suggests that the more pain we get, the more our body is tamasic, it's non-receptive to the higher forces.

Of this pain and suffering, Sri Aurobindo says, "they would not exist if in us there were an integral presence of the luminous Consciousness". We talk about the transformation of matter, but the transformation of the physical is to make this body receptive to the Divine Consciousness. What is the meaning of realisation? When we say he is a realised person

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 173

or he has realised his soul, what is the real meaning? Who is

'he' and what is the 'soul'? Did he not have the soul before?

He always had a soul, he has only become aware of what already existed. Similarly, when the body realises its higher consciousness, then it has no pain. So, the transformation of the physical is in a way nothing new, it is

just that the body becomes aware that there is Ananda around it. When the body becomes aware of this consciousness-force and Ananda, then it is transformed. Physical transformation is that which occurs when it can absorb Sachchidananda around it without any reaction. It is a very simple definition!

But when will that happen? How can it happen? Can our body ever become aware of Sachchidananda? It can, provided it undergoes some changes. If one realises one's soul perhaps he/she will be able to become receptive to the higher force. But how does one realise the soul? One has to practice meditation, read scriptures, undergo purification, and do all that is required to make oneself ready for the realisation.

Similarly, the body has to undergo some practices, some tapasya. Then only it becomes aware of Sachchidananda.

Transformation pre-exists in Nature, it is a God-given faculty within us. Sri Aurobindo asks us to do something which is a hidden potential in us already, it is not something new. What he has done is to make us aware that there is this possibility in us which can be brought out. Sri Aurobindo concludes this by saying,

Therefore the relation of truth to falsehood, of good to evil is, not a mutual dependence, but is in the nature of a contradiction of as of light and shadow; a shadow depends on light for its existence, but light does not depend for its existence on the shadow.

This is an argument that we should remember. What is the

174

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* relation of falsehood and evil with the Absolute? We said that falsehood and evil are not absolute, they are relative. They are relative realities but not absolute realities. Just as shadow depends on light but light does not depend on shadow, so too, falsehood and evil depend on ignorance, and ignorance depends on truth, but truth does not depend on falsehood and evil. Finally, he says:

The relation between the Absolute and these contraries of some of its fundamental aspects is not that they are opposite fundamental aspects of the Absolute; falsehood and evil have no fundamentality, no power of infinity or eternal being, no self-existence even by latency in the Self-Existent, no authenticity of an original inherence.

Now, he deals with the question of the origin of falsehood and evil. He gives us an elaborate answer which we will take up now. He writes:

It is no doubt a fact that once truth or good manifests, the conception of falsehood and evil becomes a possibility; for whenever there is an affirmation, its negation becomes conceivable.

This is almost Upanishadic in its style. “Whenever there is an affirmation, its negation becomes conceivable.” Why am I saying it is Upanishadic? The Upanishad says that Brahman is *iti iti*, and *neti neti*, which means “It is this, It is that”, and also the opposite, “It is not this, It is not that” .

By extension, by the very fact that we say Brahman is good, it raises the possibility that Brahman also is not good.

Its negation becomes conceivable. When does it become conceivable? He says here, “It is no doubt a fact that once truth or good manifests...” The word used here suggests that evil and falsehood come in the manifestation; they are not

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 175

present on the transcendental level. In manifestation, “the conception of falsehood and evil becomes a possibility”.

Sri Aurobindo clarifies further:

...for whenever there is an affirmation, its negation becomes conceivable. As the manifestation of existence, consciousness and delight made the manifestation of non-existence, inconscience, insensibility conceivable and, because conceivable, therefore in a way inevitable, for all possibilities push

towards actuality until they reach it, so is it with these contraries of the aspects of the Divine Existence.

He has packed so much of thought in this sentence that we have to tread slowly to understand it. We have said this many times, but may be we should take it up once again. We have talked about *Tat* or the Unmanifest, which is prior to manifestation. This *Tat* manifests and is called Sachchidananda, meaning Infinite Existence, Consciousness, Bliss. The very fact that they manifested created the conceivable possibility that there could be an opposite of this also. If I say, I will go right side, then that means I could go to the left side also. So if there is Bliss, there exists the possibility of suffering; if there is existence, then there is the possibility of non-existence also. If the possibility is there, it can become a reality. That is a beautiful part of Indian philosophy.

Further, “...for all possibilities push towards actuality until they reach it, so is it with these contraries of the aspects of the Divine Existence” This evolution is one in which every possibility of the divine manifestation becomes an actuality at one level or the other. That’s why, I think, evolution takes so much time. Otherwise, it could have progressed in a straight line. But the Divine, in building this universe,

176

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* has infinite possibilities. He gives each possibility a chance to play itself out. That is why there is an infinite Lila, an infinite game. This is what Sri Aurobindo describes here as

“all possibilities push towards actuality until they reach it”.

It may be said on this ground that these opposites, since they must be immediately perceivable by the manifesting Consciousness on the very threshold of manifestation, can take rank as implied absolutes and are inseparable from all cosmic existence. But it must first be noted that it is only in cosmic manifestation that they become possible; they cannot pre-exist in the timeless being...

Let's note this idea that all these possibilities become realities; in the "cosmic manifestation". They do not exist in the timelessness of Transcendent Brahman. Thus the cosmos is the playground of all divine possibilities. He says: In cosmos also, they cannot come into being except by a limitation of truth and good into partial and relative forms and by a breaking up of the unity of existence and consciousness into separative consciousness and separative being.

This is again a crucial sentence. In the cosmic manifestation, there is every possibility. But how do these possibilities become realities? It is because of ignorance.

How did ignorance come about? We have seen that this ignorance came about by a self-limitation of knowledge, and by a breaking up of the unity of existence. Why are we in ignorance? It is by a process of self-limitation.

For example, when I read *The Life Divine*, I may start reading chapter four, paragraph one. I sit at the table and start reading. The moment I start reading, I focus my concentration and consciousness. When I focus, I am

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 177

exclusively on that first paragraph. What is happening to me? I set aside everything else. If somebody comes into my drawing room, I may request them to wait as I am reading.

All other thoughts are set aside. The phrase 'set aside' means that I am breaking this unity of existence. This is precisely what is happening in all of us. The Divine has self-limited himself as human beings, and the self-limitation is so very compact that ultimately I think I am separate and different from you. The self-limitation comes to such a narrowness that I become ego-centred. What is the ego? It is the consciousness of being an 'I' that is separate from everything else. I forget that actually we all are one.

The reverse process which goes from the I-ness to we-ness, is called realisation. If I say I am a realised soul, what is the realisation? That we are all one, that we have a common source! This is what Sri Aurobindo is explaining, that Ignorance and falsehood and error come in the

manifestation, and these realities are possible because of the self-limitation of consciousness, and the breaking up of the oneness. If we want to come out of Ignorance, we must reverse the process and begin to see that the world is one family, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. He only is realised who has realised that “all is one family of the Divine”. If you want to come out of ignorance, to come out of falsehood, we must reverse the process of self-limitation. If we want to go out of this hall, we must go back the same way that we came in. The Divine has self-limited himself and become an ego, now we have to go back and become the cosmic, become the Transcendent consciousness that is how we get out of the Ignorance.

There is a famous Mahabharata story that Arjuna’s son, Abhimanyu, was caught in a *chakravyuha*, a labyrinth of

178

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* which he did not know the way out. We are trapped in the labyrinth of Ignorance. Arjuna wanted to tell his son the way to come out of the *chakravyuha* when he was still in the womb, but Subhadra, the would-be-mother fell asleep and he did not learn the final secret of how to get out of it.

The secret of going out is given by the Lord only to some people, whereas others are tied by the same fetters, in the same *chakravyuha*, thinking that they are achieving this or that but are simply going around in the same maze. It’s only a few who are able to get out.

The best way to get out is not on the same horizontal level but to go out vertically. Go higher in consciousness, then only one can avoid all this ignorance; otherwise, this world is very congested, and we cannot fight our way out. The best way is to fly up. That is called the change of consciousness.

It is by heightening our consciousness that we can get out of this ignorance and these trappings of the world.

Earlier, Sri Aurobindo had said:

Ignorance in its origin has not this self-existence or this authenticity; it exists by a limitation or absence or abeyance of knowledge, error by a deviation from truth, falsehood by a distortion of truth or its contradiction and denial.

There is a very interesting concept here. What is the meaning of authenticity? When I say it's an authentic report, that means it is a true report and not a false or a made-up one. Authenticity denotes something that is real and true as against something false. He says that ignorance does not have this authenticity. If ignorance does not have the authenticity, that means it is false. Why is it so? As he explained –

authenticity also means that it has a self-existence; it is something that exists by itself. It is what we call in Sanskrit

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 179

swayambhu – born of itself, existing in itself. Anything that exists in itself and by itself, we call authentic. In that way Divine alone is authentic. We don't have authenticity because we do not have the original consciousness. Ours is a limited, distorted, perverted consciousness. It is in this line that Sri Aurobindo says that in its origin ignorance does not have this self-existence. We have already seen that ignorance is not absolute, it is only relative.

Having said that, let us take up the next sentence: As soon as separateness enters, these things also can enter; but even this simultaneity is not inevitable. If there is sufficient mutuality, even in the absence of an active sense of oneness, and if the separate beings do not transgress or deviate from their norms of limited knowledge, harmony and truth can still be sovereign and evil will have no gate of entry.

We have seen that falsehood and evil come only in the manifestation; they are not there in the Transcendent. But how and why does it come in the manifestation There are two reasons. One is that in the manifestation there is always a self-limitation of consciousness and as a corollary, this self-limitation takes away the oneness of consciousness. It brings a separative

consciousness. What he says here is that this separative consciousness does not necessarily bring evil.

He says we can avoid falsehood, we can avoid evil, if within our limited knowledge and capacity we do not deviate from our norms of limited knowledge, we could then maintain harmony and truth; evil would have no gate of entry. This is something applicable to our life. If we maintain harmony and balance, an equilibrium within our limited thing, we would avoid falsehood and evil. We are not talking about being in supramental or even in the higher mind. Even within

180

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* our limited consciousness, if we can maintain harmony in ourselves and with others, with our family, our society and community, that will to a great extent stop falsehood and evil from coming into our lives. This is something which we can all practice.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

There is, therefore, no authentic inevitable cosmicity of falsehood and evil even as there is no absoluteness; they are circumstances or results that arise only at a certain stage when separativeness culminates in opposition and ignorance in a primitive unconsciousness of knowledge and a resultant wrong consciousness and wrong knowledge with its content of wrong will, wrong feeling, wrong action and wrong reaction.

This is an idea that we have seen before, that evil does not have an absoluteness but has come about at a certain stage of evolution. It is not there right from the beginning; it is only a stage. In this stage, he says, “separativeness culminates in opposition and ignorance in a primary unconsciousness”

and it is there that we have wrong will, wrong feeling, etc.

Because of the intervention of evil at this stage, wrong comes into feelings, actions, thoughts, etc.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

The question is at what juncture of cosmic manifestation the opposites enter in; for it may be either at some stage of the increasing involution of consciousness in separative mind and life or only after the plunge into inconscience. This resolves itself into the question whether falsehood, error, wrong and evil exist originally in the mental and vital planes and are native to mind and life or are proper only to the material manifestation

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 181

because inflicted on mind and life, there by the obscurity arising from the Inconscience. It may be questioned too whether, if they do exist in supraphysical mind and life, ...or if that is untenable, it may be that they arose as an enabling supraphysical affirmation in the universal Mind and Life,...

Now, he is asking the question at what point does falsehood and evil come? This leads to the question of whether falsehood and evil exist originally in the mental and vital planes and are native to mind and life, or if they are associated only with the material manifestation? Does it come in the involution at the mental or vital levels? And if they do exist in the supraphysical mind and life, were they originally and inevitably there, or have they entered as a consequence or a supraphysical extension from the material manifestation? In other words, do they come in involution or do they come as a result of the evolution? If they come with the involution on the mental or vital level, they preexist before the evolution, but if they come with evolution, they might extend their influence into the supraphysical vital or mental levels.

It was for a long time held by the human mind as a traditional knowledge that when we go beyond the material plane, these things are found to exist there also in worlds beyond us. There are in these planes of supraphysical experience powers and forms of vital mind and life that seem to be the prephysical foundation of the discordant, defective or perverse forms and powers of life-mind and life-force which will find in the terrestrial existence.

There are stories in every civilisation, in every culture of past and present, that speak about the existence of these

182

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* forces that are perverted in their consciousness, that want to bring sorrow and suffering to humanity. Traditional knowledge tells us that there are Asuras, Rakshasas, Pisachas, the Satan, forces of evil that exist beyond the material plane.

These powers, beings or forces are active to impose their adverse constructions upon terrestrial creatures; eager to maintain their reign in the manifestation, they oppose the increase of light and truth and good and, still more, are antagonistic to the progress of the soul towards a divine consciousness.

They impose their adverse constructions upon terrestrial creatures. They even come and possess human beings.

‘Possessed’ does not mean persons who are possessed and are brought to the temple and beaten with neem tree twigs by the Priest. That is an extreme case of possession, but on a normal level we are all possessed, are constantly being possessed, and are not really aware of it. When we get angry, it is a possession by a force of anger. When we have a desire, whether for sex or food or material possessions, any kind of desire from the lowest to the highest, that is also a possession by a force. These anti-divine forces are constantly occupying our mind and vital and physical, and their job is to see that we do not progress. They are created by the Divine himself to see that we do not progress. It is really a paradox! The Divine wants us to progress in spirituality, but he has kept his own guards to see that we do not progress, so to say. This is the paradox. The whole aim of the evil forces is to stop our progress towards the divine consciousness and divine existence. That is why we have to be careful and create a ring of protection around us. This is the reason why we chant the Mother’s name. It is to make this ring of protection against these adverse forces, which are constantly trying to occupy

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 183

us. Even if we have wrong thoughts about somebody, it is again one of these forces which is trying to obstruct our mental, vital and physical purity. These have been known in the old systems of knowledge, which recognise that there exist powers of light and darkness, good and evil, cosmic harmony and cosmic anarchy, a tradition that is universal in ancient myth and religion and is common to all systems of occult knowledge. There was always this antagonism between forces of good and bad, light and darkness.

How could it be so universal if it were not truly a cosmic phenomenon? These anti-divine forces, which are recognized in every civilisation, are there within us. We have given the tenancy of our mind, life and body to these forces more than we have given the tenancy to the Divine. The Divine Being, represented by the psychic being and the soul, is hidden deep within us somewhere, and the occupation of our outer being is largely by these anti-divine forces.

Now, Sri Aurobindo explains. He says: The theory of this traditional knowledge is perfectly rational and verifiable by inner experience, and it imposes itself if we admit the supraphysical and do not cabin ourselves in the acceptance of material being as the only reality.

A materialist denies the existence of these anti-divine forces. If we tell them that even their anger is a force that is coming from outside, they may laugh at us.

To continue with the text:

As there is a cosmic Self and Spirit pervading and upholding the universe and its beings, so too there is a cosmic Force that moves all things, and on this original

184

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* cosmic Force depend and act many cosmic Forces that are its powers or arise as forms of its universal action.

Whatever is formulated in the universe has a Force or Forces that support it, seek to fulfill or farther it, find their foundation in its functioning, their account of success in its success and growth and domination, etc.

...As there are Powers of Knowledge or Forces of the Light, so there are Powers of Ignorance and tenebrous Forces of the Darkness whose work is to prolong the reign of Ignorance and Inconscience.

The fundamental truth behind all these myths of the Asuras and Devil is that it is the Divine Force, the Shakti that brings the manifestation out of Sachchidananda but there are many other cosmic Forces through which it works, both good and bad. There is a conscious force, Chit Shakti, that manifests this world, and behind everything in this world there is a force which works at different levels. There are forces of Light whom we call Gods and Goddesses, and there are forces of darkness whom we call asuras or devils.

Both exist by the Supreme Chit Shakti called Aditi. Aditi has released her force, but some of these have become forces of Darkness and others of Light. So, behind the evil too there is a tremendous force.

In Ramayana who is the force behind Ravana? It is the same Shiva. He is a great worshipper of Shiva, and it is because of the boon that he got from Shiva that he had all the energy and force even to encounter Sri Rama, the Avatar.

Who is the force behind Sri Rama? He also worships the same Durga before he launches on his journey to Sri Lanka.

It is the same omnipotent Force behind both; it only depends on who is invoking it. One side Ravana wants it, on the other

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 185

side Sri Rama. This is the mystery of the world, that both good and evil draw their energy from the same unique Force.

We see this again in the story of Savitri. When Savitri does the Triratna vow, the three-night's vow, she worships the Supreme Mother in order to face the God of Death. Savitri who herself is an incarnation needs the power of Supreme Mother to face Death. This is the spiritual secret of this world that the Supreme Shakti as Mahashakti is that Force who protects us by destroying the Devil, by subjugating the anti-divine.

Sri Aurobindo says that the philosophic reason for this is that there is the same universal Aditi behind everything. The question is, "how you want to use it?" Do you want to use it like Ravana or do you want to use it like Sri Rama? The strength behind them is the same. Sri Aurobindo continues,

"As there are Forces of Truth, so there are Forces that live by the Falsehood and support it and work for its victory..."

The Mother, in one of her conversations told us that there is a whole army of death, what we call agents of death.

There are beings working for Yama just as there are beings working for Savitri. Just as there is an army under Rama, there is also an army under Ravana. In this world everywhere there are these forces of truth, forces of falsehood, energies of the divine Force, misused energies of the divine Force.

This is the balance of the world that we have to accept. Sri Aurobindo says that in the Vedic times they were called –

...sons of Darkness and Division, figured in a later tradition as Titan and Giant and Demon, Asura, Rakshasa, Pisacha; the same tradition is found in the Zoroastrian Double Principle and the later Semitic opposition of God and his angels on the one side and Satan and his hosts ... Modern thought is aware of no

186

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* invisible forces other than those revealed or constructed by Science...

He says that modern science does not believe in these forces. Why does it not believe? Because, it says, we cannot not see them. How can we believe what is beyond my senses?

We cannot see this force, we cannot measure its height or weight, so it says, I cannot believe in them. Sri Aurobindo says,

...it does not believe that Nature is capable of creating any other beings than those around us in the physical world, men, beasts, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, germs and animalculae. But if there are invisible cosmic forces physical in their nature that act upon the body of inanimate objects, there is no valid reason why there should not be invisible cosmic forces mental and vital in their nature that act upon his mind and his life-force.

This is a strong argument against scientists. If you say, I don't believe in supraphysical forces because I do not see them, because I cannot measure them, one may ask, do you believe in gravitational force, do you believe in magnetic force, or in electrical force? With our own senses we can't see them or touch them. We see only their consequences. If there is a magnet and some metal filings nearby, we see the filings moving towards the magnet, so we deduce that there is some force attracting them. The force of magnetism, which we cannot see, is a physical force which has impacts on the physical world, and scientists accept it. Sri Aurobindo extends the same logic and says that similarly there could be invisible forces which act on our mind, our vital and our emotions.

He says, this is the lacuna of the scientist that he is limited in his own beliefs, he is as dogmatic as the religionist who does not believe any other religion or worldview than his own.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 187

Ultimately, Science itself has become an 'ism'. It started off saying, "I have no limitations, I have a free and open mind", but it has landed up in as great a narrowness as any other religion.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

And if Mind and Life, impersonal forces, form conscious beings or use persons to embody them in physical forms and in a physical world and can act upon Matter and through Matter, it is not impossible that on their own planes they should form conscious beings whose subtler substance is invisible to us or that they should be able to act from those planes on beings in physical Nature.

Just as on the material plane there are beings, on the vital and subtle physical planes also there are beings that we cannot see but they can see us. Not only can they see us, but they can absorb energy from us. When we are hungry, do we listen to Beethoven's music or Tagore's poetry? No. We go straight to the kitchen to eat something material. When these beings become hungry, what do they do? They come and suck upon our vital and subtle physical energies. When I get angry, or greedy, this greed is actually the energy that is being drawn by them. When lust and greed come into a person he becomes the feed for these vital beings. There is a constant interaction between those worlds and our world.

We are at a disadvantageous position. Evolution wise we are at a stage when falsehood comes in, when subtle physical beings feed upon us because we are not strong, we are not aware and are not connected with the origin. Mankind is at the worst evolutionary stage that one could imagine. We are victims of all these subtle evil forces and beings.

Long back, the Mother had said that Hitler was guided by an Asuric force – all of us know that. But she said that that Asuric force was not killed. The Mother stopped him

188

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* from using Hitler, but who knows, that same force may be there working through some one else! These beings don't want the world to go towards the Divine. Exactly at the time when Sri Aurobindo was bringing down the supramental consciousness, Hitler was talking about the Dark Superman; it was just the opposite of the Superman that Sri Aurobindo was speaking about. Sri Aurobindo was bringing the golden Sun and Hitler was open to the dark Sun. And in fact, he had made temples like we made Matrimandir with the golden sun at the centre. He

had also made temples – I have seen the photographs – in which a dark sun was the centre of his inspiration; he had made a black sun. This is how this world moves, there are these energies which feed upon us and make people their instruments.

This is certain that when we go back into ourselves very deep away from the surface appearance, we find that the mind, heart and sensational being of man are moved by forces not under his own control and that he can become an instrument in the hands of Energies of a cosmic character without knowing the origin of his actions.

This is exactly what we were discussing earlier, that there are cosmic forces in whose hands we become instruments.

We discussed the example of Hitler who had become an instrument of an Asura. You and I may not be instruments of such a powerful cosmic energy, but we may be instruments of lesser forces of which we are unaware. He says, It is by stepping back from the physical surface into his inner being and subliminal consciousness that he becomes directly aware of them and is able to know directly and deal with their action upon him.

In order to become aware, we must step back from the physical surface into our inner being. That is how a yogi or

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 189

even a sadhak can find out whether he is being influenced by these wrong forces. The Mother gives us the exercise of self-analysis. Why are we asked to analyse ourselves? It is in order to develop the capacity to step back. Why do we need to step back within? For multiple reasons – one, to contact our own inner source in the subliminal, to come under the influence of our psychic being. Two, it enables us to become aware of the subtle forces which may be influencing us, at times even possessing us. One of the main characteristics of the subliminal consciousness is that it is connected with the subtle physical worlds, so if we can get into our subliminal being, then we can directly see what forces are moving and controlling us. We become alerted and can stop these anti-divine forces from making us their instrument. In our normal outer consciousness we cannot become aware of

these forces. When we go to a yogi with our problems, if he has the ability to connect himself to the subtle world and its forces then he may be able to pin-point to cause of our suffering. A sadhak can also connect to these subtle world and forces if he develops this capacity of self-analysis.

He grows aware of interventions, which seek to lead him in one direction or other, of suggestions and impulses which had disguised themselves as original movements of his own mind and against which he had to battle. He can realise that he is not a conscious creature inexplicably produced in an unconscious world out of a seed of inconscient Matter ...but an embodied soul through whose action cosmic Nature is seeking to fulfill itself...

We need to go inside not only to find out which forces are occupying us or are behind what we are doing, but at the same time in order to realise the true aim of our life. “Why

190

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* am I upon this earth? Am I here just to do this job well and become a wonderful poet or a businessman who gets rich? Is that the main motivation of my birth?” Are we just, as Sri Aurobindo says, “a conscious creature inexplicably produced in an unconscious world”? Most people think that I am born out of the union of my parents, I have come into a Gujarati family or a Bengali family or a Tamil family or a Telugu family. They think that we are born a conscious creature in an unconscious world. Are we just a product of an unconscious act of our parents? Have we ever asked why did we come on earth? We never ask this question because we don't believe that we have intentionally come, we think that we have just been born in a body, because we identify ourselves with our body. So, we identify our physical existence with the family in which we are born.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother explain that our soul decides to come into a particular family, at a particular time, for a particular experience. At some point in our development, this realisation begins to dawn on us. Then we say, oh, I have come by my own choice! So, it is not simply because of an unconscious act of our parents that we were born? Perhaps the

physiological body was produced by the union of parents, but the being within this body is the real

‘me’. I am residing in this body produced by my parents. I am the resident, the inhabitant; the body is only the outer cover, the habitation. When this realisation comes then, Sri Aurobindo writes, we begin to understand that we are

...an embodied soul through whose action cosmic Nature is seeking to fulfil itself, the living ground of a vast debate between a darkness of Ignorance out of which it emerges here and a light of Knowledge which is growing upwards towards an unforeseen termination.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 191

This is the understanding of our own selves, that Sri Aurobindo says, we get by going within our inner being.

We begin to find out why am I upon this earth. In fact, in a talk on yoga the Mother would say that this going within is the beginning of our preparation for sadhana. You must ask why was I born, something that only one person in a million asks. Most take this birth for granted, growth for granted, education for granted, job and salary for granted – nobody asks why! The moment one asks oneself this question, he/

she is beginning to go within, and this process will bring up more and more fundamental questions to the surface.

When we go inside we begin to see a greater light and this light contrasts with the outer darkness. The darkness becomes darker when there is a bright light. Until then our darkness was pretty comfortable. But in the greater light one begin to understand the purpose of birth and growth. Sri Aurobindo writes,

The forces which seek to move him, and among them the Forces of good and evil, present themselves as powers of universal Nature; but they seem to belong not only to the physical universe, but to planes of Life and Mind beyond it.

He says that when we go within we understand that we are the soul, but we also come to know the forces that influence us on the vital and mental levels. This is important to know so that we keep those forces away. And how do we keep them away? He gives us a hint here: by keeping harmony, by keeping unity within ourselves. Keeping harmony and unity is a great protection in itself. Our sadhus and sannyasis and saints have said that to have a good life, to have a harmonious family, it's not just a question of not fighting with each other, there must be harmony within. On our

192

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* human level, harmony is a great protection. These forces will not come into us or our family or into our circumstances if there is harmony. But if in our family there are constant fights between children and parents or among relatives, we can be sure that the doors are open to these forces. So one of the ways to stop their entry is to maintain, in our limited way, an equilibrium, a harmony, even if we cannot be perfect.

If as sadhaks we become more conscious, then our inner harmony increases, and we bring greater harmony into the community. These indeed is some a practical guidance from Sri Aurobindo for an ordinary as well as yogic life.

Coming to the next paragraph, he says, The first thing that we have to note of importance to the problem preoccupying us is that these Forces in their action seem often to surpass the measures of human relativity; they are in their larger action superhuman, divine, titanic or demoniac, but they may create their formations in him in large or in little, in his greatness or his smallness, they may cease and drive him at moments or for periods, they may influence his impulses or his acts or possess his whole nature. If that possession happens, he may himself be pushed to an excess of the normal humanity of good or evil; especially the evil takes forms which shock the sense of the human measure, exceeds the bounds of human personality, approach the gigantic, the inordinate, the immeasurable.

We have already discussed that these anti-divine forces can possess the human being, and work through them on big or small scale. We can also get inspirations from higher forces. Suddenly we may start writing beautiful

poetry, or have visions and paint them, or see in a stone, a beautiful form and carve a statue. That is also due to higher forces.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 193

It is not just our anger and lust but also the good things we do, the great inspirations we get, that are influences of these forces. They are the source of the greatness in human beings.

There is no real greatness in our surface mind and vital. We may think we have a great mind, but we don't. What's the difference between a poet's mind and the common labourer's mind? The difference is that a poet's mind is trained and is capable of opening itself to that higher creative force, whereas the labourer's is not. Our minds are only receptacles.

It is just as one TV can have 100 channels, whereas another has only 5 channels. It is depend on how much we are open to these higher forces; the more we are open the more we can become creative.

At the same time, if we become open to evil forces, we become abnormal. These evil forces may take "forms which shock the sense of human measure". We can see the tremendous destruction that was brought about by Hitler. It shocks the human measure, exceeds the bounds of the normal human mind. When evil or anti-divine forces possess a person, it creates a tremendous painful destruction. Whereas, if an artist sits in a corner and does a wonderful painting, people don't even know about it. But under the influence of a wrong force houses are burnt in the neighbourhood, the whole town knows about you. Evil is always more noticeable, whereas good is quiet and does not advertise itself. It does a quiet work.

Now Sri Aurobindo comes back to the question of whether evil may be absolute. He says,

It may then be questioned whether it is not a mistake to deny absoluteness to evil; for as there is a drive, an aspiration, a yearning in man towards an absolute truth,

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* good, beauty, so these movements ...seem to indicate the attempt at self-realisation of an absolute evil.

If a person like Hitler could bring such vast destruction in humanity, isn't evil an absolute power? We see its vastness

– he was responsible for killing not just a thousand people but many millions. Look at this grandiose evil which can in a single sweep kill millions of people! We are horrified.

Recently, I heard that there is going to be a temple in South India for Yama, the God of death. We are so terrified about death that we are building a temple in his honour to pacify him! The question is, isn't evil also absolute? But Sri Aurobindo says,

But the immeasurable is not a sign of absoluteness; for the absolute is not in itself a thing of magnitude; it is beyond measure, not in the sole sense of vastness, but in the freedom of its essential being...

This is a wonderful sentence! Evil may be immeasurable.

Hitler killed millions of people. Today terrorism is global, it is universal almost. Till yesterday we thought that terrorism was there in only one country, that we had one Hitler. But today's Hitlers are hidden everywhere. The evil which was in one place and in one man has suddenly spread everywhere.

While travelling on a plane or a train one never know what's going to happen the next minute! There is universal panic because of this invisibility of the enemy. Before we knew the enemy was in Germany, and we could go there and bomb him. But today, where can we go to fight this enemy called terrorism? So we see that the Asura which was in Hitler has become cosmic and fear has once again gripped humanity.

Sri Aurobindo says that because of the immeasurability of the evil we tend to think that evil is as potent, as universal, as authentic, as original as the Divine! But the philosophic

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 195

answer that Sri Aurobindo gives is that “the immeasurable is not a sign of absoluteness.”

We cannot call evil absolute because absolute means that something is not just great in size, but that it is beyond measure. Evil may be immeasurable and global in its scale, but there is a limit to its magnitude. It may be immeasurable vis-à-vis our consciousness, but the Absolute, the Divine is beyond earth, beyond this entire creation. Evil, however, is limited, it is confined in its scope. There is no evil in matter, there is no evil in the plant, and there is no evil in God. The Divine, however, is beyond; he is there in Matter, in Life, in man, he is there in the universe and beyond. Sri Aurobindo also says that the Absolute can “manifest itself in the infinitesimal as well as in the infinite”. Evil cannot manifest in an atom, whereas the Divine can manifest himself in the atom. The Divine extends from the infinitesimal to the infinite, evil cannot.

In the next argument he says,

It is true that as we pass from the mental to the spiritual,

—a subtle wideness and an increasing intensity of light, of power, of peace, of ecstasy mark our passing out of our limitations: but this is at first only a sign of freedom, of height, of universality... To this absoluteness pain and evil cannot attain, they are bound to limitation and they are derivative. If pain becomes immeasurable it ends itself or ends that in which it manifests, or collapses into insensibility or, in rare circumstances, it may turn into an ecstasy of Ananda.

We see here how subtle a philosopher Sri Aurobindo can be. He takes the example of pain. He says that when pain becomes immeasurable “it ends itself or ends that in which it is manifests”. It either reduces itself or it leads to death,

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* ending the pain or it expands and turn into Ananda. Pain cannot be infinite. In case of Sri Aurobindo extreme pain turned into Ananda when his thigh broke. But more often extreme pain leads to loss of consciousness or death. He says, If evil became sole and immeasurable, it would destroy the world or destroy that which bore and supported it...

Let us suppose for a moment that Hitler succeeded in conquering Europe and then the world. Ultimately, he would destroy the world by which he would destroy himself. In thinking that he would become the master of the world, in trying to conquer the world he would have destroyed it and with it himself. Ultimately what Sri Aurobindo is arguing is that evil cannot be absolute and infinite.

In contrast, think about the opposite scenario. If the Divine were to occupy this world more and more it would become divinely, it would not be destroyed. That is the difference, the Divine makes it more and more divine. It continues to evolve into the Infinite. It is only the Divine who is infinite, not evil.

Next Sri Aurobindo says,

Self-existence, in essence or by an eternal inherence in the Self-existent, is the condition of absoluteness: error, falsehood, evil are cosmic powers, but relative in their nature, not absolute, since they depend for existence on the perversion or contradiction of their opposites and are not like truth and good self-existent absolutes...

This we have seen before, that one of the criteria for a thing to be infinite is that it must be self-existent. But, evil and falsehood are not self-existent and depend “on the perversion...of their opposites”.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 197

Normally, we don't think about all this. We just say Satan is there, a Rakshasa is there, a Pisacha is there. We simplify because most people

cannot understand these subtleties.

The subtle truth is that if a thing is absolute, it must be self-existent, what we call *Swayambhu*, self-born. Is evil *Swayambhu*? No. Sri Aurobindo says that falsehood is a distortion of truth. That means it is distortion of something pre-existent. In contrast, truth is not a correction of falsehood. Truth exists by itself, and falsehood comes when this truth is twisted. What will last forever is only goodness, only the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

A second point of questioning emerges from the evidence given for the supraphysical and pre-physical existence of these dark opposites: for that suggests that they may be after all original cosmic principles. But it is to be noted that their appearance does not extend higher than the lower supraphysical life—planes; they are “powers of the Prince of Air”, —air being in the ancient symbolism the principle of life and therefore of the mid-worlds where the vital principle is predominant and essential. The adverse opposites are not, then, primal powers of the cosmos, but creations of Life or of Mind in life.

Here he says us that these dark forces, which oppose the forces of Light, are not primal parts of the cosmos but rather are creations of life or of mind in life. Evil is at the level of life, but here also we must be careful. Is there anything evil in plant kingdom? Are the tiger and the lion evil? They belong to the life plane primarily. He clarifies this immediately by saying “mind in life”. So, it is not life in its purity, but rather when there is this influence of mind in life that we get the first signs of evil. We see on *National Geographic* channel

198

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a tiger attacking a beautiful little deer that runs for its life and is caught by the throat and it is dead, and then the other tigers come and tear open the little animal. We feel terrible, but is the tiger feeling terrible? No. The tiger eats the prey without sense of sin or evil. The moral sense of evil and falsehood does not come on the level of the animal or the plant.

We have read a story narrated by the Mother, about a man who was in the jaws of death when a tiger caught him. He was about to die but something happened and he escaped.

When he was asked, how did you feel when you were in the jaws of death he said that he had no fear at all! There was such an embrace and vibration of love from the tiger, that he had no fear; it was as if his lover was embracing him! It is very strange, but the Mother said, yes it's true! The vibration of the tiger with the victim is one of love. Love that possesses, that really takes you in. What our mind interprets as evil is not at all there. It is only the Mother, perhaps, who could go to that level of consciousness and feel the vibration between the tiger and its victim.

Sri Aurobindo says it is at the level of “mind in life” that there is the beginning of falsehood and evil – that is a level of mankind. They can come in the animal if it is too mentalised. The pets we keep at home could begin to be evil.

That's why there's a kind of a crookedness in dogs sometimes, due to the effect of the mind's influence. It is the combination of the mind and life that brings in evil.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

Their supraphysical aspects and influences on earth-nature can be explained by the co-existence of worlds of a descending involution with parallel worlds of an

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 199

ascending evolution, not precisely created by earth-existence, but created as an annexe to the descending world-order and a prepared support for the evolutionary terrestrial formations; here evil may appear, not as inherent in all life, but as a possibility and a pre-formation that makes inevitable its formation in the evolutionary emergence of consciousness out of the Inconscient. However this may be, it is as an outcome of the Inconscience that we can best watch and understand the origin of falsehood, error, wrong and evil, for it is in the return of Inconscience towards Consciousness that they can be seen taking their formation and it is there that they seem to be normal and even inevitable.

There are parallel ladders: a ladder by which things descend in the involution and a ladder by which things ascend in the evolutionary scale. If we say that falsehood and evil come on the mental level or on the

“mind in life” level, it means they have come down the involutory ladder; otherwise, it would not come out on the evolutionary ladder. What is not involved, cannot evolve. The seed must be there somewhere. Sri Aurobindo says that these evil forces were “created as an annexe to the descending world-order...” Hence, evil does not appear “as inherent in all life, but as a possibility and a pre-formation”

...So, the seed was already there in the involution, but it sprouts and takes form in the evolutionary ascent out of the inconscience.

Having said that now we must see on which level, exactly at what point, does it enter? Sri Aurobindo takes us further to help us look at every step to see if falsehood is there or not.

The first step in evolution out of the Inconscience is Matter. He says:

200

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The first emergence from the Inconscient is Matter, and in Matter it would seem that falsehood and evil cannot exist, because both are created by a divided and ignorant surface consciousness and its reactions.

Sri Aurobindo does not say that there is no consciousness in Matter and therefore, there cannot be falsehood and evil on that level. There *is* consciousness in Matter, however dormant it may be. Then why is it that falsehood cannot exist at this level? He says:

There is no such active surface organisation of consciousness, no such reactions in material forces or objects: whatever indwelling secret consciousness there may be in them seems to be one, undifferentiated, mute; inertly inherent and intrinsic in the Energy that constitutes the object, it effectualises and maintains the form by the silent occult Idea in it, but is otherwise self-rapt in the form of energy it has created, uncommunicating and inexpressive.

Its level of consciousness is one which just “maintains the form by the silent occult idea” and is “self-rapt in the form of energy”. It is in a state of trance. It doesn’t communicate but is there self-existent and maintaining the form but otherwise inexpressive. He continues:

Even if it differentiates itself according to the form of Matter in a corresponding form of self-being, *rūpam rūpam pratirūpo babhūva*, there is no psychological organisation, no system of conscious actions or reactions. It is only by contact with conscious beings that material objects exercise powers or influences which can be called good or evil: but that good or evil is determined by the contacted being’s sense of help or harm, of benefit or injury from them; these

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 201

values do not belong to the material object but to some Force that uses it or they are created by the consciousness that contacts it.

This is interesting. For example, we believe, that there are some stones that have a powers or some kind of influence. What Sri Aurobindo says here is that Matter by itself does not influence. If one wears a Ruby or a Diamond or any other precious stone, the stone itself has no influence because it is a neutral consciousness; it just exists. It doesn't respond, react and communicate. Then why do we give value to these stones? He says, "It is only by contact with conscious beings that material objects exercise powers and influences which can be called good or evil..." It is only when it comes in contact with the conscious being that it reacts, and we feel some kind of an effect. For example, if I put two paperweights together, there is no reaction between them, but if I take this paperweight into my hands, there is an interaction. It is smooth, it is cool and so on. The consciousness in Matter and the consciousness in my hand respond to each other.

Another example is some kind of poison. If we pour it on a material object, nothing happens, but if it is poured on a plant or it is taken by us, the poison reacts and there is a response. When Matter contacts a living conscious being it becomes responsive, and then the evil influence of the material substance can come out. Note that our definition of living changes. Living does not simply mean it has consciousness because there is consciousness in Matter also, though it is an uncommunicating, unresponsive consciousness.

It's not that the stone has the power, but it is what we bring to it, what is in our reaction, what is in our own

202

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness. For example, one person may react to a certain stone in a positive way, whereas another might not react at all or may react in a negative way. Those are the two ways in which a stone might have an effect – either some force that uses it, or some effect is created by the consciousness that contacts it.

Next, Sri Aurobindo says:

Fire warms a man or burns him, but that is as involuntarily he meets it or voluntarily uses it; a medicinal herb cures or a poison kills, but the value of good or evil is brought into action by the user: it is to be observed too that a poison can cure as well as kill, a medicine kill or harm as well as cure or benefit. The world of pure Matter is neutral, irresponsible; these values insisted on by the human being do not exist in material Nature: as a superior Nature transcends the duality of good and evil, so this inferior Nature falls below it.

A poison can kill, or it can cure. The same snake poison can be used to cure or to kill, the poison itself does not have a label called good or evil. It depends on the utility, the way we use it. These moral qualities cannot be attached to a material force. All these values come only on the level of mind. Why? Basically the mind is a consciousness of duality.

There is no duality above the mind, there is no duality below it. When we go beyond the mind into the higher levels, this duality disappears and becomes a consciousness of unity.

Therefore, he says:

The question may begin to assume a different aspect if we go behind physical knowledge and accept the conclusions of an occult inquiry, —for here we are told that there are conscious influences that attach themselves to objects and these can be good or evil; but it might still be held

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 203

that this does not affect the neutrality of the object which does not act by an individualised consciousness but only as it is utilised for good or for evil or for both together: the duality of good and evil is not native to the material principle, it is absent from the world of Matter.

If one throws a stone in a public place, it may hit somebody, it may even kill somebody, but we cannot blame the object for killing the person. We blame the person who used the object in this way. Material things are

utilised for good or evil, but the material objects themselves have no such consciousness of evil. The duality comes only in our mind; in the material principle, it is absent.

Next, Sri Aurobindo looks at life. He says: The duality begins with conscious life and emerges fully with the development of mind in life; the vital mind, the mind of desire and sensation, is the creator of the sense of evil and of the fact of evil.

He says that the duality of evil and good begins with conscious life and emerges fully with the development of mind in life. As soon as we have the life element, in plants and animals, duality begins to appear but it emerges fully with the mind in life. When the mind starts influencing life or penetrating life, then this falsehood comes in. What is mind in life? We have got “the vital mind, the mind of desire and sensation’ – it is the creator of the sense of evil and the fact of evil. This is something important. He says that the vital mind is the creator of evil. There are many levels of mind, there is a physical mind, a cellular mind, a vital mind, and an intellectual mind. The mind is there already on the level of the cells, so there is already the beginning of falsehood coming even at the level of the cells of the body. Our body does have a falsehood in it.

204

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Had it been a pure physical thing like a physical object falsehood would not be there. But there is a mind of cells and it lets in falsehood. That is why we say that the body is tamasic, full of inconstancy and falsehood. The fundamental problem seems to be the mind; wherever there is the mind, there comes in falsehood and evil and error. But it is especially the vital mind which, he says, is the creator of the sense of evil and of the fact of evil.

Sri Aurobindo distinguishes here a physical evil and a moral evil. He says:

Moreover, in animal life, the fact of evil is there, the evil of suffering and the sense of suffering, the evil of violence and cruelty and strife and deception, but the sense of moral evil is absent; in animal life, there is no duality of sin or virtue, all action is neutral and permissible for the

preservation of life and its maintenance and for the satisfaction of the life-instincts.

Physical evil is the sense of evil that is in suffering, violence and cruelty, strife and deception. We were speaking about the tiger pouncing on the deer. There is no evil in that, but there may be suffering; but we cannot say that the tiger is bad. Whereas, if a man kills somebody, we can say he is bad. The tiger has brought suffering upon the deer, but we cannot label it as morally good or bad. It is not a moral evil.

The basic truth is that in nature a kind of physical evil is permitted because it is necessary for preservation, maintenance and satisfaction of life-instincts. The basic instincts of life are to survive, to maintain oneself, to satisfy the need for food and sex, etc. If a tiger eats or kills an animal for food, we don't say it is evil. But if the tiger goes on killing just for fun, we would call it evil.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 205

The sensational values of good and evil are inherent in the form of pain and pleasure, vital satisfaction and vital frustration, but the mental idea, the moral response of the mind to these values are a creation of the human being.

It is only man who says that this is a bad act, or a criminal act, or a sinful act, or a virtuous act. Morality does not exist in the animal world. All that nature does in the animal world it does only for its self-preservation, to maintain itself, to continue its progeny. Sri Aurobindo adds: It does not follow, as might be hastily inferred, that they are unrealities, mental constructions only, and that the only true way to receive the activities of Nature is either a neutral indifference or an equal acceptance or, intellectually, an admission of all that she may do as a divine or a natural law in which everything is impartially admissible. That is indeed one side of the truth; there is an infrarational truth of Life and Matter which is impartial and neutral and admits all things as acts of Nature and serviceable for the creation, preservation or destruction of life, three necessary movements of the universal Energy which are all connectedly indispensable and, each in its own place, of equal value.

These things are facts of life and have their place in Nature, but we cannot say that just because they are part of Nature that evil does not exist. We have to accept that they are there and observe them.

There is too a truth of the detached reason which can look on all that is thus admitted by Nature as serviceable to her process in life and matter and observe everything that is with an unmoved neutral impartiality and acceptance; this is a philosophic and scientific reason that witnesses and seeks

206

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* to understand but considers it futile to judge the activities of the cosmic Energy.

This is the attitude of the scientist. If you watch the *National Geographic* channel, you see this kind of an attitude.

The objective attitude of the scientist is commendable. They go deep into the jungles and follow a snake or a bird or a tiger and find out all about its eating habits, living, mating habits etc., all its natural instincts, but they do not pass any judgments. A scientist looks at it with a detached reason. As a scientist, he knows that he cannot say that the tiger is bad for killing three animals in a day. He has a detached reason that understands it's a process of life. He has an unmoved, neutral impartiality and acceptance.

When it comes to human life, this is what a philosopher does. A philosopher observes life and human nature. He knows its sufferings, he knows its failures, and its greater possibilities. He does not say that humans are bad, but he describes the human sufferings and how we can come out of them and move towards a better future. If we listen to what the Buddha or Mahavira have said, we find the same impartiality and detachment in it. We see the same in the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's works also. When the Mother spoke in a class, she did not attack any individual being.

Even if there was a person being false in front of her, she did not say anything against them. There is a detachment that has wisdom in it. The moment we start being personal, we lose that wisdom because we get

attached and lose the sense of discrimination. The philosopher or the scientist with detachment becomes wise.

There is too a suprarational truth formulating itself in spiritual experience which can observe the play of universal possibility, except all impartially as the true and natural

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 207

features and consequences of a world of ignorance and inconstancy or admit all with calm and compassion as a part of the divine working, but while it awaits the awakening of a higher consciousness and knowledge as the sole escape from what presents itself as evil, is ready with help and intervention where that is truly helpful and possible.

This is the status of a yogi, a saint, or a sanyasi of a high order. He has a “spiritual experience which can observe the play of universal possibility”. The difference between the philosopher and the yogi is that the yogi observes our human status, but he is ready to help and intervene.

The yogi brings in his force to help the suffering human being, whereas the philosopher just notes the human suffering; he cannot help it. But there is a difference between Indian philosophers and western philosophers.

Western philosophers are wonderful in observation and analysis and can show you the status of human beings.

But an Indian philosopher is not just a philosopher, he is also a yogi. Adi Shankaracharya or Sri Ramanujacharya or Raman Maharshi or Sri Aurobindo, had their philosophies, but they were philosopher-yogis who intervened with their force to help humanity wherever it was possible.

But, nonetheless, there is also this other middle truth of consciousness which awakens us to the values of good and evil and the appreciation of their necessity and importance; this awakening, whatever may be the sanction or the validity of its particular judgments, is one of the indispensable steps in the process of evolutionary Nature.

Sri Aurobindo says there are three levels: one is the level of the philosopher or scientist who is impartial and impersonal; the other extreme is the sage who is also impersonal but who also influences human beings when

208

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* necessary; and third there is the common human being who is not impartial nor impersonal and cannot really help other human beings. He has only a moral sense of good and evil which is personal and thereby limited. Nature has given to the common man this moral sense of evil and good. Sri Aurobindo explains this category because, after all, we have to deal with this moral sense of falsehood at our own level. The sage is not bothered, the animal is not bothered, but you and I are bothered and affected.

Moving further, Sri Aurobindo says: But from what then does this awakening proceed?

What is it in the human being that originates and gives its power and place to the sense of good and evil? If we regard only the process, we may agree that it is the vital mind that makes the distinction. Its first valuation is sensational and individual, —all that is pleasant, helpful, beneficial, to the life-ego is good, all that is unpleasant, malefic, injurious or destructive is evil.

This is an analysis of how the sense of good and evil comes into our life. The first stage is what Sri Aurobindo calls “sensational and individual”. First, individually, whatever is good for me, I say that is good. That is why there are problems between parents and their children because what the child thinks is correct or right for him is not right according to the parents or it is not good for the family. Why is there a rift? In the first stage, every human being thinks mainly of himself or herself his or body, name, fame, expression, his or her enjoyment.

This is the stage where the sense of good and evil is introduced. The ‘good’ of the individual is the only good.

He does not care for parents, society or nation. This

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 209

predominantly individual basis for the sense of good is something which parents, teachers and the elders often fail to recognise. Teenagers are at that age where this self-focus becomes most acute. Psychologically, they are unable to see anything beyond themselves. It is not a question of disobedience in the way we think it to be it is simply part of the natural growth of an individual. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls the life-ego, or the physical-vital ego.

Whatever is good for this ego is good, whatever doesn't please, it is bad.

Regarding the second level, Sri Aurobindo says: Its next valuation is utilitarian and social: all that is considered helpful to the associated life, all that it demands from the individual in order to remain in association and to regulate association for the best maintenance, satisfaction, development, good order of the associated life and its units, is good; all that has in the view of the society a contrary effect or tendency is evil.

Here we have two important words "utilitarian" and

"social" that are need to discuss. After the individual gets married and has a family, the sense of good and evil changes. The husband and wife do not think about only what is good for themselves individually, they think about what is good for the family. The person starts thinking of one's associations – it may start with one's own spouse and children, but it enlarges to one's parents, in-laws, circle of friends, colleagues, teachers, etc. You may now be working in a group or taken to business or become a teacher, etc.

There comes a stronger sense of the 'social'. Utilitarian means what is useful, but in this case what is valued is what is useful for the development of the society. It is a simple but interesting analysis of our own lives. At this

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* level, we join clubs and societies because we want to be socially relevant. In India, the family system is very strong and often includes uncles and aunts and the grandparents; it is a kind of natural formation and part of a natural growth process. Today, with the decline of this extended family structure, people seem to suffer. We are moving towards a family situation which includes just the couple and the children; it is becoming very individualistic. So, there is a clash between the society and the individual because the natural process of extension is missing.

We do not get to hear or watch news about Indians who were living abroad but were returning to India because they were missing their families. They said that although they had a good material life abroad, there was nothing like being part of a family. Some of them left lucrative jobs because they were missing the family system.

Sri Aurobindo says that this social structure is a natural part of the healthy growth of an individual.

Next, Sri Aurobindo writes:

But thinking mind then comes in with its own valuation and strives to find out an intellectual basis, an idea of law or principle, rational or cosmic, a law of Karma perhaps or an ethical system founded on reason or on an aesthetic, emotional or hedonistic basis. Religion brings in her sanctions; there is a word or law of God that enjoins righteousness even though Nature permits or stimulates its opposite, –or perhaps Truth and Righteousness are themselves God and there is no other Divinity.

At the third level, there is what Sri Aurobindo calls “an idea of law or principle, rational or cosmic”, what we call in Indian terminology “dharma”. The valuation of good and

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 211

evil changes again. Now people start becoming religious, because this ideal law or principle is normally supported by religion. Psychologically, by the time we come to the third level, our children are already growing up. We

begin to teach them, impart to them some moral values that are based on religious or spiritual teachings. The whole definition of evil and good keeps changing even in our own lifetime and takes on a different priority.

Then there is a fourth and the most important level: But, behind all this practical or rational enforcement of the human ethical instincts, there is a feeling that there is something deeper: all these standards are either too narrow and rigid or complex and confused, uncertain, subject to alteration by a mental or a vital change or evolution; yet it is felt that there is a deeper abiding truth and something within us that can have the intuition of that truth, —in other words, that the real sanction is inward, spiritual and psychic. The traditional account of these inner witness is conscience, a power of perception in us half mental, half intuitive; but this is something superficial, constructed, unreliable: there is certainly within us, though less easily active, more masked by surface elements, a deeper spiritual sense, the soul's discernment, an inborn light within our nature.

This last stage is the “soul's discernment”, what we normally call an inner voice or inner guidance. Whereas the third level is ethical, and the fourth level is spiritual. We can see a development in the four levels from the physical, to the vital, to the mental or ethical, and then to the psychic or spiritual. This is how our sense of good and evil awakens, becomes stronger, becomes more and more true. At each level, a different sense of good and evil comes in. Often,

212

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the common person gets stuck at the third level. He goes to the temple or the church regularly and tries to follow the religious order. Sri Aurobindo asks us to go to the fourth level and not get stuck in religion because on the third level we are still being guided by mental principles. In the fourth stage, “there is a deeper abiding truth and something within us that can have the intuition of that truth”. He contrasts it with “conscience, a power of perception in us half mental, half intuitive; but this is something superficial, constructed, unreliable”. Many people, who may be following one particular spiritual path, play it safe: they don't have the courage to leave behind their religion. This is a need of human psychology, and we have to acknowledge it. With all the devotion to their

Guru, there is still something of the old that persists. As long as we are mental in our approach to the spiritual path, there is a religious attitude that clings on us. When we awaken fully on the psychic or spiritual level, then this attitude drops, and it is not necessary anymore.

The four ashramas of the old Indian social system have the same human psychology. The first one is Brahmacharya, the individual physical being, the student life where one thinks about oneself and one's own development. Then there is the Grihastha when one is married and maintains the family and society. Then we have the Vanaprastha where one offers socio-religious services; one is concerned with the whole society and look at it more from an ethical-religious point of view. And then comes the Sannyasa where one leaves everything behind and seeks liberation in moksha.

Sri Aurobindo differs only in the last level; whereas the ancients talked about *moksha*, he emphasised on the transformation of outer nature.

Yesterday, a young man came to me at the end of the class

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 213

and asked, "Sir, why is it that we don't have *moksha*, it is such a high ideal?" I said, "there is nothing wrong in having *moksha* as an ideal, but Sri Aurobindo tells us that we have a greater potential in us". *Moksha* is a kind of a midway station.

If we want to go from Pondicherry to Delhi, we first go to Chennai. We may stop our journey there because we find a wonderful room with A. C. and get into a kind of blissful state. We may miss greater possibilities by asking for *moksha*.

One may say "I want to be a good man", but to be human is not the highest ideal; to be Divine is the ideal. "Chennai is a good place and you can do some sight-seeing, but then go on to Delhi even though it is far". This is a long journey to the Divine and salvation and *moksha* are midway junctions, and Sri Aurobindo says we can enjoy them, but we should keep moving on. This is a difference of the ideal. The ancients called it *moksha* but now we call it transformation.

We tend to turn Sri Aurobindo into a religion because we do not get into the spiritual experience; we look at him with a mental understanding. As long as we have this mental approach, we are bound to make this mistake. In the times of the Vedas and the Upanishads, the Vedas were forgotten because there was a lot of religiosity that got associated with them. When the Upanishads came, they rekindled Indian spirituality. If the Upanishadic rishis had not come, we would have a pure religion, and we would have lost Indian spirituality. Spirituality is always based on the level of psychic and spiritual experience, and if we do not get that experience, then we also could turn Sri Aurobindo into one more religion.

Once we go beyond the mind, our parameters of good and evil begin to change. This is the process that we see in the Bhagavad Gita. Arjuna starts with a sense of the

214

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mental, the perfect ethical man. He doesn't want to kill his teachers and relatives on the battlefield because he says that it would create a lot of confusion and corruption if all these men are killed. He had a high sense of ethical morality. The whole of Bhagavad Gita is nothing but a transition from the third level to the fourth level, from the religious, ethical ideal that Arjuna represents to the spiritual ideal that Lord Krishna awakens in him, a deeper spiritual sense of the soul's discernment and inborn light. Once he gets that new light, Arjuna is ready to fight his whole sense of what is good and what is evil changes. That is why Bhagavad Gita is such a relevant psychological scripture because it shows the transformation of the ethical, religious man into the spiritual man.

So, to follow the Gita does not imply following any religion. It is to help us get into the fourth level, the deeper spiritual sense and the "soul's discernment". What happens at that level? One becomes an instrument of the Divine one does not have self-will or priorities and prejudices! What the mind thinks to be right and wrong does not exist any longer because one is surrendered to the Divine and obeys the Divine implicitly, without any mental judgment. One is led by the inner guide, by the Lord or Sri Krishna

or whomever one has faith on. When one becomes an instrument of the Divine, all these mental values suddenly take a *volte face*.

That is what had happened to Arjuna. He, who did not want to fight at all, ultimately tells Sri Krishna, “I shall obey you and do exactly what you demand.” Arjuna responds positively to Sri Krishna’s call – *sarva dharmam parityajya mamekam sharanam vraja*, “Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me alone”. (CWSA 19: 556) In that single verse, we have the conclusion of all the verses that come before it. All

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 215

our dharmas are good, but in order to come to the fourth level of the soul’s discernment, one has to go beyond them.

What is the function good and evil? “It may be maintained that the one use of the sense of sin and evil is that the embodied being may become aware of the nature of this world of inconscience and ignorance, awake to a knowledge of its evil and suffering and the relative nature of its good and happiness and turn away from it to that which is absolute”.

This is one of the most important paragraphs because we get here an explanation of why this sense of evil exists. When the child grows up, it must begin to understand this world. It may be under the protective wings of its parents, but it must one day come face to face with the world. It must understand that this world is not a rosy place; there are people and forces that are against its interests. It must begin to discern and discriminate. These are faculties that are very important.

It is only when this *viveka*, this discernment between good and evil comes that we can grow spiritually.

At every moment we face this question of whether something is good or bad, right or wrong. This discernment begins by looking at what benefits or hurts us personally.

We consider the former to be good and the latter to be bad.

However, through this we learn. We become aware of evil and suffering and the relative nature of good and happiness and finally, we turn away from these things to that which is absolute. A wonderful process indeed! Right from the beginning everything has been designed quite purposefully.

The whole *raison d'être* of good or bad, suffering and happiness seems to be to lead us to the Absolute – whether we want it or not, whether we are conscious of it or not! Our Prakriti always moves towards Purusha. If we do not sense and follow it, then the movement may be forced on us, and

216

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* we may have to learn under crushing circumstances. For example, a criminal is first made to understand and accept his mistake, but if he remains stubborn, then harsh means are employed to make him realise it. Similarly, nature and life give us problems only in order to move us towards the Absolute. The entire journey of life is like that. If we take it up consciously, it becomes our yoga; if we do not take it up consciously, it becomes Nature's yoga; it is either Integral Yoga or Nature's yoga, that is the only difference. But by becoming conscious, we hasten the process; left to the Nature the process will move very slowly.

Second, this discernment between good and evil can have a spiritual use. “...purify the nature by the pursuit of good and the negation of evil until it is ready to perceive the supreme good and turn from the world towards God...”

Any Religion has a set of dos and don'ts, *yamas* and *niyamas* to follow. These are nothing but methods of purification. It insists on following the good and abstaining from the evil, thus preparing us for a spiritual life.

Third, this discernment may prepare the being for the dissolution of the ignorant ego-complex and the escape from the limited personality and suffering. That, I suppose, is the hardest lesson to learn and accept – that all these problems are given to us to break and demolish and dissolve our ego-personality, the ego-complex. The whole of life's journey has this as its goal, – to dissolve the ego. In Integral Yoga also, we are required to dissolve the ego-complex. As long as we do not dissolve the ego, we have

to face difficulties. Finally, let us remember that the purpose of all these difficulties is only to make us aware of our real aim in life.

Fourth, the discernment between good and evil may lead to the “...growth of the being out of the Ignorance into

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 217

the truth of the divine unity and the evolution of a divine consciousness and a divine being”. Why is it that nature is pushing us towards the spiritual level, taking us through the problems of good and evil, leading us to the dissolution of the ego? There is one single aim: to take us to the next evolutionary step, that of entering into union with the Divine. Sri Aurobindo writes:

For much more than the mind or life which can turn either to good or to evil, it is the soul-personality, the psychic being, which insists on the distinction, though in a larger sense than the mere moral difference. It is the soul in us which turns always towards Truth, Good and Beauty, because it is by these things that it itself grows in stature; the rest, their opposites, are a necessary part of experience, but have to be outgrown in the spiritual increase of the being.

Sri Aurobindo does not discard anything, he accepts the different stages of human growth explains their rightful place and their inner meaning. Normally, when we see young people looking at themselves in the mirror and saying “I am so beautiful, I am so handsome”, we say it is wrong, but that also has its value. It may become a hindrance if one continues to stay on that level of the physical consciousness and constantly thinks about one’s beauty and physical attractiveness; they have to evolve. There is a gradual growth from the individual level to the social, to larger collectivities and group identities. Nature has given us a wonderful way of expanding through the natural process of life. Sri Aurobindo embraces the whole of life without rejecting any. He says, why should I change Nature’s process? If the Ganges is going from the Gangotri right into the Indian ocean, why should I change it to flow into the Arabian sea? He only constructs

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* some barrages to make the flow faster. Sri Aurobindo's yoga is Nature's own yoga made faster.

All the levels of 'good' that we discussed – individual, social, ethics; spiritual have only one purpose – psychic being seeks for unity with the Divine. Through all the circumstances of our life the psychic is very active and dynamic. Our mind and vital do not recognise its presence and influence. Instead of acknowledging the work and help of the psychic being, our ego constantly takes the credit, and that creates a psychological barrier.

Sri Aurobindo says:

The fundamental psychic entity in us has the delight of life and all experience as part of the progressive manifestation of the spirit, but the very principle of its delight of life is to gather out of all contacts and happenings their secret divine sense and essence, a divine use and purpose so that by experience our mind and life may grow out of the Inconscience towards a supreme consciousness, out of the divisions of the Ignorance towards an integralising consciousness and knowledge. It is there for that and it pursues from life to life its ever-increasing upward tendency and insistence; the growth of the soul is a growth out of darkness into light, out of falsehood into truth, out of suffering into its own supreme and universal Ananda.

Let us read this paragraph slowly, trying to understand its deeper meaning. He says, "that the fundamental psychic entity in us has the delight of life and all experience as part of the progressive manifestation of the spirit". The psychic existence brings delight into life because it has contact with the Ananda aspect of the Divine. It tries to bring truth and beauty and Ananda into our life in every way possible. He

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 219

says, "the very principle of its delight of life is to gather out of all contacts and happenings their secret divine sense and essence".

When we admire a flower or a sunrise, it is our psychic sense which takes delight in it. This delight is in everything.

However, we run after pleasures – physical and vital – which are also part of that delight but they have been deformed and twisted, they are not pure forms of the psychic delight.

At the level of the mind and vital, the delight gets twisted or vitiated because they bring in their ego and narrowness.

The purity is lost. For example the Ganges that comes down the mountain into the city gets polluted there. It is the same water of Gangotri but we can see an immense difference. The same phenomenon takes place with Delight, it gets distorted.

Sri Aurobindo explains that the fundamental nature of the psychic being is that out of every contact it tries to give us the divine sense and essence so that our mind and life may grow out of the Inconscience. It is most gratifying to know that all our experiences of good and evil are part of the spiritual journey. We begin to understand how “all life is yoga”, because at each instance the psychic tries to give us some divine touch, some divine essence; unfortunately, we do not recognise and acknowledge it. The whole purpose of the psychic being coming into birth is to grow towards an integral consciousness and knowledge. It pursues from life to life its ever-increasing upward tendency and insistence.

On one side, the psychic being gains from all the varied experiences, both good and bad, but on the other side it wants to bring this psychic delight into our existence.

It wants to touch the mind, life and body with a divine consciousness. It makes effort to come out of the darkness into light, out of falsehood into truth. Such were the reasons

220

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* for the existence of this sense of sin and virtue or evil; it is not per chance but because our soul is leading us to union with the Divine; they act an instrument.

Next, Sri Aurobindo says:

The soul's perception of good and evil may not coincide with the mind's artificial standards, but it has a deeper sense, a sure discrimination of what points to the higher Light and what points away from it.

The soul's judgment of good and bad is completely different from what our mind may think and accept. Like Arjuna, mentally and morally we may say we must not kill our elders, it is a sin. But Sri Krishna says, "Remember me and fight". It is no more a sin. This is potential example of the soul's vision of good and evil not coinciding with the mind's artificial standards. ***

On the fourth level, the spiritual level, what is good or bad, sin or virtue depends solely on one criterion, and that is whether it takes us towards the Divine or away from Him. We not have to consult any book, any scripture, any quotation or verses. In real life there are many different situations in which it is had to think of the Divine or recall the verses from scriptures which would help us. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo emphasised on remembering only one principle as it were – whatever the act or thought, if we can do so in front of the Mother then it is worth doing.

Of course it depends also on our sincerity and surrender to the Mother. This is the highest spiritual law. Similarly the above sentence depends on time and circumstances.

There is no single binding law. We only have to ask, "is this act taking me towards the Divine Consciousness or away from it?" In that split second the answer will be very clear,

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 221

unless of course, we become so very insincere and resistant in our consciousness that we cannot hear the reply. That does happen. If one is continuously insincere, if we regularly disobey our own inner voice, then our mind may intervene and justify our wrong decisions also. That is the whole problem! I may even get an intuitive answer, "Don't do that", but then my mind comes into play and justifies my wrong action; it may say – "no, it doesn't matter, after all you are doing it for your institution". We could come up some kind of mental justification for our action.

In the next paragraph we see how with the mind's intrusion, intuition is lost. The inner voice gets silenced. That is why Sri Aurobindo says we must go beyond the mind and not let the mind be predominant in our consciousness. Mind is a clever instrument, it can justify even our wrong acts. We have to keep the mind quiet, and then if we ask the question whether we should perform an action, we are bound to get the answer. That is the highest law – whatever is taking us towards the higher light is right and what takes us away is wrong.

Sri Aurobindo says,

It is true that as the inferior light is below good and evil, so the superior spiritual light is beyond good and evil; but this is not in the sense of admitting all things with an impartial neutrality or of obeying equally the impulses of good and evil, but in the sense that a higher law of being intervenes in which there is no longer any place or utility for these values.

This is something that people forget. We say, "I am a spiritual person, I am beyond good and evil". Even some religious masters think that since they are a pundit, a priest, or a great leader of Hinduism, they are beyond good and

222

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* evil. Sri Aurobindo warns us here that it is not so. He says,

"...this is not in the sense of admitting all things with an impartial neutrality or of obeying equally the impulses of good and evil". It is not that one is beyond them and can do everything she wants. On the contrary, if one is spiritual, he/

she must try to bring in a higher law of being to intervene.

This is a little complex to understand. When we turn to spirituality, or rather, when we come to the fourth level of consciousness that we have been speaking about, it is not that we blindly do what is bad and evil while saying, "I am on the spiritual level, I don't care!" If we do that we bring in

chaos and disorder in the society. A spiritual person brings in the intervention of the higher consciousness which per se adds harmony to the individual and the society. Most of us, however, cannot bring in the higher law. Sri Aurobindo says, There is self-law of supreme Truth which is above all standards; there is a supreme and universal Good inherent, intrinsic, self-existent, self-aware, self-moved and determined, infinitely plastic with the pure plasticity of the luminous consciousness of the supreme Infinite.

When Sri Krishna says *sarva dharmam parityajya mam ekam sharanam vraja*, “Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me”, it means there is a higher and superior truth.

But until we reach this higher truth, which he says here is “self-existent, self-aware, self-moved and determined”, we should not take the risk of thinking ourselves to be spiritual and do away with all social norms. It is safer to keep our feet on the ground. It is only when we are safely in that consciousness of the Truth that we can go beyond the sense of evil. I have seen that some Ashram sadhaks who were advanced in their consciousness would guide us very differently. They would help us in our inner growth. I

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 223

had the opportunity to have been guided by such a senior sadhaka at a crucial juncture in my life. On the hindsight when I analyse it I see that he had advised me to follow what was good for my inner expression rather than for my outer name and fame. I was asked to express my inner swabhava, to fulfill my swadharma. Using that as a criterion, I was to decide whether a certain kind of work was right for me or not? What is right is what helps me fulfill my swabhava. If I compromise that for an external situation, that earns me more money or fame, then I am surely on the wrong path.

It may be a good path for others, but for my inner growth it was not appreciate. It was spiritually wrong because it was against my swadharma.

Let us review the overall argument so far. Falsehood and evil are not there on the level of matter – because matter is a neutral consciousness, it does not have this duality – it comes with life or with the vital mind, what Sri Aurobindo called the mind in life; especially it has become prominent in the human being. The sense of evil and good also increases and grows; it is not static. The first sense of the good and evil that comes is on the individual physical level, where we say what is good for me is right, what is bad for me is wrong. Then, slowly, the human being rises to the social level and the parameters of good and evil change to what is good for my family and the groups to which I belong.

Then comes the ethico-religious level, where again there is the transformation of the values of good and evil, and the sense of ethics and religious dogmas come in. Finally, comes the spiritual level. Sri Aurobindo explains that behind this whole movement of the sense of good and evil is the psychic being leading us through various levels towards a higher consciousness. The very purpose of our birth is not just to

224

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* fulfill ourselves in this world, but, as he writes in an earlier chapter of *The Life Divine*, “to fulfil God in life is man’s manhood”. (CWSA 21: 41) As this is the aim, the soul is responsible to guide the being towards that fulfillment. Not many can be truly spiritual at a young age, exceptions apart!

The soul has given us a whole life process to become more and more mature and reach that fulfillment. Unfortunately, because of the perversity of the human nature, we tend to get more or less stuck on the second or the third level. Political and social leaders tend to get stuck on the second level and hardly rise to the religious and ethical level. Those who go to the third level tend to get stuck there, and develop a sattwic ego. There is first the physical ego, then the vital ego, and there is third a mental or sattwic ego. Through the whole development it is the psychic being which strains to come forward and express more and more.

Now, we can take up the next argument: If, then, evil and falsehood are natural products of the Inconscience, automatic results of the evolution of

life and mind from it in the process of the Ignorance, we have to see how they arise, on what they depend for their existence and what is the remedy or escape.

We are going to discuss three questions: First, how do falsehood and evil arise? Second, on what do they depend for their existence? And third, what is the remedy? The first question is taken up in this paragraph itself. Sri Aurobindo says,

In the surface emergence of mental and vital consciousness from the Inconscience is to be found the process by which these phenomena come into being.

Here there are two determining factors, —and it is these that are the efficient cause of the simultaneous emergence

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 225

of falsehood and evil. First there is an underlying, a still occult consciousness and power of inherent knowledge, and there is also an overlying layer of what might be called indeterminate or else ill formed stuff of vital and physical consciousness; through this obscure difficult medium the emerging mentality has to force its way and has to impose itself on it by a constructed and no longer an inherent knowledge, because this stuff is still full of nescience, heavily burdened and enveloped with the inconscience of Matter.

When the involved consciousness involved in the inconscience evolves, it comes through different layers of unconsciousness and is met with tremendous resistance.

For example, when we first take out gold from the earth we don't get a gold nugget in its purity. It is embedded in rock. Around the gold there are layers of stone and rock and mud and earth. But down inside, there is a little bit of gold. So unless and until we remove all those layers of rock and mud and earth, we do not get that gold. Similarly, there is a hidden knowledge even in the inconscience. But, this hidden knowledge, when it comes up, is not pure, it is covered by layers of inconscience and subconsciousness and slowly

this knowledge tries to break through these layers. It is only when we come to the higher levels that for the first time we begin to get some knowledge, until then we do not even perceive it despite it being there.

Sri Aurobindo shows us here how knowledge is born.

On the mental level, we have a limited knowledge, which is called ignorance. When we go beyond the mind, this limited knowledge becomes more and more limitless and we have greater knowledge. However, in the evolutionary process, knowledge already exists in a concealed form in

226

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the inconscience itself, but, as seen before, it is layered and surrounded by matter and subconscient. When this knowledge comes up to the level of life, we have for the first time a living, responsive form. Sri Aurobindo describes, Next, the emergence takes place in a separated form of life which has to affirm itself against a principle of inanimate material inertia and a constant pull of that material inertia towards disintegration and a relapse into the original inanimate Inconscience. This separated life-form has also to affirm itself, supported only by a limited principle of association, against an outside world which is, if not hostile to its existence, yet full of dangers and on which it has to impose itself, conquer life-room, arrive at expression and propagation, if it wishes to survive.

This life form has to struggle against two things. First, its own inertia of inconscience, the pull of matter. There is “a constant pull of the material inertia towards disintegration and a relapse into the original inanimate Inconscience”. This is the law of material form that it has to fight against death, dissolution and disintegration. The second fight is the need to “affirm itself, supported only by a limited principle of association”. It has to fight other forms constantly. That is a great battle. That means each life form has to fight for its survival, and for its propagation, for its species to continue.

We are aware that whether a tiger or a deer – they are not free. Their survival is a constant struggle. The deer must literally run for its life. And even among the tigers, there is a fight. There is a constant fight with other

forms in their species and outside of it. That is exactly what every human being also faces. We fight with other people and other forms and forces of life. The fight is not only against

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 227

human beings, who come in various groups such as other religions, castes, nations, and other egos but we also have to fight against diseases, viruses, wild animals and calamities.

At the same time, we have to fight against the pull of inertia and disintegration of our being towards death. Our medical Science is constantly making effort to help us to postpone death as long as possible.

Now, how is this related to knowledge and evil? We have seen that knowledge increases through evolution. At the level of life the evolving being has a form. The moment the being has an individual form it has these two great battles to fight. Sri Aurobindo explains—

The result of the emergence of consciousness in these conditions is the growth of a self-affirming vital and physical individual, a construction of Nature of life and matter with a concealed psychic or spiritual true individual behind it for which Nature is creating this outward means of expression.

Now, we may ask – why is there the struggle, why is there this constant battle? On the level of the animal we can say that it is a struggle for survival; but on the human level, why is there this battle? Is it simply that we want to get more money, get richer, get more knowledge of material world, so that we can get more comforts? No. That may seem to be the outer reason, that we are battling for some kind of achievement – scientific, social, religious or anything else, but Sri Aurobindo says there is a deeper reason behind this battle; it is for “the growth of a self-affirming vital and physical individual”. Each one of us is trying to form an individuality. The deeper reason for us to strive to get MA degree or a PhD degree or promotion and recognition is because we are trying to get an individuality of our own.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* What is the purpose of that individuality? The real purpose is not simply to get name and fame, but to become an instrument for the concealed psychic and spiritual being

– the true individual behind, for which nature has created this outward means of expression.

This is the secret of secrets. All the battles of our life are to gain a vital, mental and physical individuality; but it is not for the sake of any superficial utility – it is for the psychic within to express itself. This is the deeper purpose behind developing one’s individuality. An Indian philosopher might say that we develop our individuality to fulfil our swadharma, to become an artist, a poet, a sculptor, or in order to fulfill a particular role. Certainly it can be a good purpose but behind the sculptor or artist personality is the true person, the soul, who is fulfilling himself. Unless we have a proper instrument we cannot express ourselves.

The struggle for life is first of all to create our individuality.

That is why the Mother always told us to become somebody, not for name and fame, but to become an effective instrument. Otherwise, she would say, we are like corks on the ocean. Somebody guides us to go this way, someone else tells us to go that way, and live in continuous confusion

– having no opinion of ourselves. The Mother, in her talks, insisted that we should become an individual. And then, after becoming an individual, once the instrument is prepared, then put it at the feet of the Mother and say,

“Ma, this is the instrument, now you use me as you want”.

Otherwise, if you put a lump of clay at the Mother’s feet, she would say, “What can I do with a lump of clay?”

It is recounted that at one time the Ashram was in dire need of money, so the Mother called up a certain trustee member and said, “Look, I have no money; you have to

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 229

get this much money immediately or we may have to close down the Ashram.” Such was the critical situation. The gentleman said, “Mother, give me some time, I will go and get the money”. He went to Calcutta, he called his friends and everybody he could think might help and said, “Do you want the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to close down? Mother needs this much money; do what you can within 48 hours else the ashram will shut down. So people gave their jewelry, their bank balance, everything they could because the Mother wanted it and if it was not there the Ashram would be closed

– it was at that critical point. Soon he got that money and flew back and placed it at the feet of the Mother. The Mother appreciated that. He said, “Mother, what did I do? After all, it’s your grace, you have done it, I have not done anything.”

Then the Mother seems to have said, “I can’t play piano on a log of wood.” “Because you are receptive as an individual instrument for my work, I have worked through you and got the money.” That is the meaning of becoming an individual.

If we are undeveloped, uncouth, without devotion, without any formation, a kind of basket of jumbled ideas, a bundle of emotions, we don’t have control over ourselves. In such a condition the Mother may say, “What can I do with you?”

You are like a sponge of feelings, a mess of ideas, and a body that is full of disease – how can I use you?” We may have much devotion and say, “Ma, I want to be your instrument”, but for her work she needs we formed instruments, not a lump of clay.

Sri Aurobindo also emphasize the same thing – that we need to have a vital, mental, physical individuality so that the soul may express itself. He says, in this difficult passage of life, there is a direction, that if human beings become

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* developed individuals, then they could be used by the soul effectively.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

In its first appearance consciousness has the semblance of a miracle, a power alien to Matter that manifests unaccountably in a world of inconscience Nature and grows slowly and with difficulty. Knowledge is acquired, created out of nothing as it were, learned, increased, accumulated by an ephemeral ignorant creature in whom at birth it is entirely absent or present only, not as knowledge, but in the form of an inherited capacity proper to the stage of development of this slowly learning ignorance. It might be conjectured that consciousness is only the original Inconscience mechanically recording the facts of existence on the brain-cells... the record, reflex, response together constitute what appears to be consciousness. But this is evidently not the whole truth, for it might account for observation and mechanical action ...but does not credibly account for ideation, imagination, speculation, the free play of intellect with its observed materials. The evolution of consciousness and knowledge cannot be accounted for unless there is already a concealed consciousness in things with its inherent and native powers emerging little by little...

there is in this concealed consciousness an underlying Knowledge or power of knowledge which by the necessity of the life-contacts with the environment comes to the surface.

Sri Aurobindo has given here a kind of summary of the evolution until now. We grow from inconscience into matter, into life-forms, up to where we have got the vital individual. From the animal, there is the birth of the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 231

human. And with the birth of the human being there is a birth of knowledge. How does this knowledge evolve?

He says, it comes almost like a miracle. How does this knowledge come into the human being? People say that human beings have knowledge because of their inheritance of the mental consciousness. But the human

being cannot get knowledge suddenly out of nowhere. It comes from deep below in the inconscience, because the roots of this evolution are there. Everything, knowledge, consciousness, Supermind, is actually embedded in the inconscient itself as a seed, and we can see the seed growing slowly through matter, through plant life, through animal life, and then it sprouts in man. Until the level of animal, the seed of knowledge grows underground, then in human beings it breaks open and shows its beautiful leaves. That is why Sri Aurobindo says that it looks as if it were a miracle, but it is not a miracle. There has been a slow hidden growth of an

“ephemeral ignorant creature” through which the knowledge gradually comes out. So, this is a very broad analysis of how knowledge comes right from the Inconscient.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo delves into the roots of knowledge in the animal. Without the roots, the appearance of knowledge in human beings becomes something of a miracle, and he does not accept or leave anything unexplained. He says,

The individual animal being in its first conscious self-affirmation has to rely on two sources of knowledge. As it is nescient and helpless, a small modicum of uninformed surface consciousness in a world unknown to it, the secret Conscious-Force sends up to this surface the minimum of intuition necessary for it to maintain its existence and go through the operations indispensable

232

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* to life and survival. This intuition is not possessed by the animal, but possesses and moves it...

As consciousness moves up the evolutionary ladder, there must already exist somewhere the knowledge that moves up with it. On one side there is the consciousness, and simultaneously there is the growth of knowledge. When consciousness moves up to the level of matter and then life, it is still not called knowledge. We call this consciousness

‘knowledge’ only on the mental level. Until then, we call it ‘consciousness’, or the new word that he uses here, –

‘intuition’. It is very important to know that. On the life plane, there is no knowledge. Why are we distinguishing this? Because knowledge is a word associated with mind; we cannot say ‘life-knowledge’. We use the word ‘knowledge’

only when we come to the level of mind. But there must be some kind of knowledge on the life plane. Of what?

Knowledge that gives a direction, that indicates what to do, how to do, where to go. We sometimes refer to it as ‘know-how’. But know-how when it is on the life-plane is called intuition, when it is on the mind plane it is called knowledge.

He says, the Conscious-Force sends up to this surface the minimum of intuition necessary for its maintenance.

Why is he calling it Conscious-Force? Chit and Shakti are always together, so when we say there is an evolution of consciousness, it really means that there is an evolution of Conscious-Force. In matter, there is force rather than consciousness. In evolution, during the beginning, it is the energy, the Tapas, the Force that takes predominance. In the dinosaurs there was a lot of force but a modicum of consciousness. Up until the coming of man, force takes the precedence. With the coming of man and beyond, consciousness takes the precedence.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 233

Sri Aurobindo urges humanity to develop consciousness, force has already been developed by Nature. Now we must become conscious of our inner being, of the Divine within us, of the Divine outside us.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

...the Consciousness-Force sends up to this surface the minimum of intuition necessary for it to maintain its existence and go through the operations indispensable to life and survival.

The main criterion is that intuition guides the operations needed for life and survival. The birds migrate to Orissa or Russia for their survival. Intuition helps the animals, the birds and every creature to survive. Sri Aurobindo says, “This intuition is not possessed by the animal but possesses and moves it.” That is important. Human beings possess knowledge, but the ant does not possess intuition but intuition possesses and moves the animal. Every movement of an ant is nearly perfect. It hardly ever makes a mistake. But because I “possess’ knowledge, and there are deficiencies in my mind, I make many errors. But, if the Divine consciousness takes possession even an uneducated person can become a great scholar.

Sri Aurobindo clarifies —

... it is something that manifests of itself in the grain of the vital and physical substance of consciousness under pressure of a need and for the needed occasion: but at the same time a surface result of this intuition accumulates and takes the form of an automatic instinct which works whenever the occasion for it recurs; this

234

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* instinct belongs to the race and is imparted at birth to its individual members.

What intuition becomes through inheritance is instinct.

We say that animals and birds have instincts. When scientists say birds fly from Siberia to Orissa, they don't say they are guided by intuition, they say they are guided by instinct.

What is instinct? It is intuition working on a collective level.

On the individual level, it is called intuition. On a collective level instinct is passed on to the next generation. When a new ant is born it is born with

certain instincts. The moment it is born, it knows exactly where to go, how to go, and to which nest to go. There is no orientation programme for it. It has already got all that it needs for its survival by its instinct. That means that knowledge which was gathered by its predecessors is passed on to it. It is not like a human child who learns through the education imparted by the school and society.

Sri Aurobindo describes the nature of intuitions and instincts:

The intuition, when it occurs or recurs, is unerring; the instinct is automatically correct as a rule, but can err, for it fails or blunders when the surface consciousness or an ill-developed intelligence interferes or if the instinct continues to act mechanically when, owing to changed circumstances, the need or the necessary circumstances are no longer there.

He says that instinct sometimes can make mistakes. It is limited to specific conditions and situations. For example, in the flight of the birds from Siberia to Orissa, the birds take the same time and the same route. But, if the climate changes suddenly, or if there is an unforeseen storm etc, then

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 235

the flight of the birds may not be on the same trajectory that they have been taking year after year.

Now Sri Aurobindo describes the second source of knowledge:

The second source of knowledge is surface contact with the world outside the natural individual being; it is this contact which is the cause first of a conscious sensation and sense-perception and then of intelligence. If there were not an underlying consciousness, the contact would not create any perception or reaction; it is because the contact stimulates into a feeling and a surface response the subliminal of a being already vitalised by the subconscious life-principle and its first needs... when the life-principle is ready, sufficiently sensitive in the subject, the recipient of the contact, this subliminal consciousness emerges in a response to the stimulus which begins to constitute a vital or life mind, the mind of the animal, and then, in the course of the evolution, a thinking intelligence. The secret

consciousness is rendered into surface sensation and perception, the secret force into surface impulse.

The second source of knowledge is from the whereas instinct is inherited and comes from within. He says that this outer contact is the “cause first of conscious sensation and sense-perception and then of intelligence”. This develops first in the animal as conscious sensation and sense-perception.

We observe that when the ants meet they touch each other’s antennae, and in that way they pass on information. We have also seen how birds dance in a peculiar manner which passes on a particular signal to bird about coming of the mating season or any danger. It is the beginning of intelligence.

This intelligence constitutes a vital or life mind, and later in

236

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the course of evolution it becomes the thinking intelligence.

A modicum of mind in the form of sense-perception and sensation begins at the animal stage itself. We are trying to find out the roots of knowledge which are there in the animal and is called instinct. It is only when it comes to the level of mind that we call it ‘knowledge’.

Sri Aurobindo further explains:

If this underlying subliminal consciousness were to come itself to the surface, there would be a direct meeting between the consciousness of the subject and the contents of the object and the result would be a direct knowledge; but this is not possible, first, because of the veto or obstruction of the Inconscience and, secondly, because the evolutionary intention is to develop slowly through an imperfect but growing surface awareness.

If the subliminal consciousness would come out fully, we could have a direct and full knowledge of things, that is, knowledge by identity. A yogi with his penetrating can know all the problems, thinking, emotions, future and past or anything of a person because he has the direct contact with this

subliminal consciousness. Some yogis develop these abilities because they have the capacity to go within into the subliminal. But for a common person limited to the surface consciousness this not possible for two reasons. The first is the “veto or the obstruction of the Inconscience” it will not let us have this direct knowledge because it is full of darkness and tamas. We are in ignorance because we use external instruments, our senses to gather knowledge, and the instruments can be faulty. The second problem is that it is “the evolutionary intention” for us to

“develop slowly through an imperfect but a growing surface awareness”. This is something interesting and new that we

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 237

have not seen before. Evolution itself does not want us to evolve quickly by leaving the surface consciousness and going into the subliminal consciousness to get this direct knowledge. It wants us to develop this ability with the surface consciousness. Evolution has its course and its own timing.

If we cook a vegetable on a high flame to make it faster, it gets burnt. Similarly, the evolution of mankind takes some minimum time; too much heat, too much tapas, too much haste, may burn the human being. The human being has to be ‘slowly cooked’ well before the divine consciousness can be brought into him. There is a need for the maturation period.

Also, evolution goes at a slow pace because all the aspects of the human nature have to be developed. For example, the Vedic rishis were highly evolved spiritual people, but they could not come to the Olympics and run

100 meters in 9 seconds. Evolution did not go straight from the Vedic rishi into the superman. On the contrary, there has been a devolution. From the spiritual heights, there came the development of the intuitive mind, the mind, the emotions and then the body. Today we see how developed the body has become in this process of evolution. This body consciousness was not so advanced at the time of Sri Krishna. The possibility of the body

attaining its perfection had to be brought forward. Evolution did not want only the spiritual and the psychic to be developed. It would nullify the purpose of mind, vital and physical. Each element, each being gets a chance to grow. All these aspects of the human being had to be given sufficient time to express their genius, capabilities, aspiration to the Divine. That is why the Vedic rishi was not the ultimate of evolution; he was of a very high order but then there was a downward movement to

238

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* develop all these parts of the nature before an upward swing.

There is a cyclical movement. Evolution is not a vertical or unilinear movement, it is cyclical. Even if it goes up to the supramental level, again it has to be brought down into the mind, the vital, the physical, to transform all these and then go up again to the next level.

Next, Sri Aurobindo says,

This creation of an external knowledge and intelligence takes place in an already prepared indeterminate conscious structure... At first this structure is only a minimum formation of consciousness... but, as more organised forms of life appear, this grows into a life-mind and vital intelligence... All this activity is in its initiation intuitive and instructive; the underlying consciousness is translated in the surface substratum...

The mind-movements, when they appear, are involved in these automatisms, they occur as a subordinate mental notation within the predominant vital sense-notation.

But slowly mind starts its task of disengaging itself; it still works for the life-instinct, life-need and life-desire, but its own special characters emerge, observation, invention, device, intention, execution of purpose, while sensation and impulse add to themselves emotion...

There is instinct in the animal, but when the human being comes on earth's scene, we do not leap into the direct knowledge available in the subliminal,

but we develop a mental knowledge in the surface consciousness. The mental consciousness was already in the animal supporting and subservient to the animal need. What is important to understand here is that the animal also has a mind, but a mind which is in the background of the vital intuition and instincts. Remember what we said earlier, there are

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 239

different levels of mind – there is a mental mind, a vital mind, a physical mind, and even a cellular mind. The mind is there on every level and it's a question of which level is predominant. In the vital mind it is behind and the vital is in front – that is the case for the animal. Mankind has a mental mind as well as a vital mind, and there the mind is in the forefront and the vital in the background though this may differ in different individuals and even in the same individual at different times. Otherwise, we have also got a vital mind and a cellular mind, but what is predominant is the mental mind, which did not emerge until the coming of the human beings. This mental mind, he says, gives new faculties of “observation, invention, device, intention, execution of purpose”, and so on. This is the level of human intelligence.

With the coming of the mental mind in human beings, instinct and this animal intuition recedes into the background.

In the animal, instinct works only for its survival and its life purpose, but humans have observation, imagination, and invention too. We observe, suddenly there is an expression of the consciousness. The consciousness as it emerges into the mental capacity opens many branches of new possibility.

We can use the image of a plant. This consciousness starts in the inconscience, has roots visible in the vital mind of the animal, comes out into the open with the developing mental mind on the human level until it becomes a diverse intelligence. Today, the mental man is a big banyan tree with huge multiple mental capacities. But with the coming of the mind, somethings are lost. Physiologically, the tail is lost, which is a very good instrument for the animal, but we don't need it. Mentally, with the coming of the mental mind, instinct is lost. If we compare the animal and the human,

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the animal is surer of its knowledge because of instinct.

Mankind can express itself better and invent computers, aeroplanes and rockets that can go to the moon, but it has lost the sureness of instinct.

Sri Aurobindo says,

When human intelligence adds itself to the animal basis, this basis still remains present and active, but it is largely changed, subtilised and uplifted by conscious will and intention; the automatic life of instinct and vital intuition diminishes and cannot keep its original predominant proportion to the self-aware mental intelligence. Intuition becomes less purely intuitive: even when there is still a strong vital intuition, its vital character is concealed by mentalisation, and mental intuition is most often a mixture, not the pure article, for an alloy is added to make it mentally current and serviceable. In the animal also the surface consciousness can obstruct or alter the intuition but, because its capacity is less, it interferes less with the automatic, mechanical or instinctive action of Nature: in mental man when the intuition rises towards the surface, it is caught at once before it reaches and is translated into terms of mind-intelligence with a gloss or mental interpretation added which conceals the origin of the knowledge.

There is a loss and a gain. We have gained a mind, but we have lost the instinct. A mentality is there in the animal and supports the life, but the life intuition is stronger and the mind cannot interfere. But in human beings it's just the opposite. Mind is so strong that when the intuition comes, the mind usurps it twists it and moulds it as it wants.

Intuition gets diminished and is dominated so heavily by the mental mind that it is hardly existent. Sometimes an

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 241

intuition comes when the mind is suspended, such as in meditation or sleep and there is no interference from the mind.

The emergence of mind in life brings an immense increase of the range and capacity of the evolving consciousness-force; but it also brings an immense increase in the range of capacity of error.

Humans have an immense capacity, an enlarged scope, but with this enlarged scope there is also the possibility of greater error. We have greater possibilities, we can go in any of four or five different ways, but we don't know which is the right way, whereas the ant knows exactly where to go.

The larger the scope of our knowledge, the larger the scope of our error. We are logically compelled to make mistakes.

The ant is programmed to go one way, but we have many possibilities, so we automatically fall into error.

Next, Sri Aurobindo says,

If in the evolution the surface consciousness were always open to the action of intuition, the intervention of error would not be possible. For intuition is an edge of light thrust out by the secret Supermind, and an emergent Truth-Consciousness, however limited, yet sure in its action, would be the consequence. Instinct, if it had to form, would be plastic to the intuition and adapt itself freely to evolutionary change and the change of inner or environing circumstance. Intelligence, if it had to form, would be subservient to intuition and would be its accurate mental expression; its brilliancy would perhaps be modulated to suit a diminished action serving as a minor, not, as it is now, a major function and movement, but it would not be erratic by deviation, would not by

242

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* its parts of obscurity sink into the false or fallible. But this could not be, because the hold of Inconscience on the matter, the surface substance, in which mind and life have to express themselves, makes the surface consciousness obscure and unresponsive to the light within; it is impelled moreover to cherish these defects, to substitute more and more its own incomplete but better grasped clarities for the unaccountable inner intimations, because a rapid development of the

Truth-Consciousness is not the intention in Nature. For the method chosen by her is a slow and difficult evolution of Inconscience developing into Ignorance and Ignorance forming itself into a mixed, modified and partial knowledge before it can be ready for transformation into a higher Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Knowledge. Our imperfect mental intelligence is a necessary stage of transition before this higher transformation can be made possible.

This is, perhaps, the conclusion of the argument. Of course, here we get a wonderful definition of intuition, which he calls “an edge of light thrust out by the secret Supermind”. Intuition is infallible because it comes straight from the Supermind. That is its nature, and the nature of instinct also. If the human intelligence would be plastic and adapted to intuition and serve it – not as it is now which tries to capture intuition and remould it, twist it to suit its own need and its own greed – the intervention of error would not have been necessary. But, alas, this is not possible because of this influence of the inconscience which constantly holds the human consciousness down. Because of this pull of the inconscience, human beings are not able to receive intuition in its pristine purity.

Another problem, he says, is that mankind cherishes its

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 243

defects. Instead of trying to correct the defect of the mind in usurping the role of the intuition, it only cherishes the defect and substitutes more and more its incomplete but better grasped clarities for the unaccountable inner intimations.

Mankind says, “I can explain the world very well, why do I need the intuition? I have imagination, discrimination, inventions, and so much technology at hand”. Human beings are proud of their mental capacities that they do not give doesn't let any chance of for intuition to intervene. It blocks itself completely, saying, “I am happy with what I am”. It does not let itself open. And this is exactly what has to be done in sadhana, to pursue the mind and tell it, “Look, this is not the end, this is not your role. You have a good role, but a limited role. There is something beyond you also,

there is a higher knowledge, there is intuition beyond you, which should be your guideline”.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo explains one of the reasons that the human mind does not open itself to intuition is because it is not developed. If the human mind were developed to a great height, then it would realise its incapacities. It is a paradox. Because the human mind is, in general, very low in its development, that half-knowledge is a handicap. It says, “I know everything”. But one who thinks he knows everything cannot learn anything or open to true knowledge. It’s the same experience we have that the more we read Sri Aurobindo, the more we see how little we understand. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The more we go deeper into it, we say, “I never knew this, how little do I really understand! That is the beauty. The higher we go into knowledge, we understand more the depth of our ignorance. It is only a developed mind which can give itself up to intuition; an undeveloped mind does not give in. That

244

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is why Sri Aurobindo says that unfortunately it is impelled to cherish its defects. And that is why it is not possible for intuition to be a regular faculty.

The Mother has mentioned that the age has come when intuition must take over and replace the mental intelligence.

I think that in her scheme of things, she really expected a faster evolution from human beings. She had hoped that mankind would develop faster. Even while I was a student in 1967-68, we were told about this and I had written about this to the Mother. She wanted the students to start using intuition more than their mental intelligence. But I do not know how much intuition has replaced or taken over mind. There could be some individuals who have opened themselves, but as a general faculty, I am sure we are still miles away from it. Reason is asserting itself more and more although perhaps, at a certain level it does feel that it is incapable. But that is the secret of evolution – individual and collective – when one knows one are weak, when one knows that his time is almost over, there is a kind of last effort to put forward the best of oneself In fact, in a message, when we were

in Auroville, the Mother said that there was a last lash of the falsehood, that it is trying to retain itself and trying to come back, because it sees the coming of the new force, the supramental force. And the falsehood, in its last lash, was harming humanity.

These problems come from the fact that the method chosen by Nature is a slow and difficult evolution, it is not meant to go at a high speed, because that is not the purpose of evolution. Evolution is circular path which takes a longer time than the linear one but it is more integral.

Sri Aurobindo ultimately concludes that “Our imperfect mental intelligence is a necessary stage of transition

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 245

before this higher transformation can be made possible.”

Although mind seems to be the devil in this evolution, still it is a necessary stage of transition. Evolution has to pass through mind in spite of all its defects, because it is a stage in the evolution, and falsehood, error, sin, virtue, morality, immorality, everything seems to be packed in this single layer of transitional consciousness. It is necessary because mind is that stage in which duality and multiplicity begins and exclusivity comes in. This exclusivity of I-ness and my-ness comes on the level of the mind. It may have a negative aspect, but it also has a positive aspect. This separate ego culminates in the psychic being which is an individuality that knows its oneness with others. It is like instead of the Divine looking at itself in a single mirror, it looks through millions of mirrors from different angles. We can see the great beauty and bounty of these millions of reflections. This is made possible by the mind. And that is why the mind is the necessary stage in this evolution.

In the next paragraph Sri Aurobindo says, There are, in practical fact, two poles of the conscious being between which the evolutionary process works, one a surface nescience which has to change gradually into knowledge, the other a secret Conscious-Force in which all power of knowledge is and which has slowly to manifest in the nescience. The surface nescience which is full of incomprehension and inapprehension can

change into knowledge because consciousness is there involved in it; if it were intrinsically an entire absence of consciousness, the change would be impossible: but still it works as an inconscience trying to be conscious; it is at first a nescience compelled by need and outer

246

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* impact to feeling and response and then an ignorance labouring to know.

Having said that the mental intelligence is a necessary stage, Sri Aurobindo now tells us how this mental intelligence is going to get knowledge. He says there are two levels of knowledge that are at work. One is the “surface nescience”, the other is the secret consciousness within. The surface nescience is our ignorance. We are ignorant of the world of Nature, we are ignorant of matter. Science is trying to help us to go from ignorance to knowledge – from nescience to knowledge. This is one of the movements that is happening.

But there is also the secret Consciousness-Force in which exists all knowledge and power, and which works in us as the inner knowledge that is there in the psychic being or the soul. It is gradually coming up to the surface making us more and more knowledgeable – it is in the right sense of the deeper knowledge. That means there are two layers of knowledge – the surface layer and the inner-subliminal layer.

Regarding this surface layer, Sri Aurobindo says, The means used is a contact with the world and its forces and objects which, like the rubbing of tinders, creates a spark of awareness; the response from within is that spark leaping out into manifestation. But the surface nescience in receiving the response from an underlying source of knowledge subdues and changes it into something obscure and incomplete...

He says, we get surface knowledge through contact with the outer world, and he gives us an image: “like the rubbing of tinders”. Suppose two people sit in the same room with light, voice, touch, sound or smell, then they cannot know each other. It is only when there is a sense contact that there begins an interaction and out of this clash of vibrations,

knowledge emerges. To get knowledge, we need this contact on the surface level.

Similarly, when we contact our inner being, again there is a kind of a contact that takes place before the inner being gives out its own knowledge. The process of knowledge is through contact, just like the rubbing of tinders creates a spark, only here it is a spark of awareness and the response is the spark leaping out into manifestation. In our meditations, with whatever little contact we get with our inner being, there is an upsurge of what we can call “knowledge manifesting itself.” That is why if we don’t go within, we will not get the knowledge. It is pure and simple! Sri Aurobindo applies the same technique of knowledge on the outer level with the knowledge on the inner level. If we want to get the knowledge of our own soul, we have to contact it consciously.

The moment there is a linking, the psychic being will give up its divine knowledge. Just as an object gives its knowledge when touched or seen through the microscope, similarly the inner being gives its knowledge when contacted.

But going back to the surface knowledge, Sri Aurobindo explains that,

...there is an imperfect seizure or a misprision of the intuition that answers to the contact: still by this process an initiation of responsive consciousness, a first accumulation of ingrained or habitual instinctive knowledge begins, and there follows upon it first a primitive and then a developed capacity of receptive awareness, understanding, reply of action, previsional initiation of action, — an evolving consciousness which is half knowledge, half-ignorance.

What Sri Aurobindo describes here is the evolution of knowledge. When people were still living in caves and

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* they came in contact with Nature, they really rubbed two stones together and discovered how to make fire. The more they were exposed to Nature, the more knowledge they received. That is why the interaction with Nature was so very important for the development of knowledge right from the beginning.

Through outer contact, knowledge develops slowly and ultimately what we get is a half-knowledge and half-ignorance, which is humanity's present state.

All that is unknown is met on the basis of what is known; but as this knowledge is imperfect, as it receives imperfectly and responds imperfectly to the contacts of things, there can be a misprision of the new contact as well as a misprision or deformation of the intuitive response, a double source of error.

Now, if you remember, we have discussed the evolution of knowledge – how it started right from Inconscient and grew up to the level of animal, to the level of mankind, and how through contact with the world, we are developing knowledge. What happens with this development of knowledge? There comes a greater possibility of error.

This knowledge of man is imperfect because “...it receives imperfectly and responds imperfectly to the contacts of things, there can be a misprision of the new contact as well as a misprision or deformation of the intuitive response, a double source of error.”

We can illustrate this with an example. When I speak to you, I get some kind of knowledge, but because my mind is limited, I am not able to understand you properly; I start adding my own prejudices. Those prejudices block me from understanding you perfectly. Or consider another example,

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 249

when I touch this pen, my senses may be a little blunt, they may not be very accurate and as a result I get imperfect knowledge of it and could mistake it for something else.

That is one problem. Imperfect senses lead to errors.

Another source of error is that “there could be a misprision or deformation of the intuitive response”. Touching the pen, my hand tells me that it has a smooth cold surface, and then my mind intervenes and says, “This seems to be like a pen, I have seen it before”. But if someone who has not seen a pen before, touches it, then his mind would not intervene like this. For him this touch could mean a gun or a rod. So the mind may err in its perception. So the mind can guess it wrong or the senses may fail to convey the real object and so with these imperfect instrumentation we are bound to err. The senses and the mind are unfortunately limited. Our endeavour is to certainly to increase our knowledge but our instruments are limited. We do not deny that. If we compare the caveman with what we are today we have much more knowledge of the earth and Nature. At the same time, how many blunders have we made? The caveman, I am sure, did not kill each other as much as we are killing each other today! The propensity of terrorism was not there. As Sri Aurobindo tells us, then it was a question of survival and living. But today we are not killing each other for survival and living; there is some other anti-divine force that has set in. Error has increased a hundred-fold with the hundred-fold increase of knowledge.

Next, he draws a conclusion about error: It is evident, in these conditions, that Error is a necessary accompaniment, almost a necessary condition and instrumentation, an indispensable step or stage in the slow evolution towards knowledge in a consciousness

250

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* that begins from nescience and works in the stuff of a general nescience. The evolving consciousness has to acquire knowledge by an indirect means which does not give even a fragmentary certitude; for there is at first only a figure or a sign, an image or a vibration physical in character created by contact with the object and a resulting vital

sensation which have to be interpreted by mind and sense and turned into a corresponding mental idea or figure.

How has error become a necessary condition in our knowledge? How does it come in? We already have two reasons: the imperfection of the senses and the imperfection of the mind. Now he says, “The evolving consciousness has to acquire knowledge by an indirect means ”. The indirect means is through the senses. There are other indirect means like telescopes and microscopes, but these are further extensions of our senses. Then he says “knowledge by an indirect means which does not give even a fragmentary certitude;...” The mind and senses are both necessary to get the knowledge, and both are prone to error.

Sri Aurobindo tells us,

...there is at first only a figure or a sign, an image or a vibration physical in character created by contact with the object and a resulting vital sensation which have to be interpreted... Things thus experienced and mentally known have to be related together; things unknown have to be observed, discovered, fitted into the already acquired sum of experience and knowledge. At each step different possibilities of fact, significance, judgment, interpretation, relation present themselves; some have to be tested and rejected, others accepted and confirmed: to

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 251

shut out error is impossible without limiting the chance of acquisition of knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo gives us here multiple ways in which error can intervene. Right from the beginning when I look at the image, my senses can err. If I take off my specs I cannot see what is there on the board because of the defect of my own eyes. Then there is the interpretation of the mind. If I don't see properly, my mind may construct an image based on its expectations and whatever bits of information the senses have provided. This perception is bound to be wrong. Then my mind based on its faulty perception may start judging and interpreting the significance of the perception, imagining how it is related with other things, or rather its

perceptions of other things. If I see two people sitting there, my mind starts interpreting why are they are there, what they are doing, and what they may do next. This brings in more possibility of error, and we have no certainty about any of this supposed knowledge. Such is the problem with mental knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo says, it is impossible to shut out error without limiting the possibility of acquiring knowledge. All we can do to avoid this error of the mind is to go to the Himalayas and be in a cave! But then we limit, along with the error, even the partial knowledge that we might have received from books, from Nature, from contact with other people. If we don't want knowledge then we can avoid committing errors. But if we want knowledge, then we also open ourselves to error. As Sri Aurobindo says,

Observation is the first instrument of the mind, but observation itself is a complex process open at every step to the mistakes of the ignorant observing consciousness; misprision of the fact by the senses and the sense-mind, omission, wrong selection and putting together,

252

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* unconscious additions made by a personal impression or personal reaction create a false or an imperfect composite picture; to these errors are added the errors of inference, judgment, interpretation of facts by the intelligence: when even the data are not sure or perfect, the conclusions built on them must also be insecure and imperfect.

In addition to the misinterpretation of our senses, there are possible errors of inference, judgment and interpretation.

If our mind is narrow, if it is prejudiced, and self-centered we build around ourselves, like a spider, a sticky web that is made of all the thoughts, prejudices, prejudgments and preferences. Unlike the spider, which can coolly walk off its web, we get stuck, a prisoner of our own mind.

Consciousness in its acquisition of knowledge proceeds from the known to the unknown; it builds a structure of acquired experience, memories, impressions, judgments, a composite mental plan of things which is of the

nature of a shifting and ever modifiable fixity. In the reception of new knowledge, what counts in to be received is judged in the light of past knowledge and fitted into the structure; if it cannot properly fit, it is either dove-tailed in anyhow or rejected: but the existing knowledge and its structure or standards may not be applicable to the new object or new field of knowledge, the fitting may be a misfitting or the rejection may be an erroneous response.

How does the mind move to get knowledge? It moves from the known to the unknown. In integral education, Sri Aurobindo gave us an important principle that the child in its learning goes from knowing what is near to what is far. That means from the known to the unknown. The child

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 253

does not start thinking of the abstract things at all. For a child compassion, love, beauty, aesthetics mean nothing!

But if we give in his hand an object that he can touch, it is something real for him. That is the closest, the known fact, and after this, when he grows up, then we introduce him to the idea of, say a pen – “this is a pen that we use for writing”.

But first he feels the pen and knows it physically.

If we just show an image and say this is a pen, he may learn to recognise and name the image, but he will not understand what it is. Lots of parents buy books of animals and teach their children the names of the animals and vegetables etc. I have seen a young boy of two years who could name a whole album of animals. But that child had never seen a chicken outside his house!

Sri Aurobindo speaks of the principle of learning things from near to far in any proper education. He does not have one rule for integral education and another for integral yoga.

It is the same pattern of human growth. That is the beauty of Sri Aurobindo’s approach; he takes the whole thing as a natural process of life

itself. He discovered the secret of life's growth, which he has categorized and systematized for us. He has only named the life processes, not invented or converted it. It is the same for education, for our individual growth, for the collective growth of a nation it is an integral process, something organic – the mind goes from the known to the unknown. "...it builds a structure of acquired experience, memories, impressions, judgments, a composite mental plan of things which is of the nature of a shifting and ever modifiable fixity". We step forward based on what we have acquired till now. The scientist keeps his feet on the ground, because that is his solid fixity. Sri Aurobindo says,

"In the reception of new knowledge, what counts in to be

254

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* received is judged in the light of past knowledge and fitted into the structure". If something new is found it is accepted if it fits into the past knowledge otherwise it is rejected.

If it cannot be given a place, the scientist will say it wrong information. That is the strength of the scientist and that is their bane. The idea of supraphysical or anti-divine forces find us place in the scientists knowledge scheme. Usually, a scientist believes in what he sees and not necessarily in forces or evil or God. They reject and refute the presence of any such force because they do not fit into their scheme of knowledge. That is the problem, these things are rejected because they don't fit into his scheme of knowledge. As Sri Aurobindo says, "the existing knowledge and its structure or standards may not be applicable to the new object or new field of knowledge, the fitting may be a misfitting or the rejection may be an erroneous response." Sri Aurobindo says, To misprision and wrong interpretation of facts, there is added misapplication of knowledge – miscombination, misconstruction, misrepresentation, a complicated machinery of mental error. In all this enlightened obscurity of our mental parts a secret intuition is at work.

Sri Aurobindo observes more problem to what we already have – "miscombination, misconstruction, misrepresentation, a complicated

machinery of mental error". We can imagine how far we go into error in our life.

But, our saving grace is that there is some higher force or intuition at work:

In all this enlightened obscurity of our mental parts a secret intuition is at work, a truth-urge that corrects or pushes the intelligence to correct what is erroneous, to labour towards a true picture of things and a true

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 255

interpretative knowledge. But intuition itself is limited in the human mind by mental misperception of its intimations and is unable to act in its own right; for whether it be physical, vital or mental intuition, it has to present itself in order to be received, not nude and pure, but garbed with a mental coating or entirely enveloped in an ample mental vesture; so disguised, its true nature cannot be recognised and its relation to mind and its office are not understood, its way of working is ignored by the hasty and half-aware human intelligence.

As we said earlier, fortunately, we have something called intuition. Had intuition not been there, even the scientist would not have progressed. Who was that famous scientist who said "Eureka"? Archimedes. If science had stopped at that place, where would we be? When there is a new element that is discovered in the course of science, science accepts it. Fortunately, there is this intuition in mankind to move forward. There is something beyond Archimedes, there is something beyond Newton, and there is something beyond Einstein too. Humanity is moving forward. How did Einstein himself go forward? From his records we know that he received the theory of relativity through intuition. He did not start putting the formulas together, he intuited it and then translated it into mathematical formulas. This intuition keeps pushing mankind forward. Sometimes it disguises itself. It may be just a feeling. Sometimes a scientist sees something in Nature, and seeing through that unimportant, vague thing, suddenly the mind catches a truth – for instance

– falling of an apple which was caught by Newton.

This intuition has to play many roles, wear many disguises so that it is not rejected. If the scientist would see that God is working in him, he would reject it. God does not bother

256

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* about whether he is given credit or not. As long as man progresses and receives the intuitions, it is enough for him.

There are intuitions of actuality, of possibility, of the determining truth behind things, but all are mistaken by the mind for each other. A great confusion of half-grasped material and an experimental building with it, a representation or mental structure of the figure of self and things rigid and yet chaotic, half formed and arranged, half jumbled, half true, half erroneous, but always imperfect, is the character of human knowledge.

What we have learnt here is that there are multiple sources of error in our knowledge. There is the error in our acquiring knowledge through our senses, in the interpretation of this knowledge which ultimately is a half-knowledge, half-error; and then there are gross errors, further more dangerous errors of applying this half-knowledge to our view of reality. When we start applying our half-knowledge it becomes more frustrating and more dangerous. It leads us into further error. Intuition is helping humanity to move forward, but we have not yet come to that stage where we are completely open to intuition. At the end of the day, what we are left with is a jumbled, half-true, half-erroneous, always imperfect knowledge. This brings us to the end of this discussion on error.

Now Sri Aurobindo will take up the important questions of falsehood and evil.

What is of greater danger than error is falsehood, which not only makes our progress slow, but it may reverse our evolution. Error, by itself, is pardonable, but falsehood has the danger of arresting the evolution, or at least the progression of man. Sri Aurobindo says,

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 257

Error by itself, however, would not amount to falsehood; it would only be an imperfection of truth, a trying, an essay of possibilities: for when we do not know, untried and uncertain possibilities have to be admitted and, even if as a result an imperfect or inapt structure of thought is built, yet it may justify itself by opening to fresh knowledge in unexpected directions and either its dissolution and rebuilding or the discovery of some truth it concealed might increase our cognition or our experience.

If I do not know something today, there are all chances that I will know it tomorrow. Error exists because of incomplete and imperfect knowledge of the truth, but there is still the possibility of growing into knowledge. And thanks to the hidden intuition, mankind can get a higher knowledge, and by this increasing knowledge, the original and enveloping inconscience diminishes, it gives way to more and more light. That is the process that Sri Aurobindo has accepted.

But here the second condition or factor of the evolution intervenes; for this seeking for knowledge is not an impersonal mental process hampered only by the general limitations of mind-intelligence: the ego is there, the physical ego, the life-ego bent, not on self-knowledge and the discovery of the truth of things and the truth of life, but on vital self-affirmation; a mental ego is there also bent on its own personal self-affirmation and largely directed and used by the vital urge for its life-desire and life-purpose.

The real culprit here is the ego, this is where falsehood comes in. Even in criminal law, if there has been a mistake, if there was no motivation behind a crime, there would be no conviction for murder. When there is a crime, we would

258

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* first find out the motivation behind it. In an accidental death, nobody is punished, or there is perhaps a minimum punishment. But it is not a murder. An accidental death is an error, but a murder is falsehood. This falsehood comes because of the perversion of the vital, the mind in life, it is not just the vital in its own purity. It is when the mind intervenes in life that there comes perversion.

Error creates the basis; but with the intervention of the mind in life, the innocent error becomes a falsehood. If a child breaks a glass by accident, we don't scold him, it is an error; but if the child throws the glass down to break it, then the child gets a scolding. That means he has done it with the vital mind intending to destroy something to express his anger. The vital mind has come into play. That is why animals can make errors, but animals do not indulge in falsehood. It is only human beings who indulge in falsehood, because of the ego.

Both the vital and mental ego want to affirm themselves, to show that they are the master, the hero. The ego is bent upon its own personal affirmation. Whatever it thinks is right, whatever it knows is right; we cannot argue with it. All the arguments take place because of the ego. Its "rightness"

gets extended into religion, caste, creed, and nation. We say my religion is the greatest one, my religion is the only one that is true. It is all because of the mental and vital ego. Was happen because of the Nation egos. Everyone asserts their own rightness and that becomes a falsehood and then terror and violence and bloodshed is unleashed.

For as mind develops, there develops also a mental individuality with a personal drive of mind-tendency, a mental temperament, a mind-formation of its own. This surface mental individuality is egocentric; it looks at the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 259

world and things and happenings from its own standpoint and sees them not as they are but as they affect itself: in observing things it gives them the turn suitable to its own tendency and temperament, selects or rejects, arranges truth according to its own mental preference and convenience; observation, judgment, reason are all determined or affected by this mind-personality and assimilated to the needs of the individuality and the ego.

Sri Aurobindo analyses and brings clarity to the life-process, the movement of the life force. He says, when the child grows up (the Mother would say at about the age of 12 or 13) the mental faculties open up, the mind opens up.

Before that the child is more or less a vital creature, but once the mind starts opening up he/she develops a mental personality what Sri Aurobindo calls a “mind-tendency, a mental temperament”. And once the child develops this mental temperament, then everything that he observes he will try to take it according to his own preference and choice, and based on his own tendency or temperament.

It selects or rejects, arranges truth according to its own mental preference and convenience. If the child is not well educated, which brings training in controlling himself and his mental energies, and when he grows to adulthood and enters life proper, then his reactions and responses to life will be wild and uncontrolled. This is something that happens in terrorism; those are the ones who are trapped into this kind of activities. This mental personality that Sri Aurobindo is speaking of here gets trained by the terrorists or even a faulty education and they start hating another community.

Their minds are narrowed into just thinking of hatred which can result in a self-immolation. That hatred goes to such an extreme that the person is ready to give up his or her life in

260

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* order to harm others and fulfil his community's ego. What is interesting is that Sri Aurobindo says that the mental temperament selects or rejects, arranges truth according to its own mental preference. That is how a doctrine of hatred is rubbed into the young minds who are brain washed.

We had a case here of a parent who had two daughters, one daughter was put in the Ashram school, and the other was put in a school Calcutta; I met both of them. Although the parents are the same, for the daughter in the Ashram, her personality came out to be so very different from her sister. She was wide in comprehension, very flexible, and there were no anti-feelings for certain people. The other girl was brilliant and sharp in her subjects but as a person she was very narrow and closed. Her mind was not open!

That suggests that the formation of the mental personality depends on where one grows up. A child groomed in a good school grows differently. What is a good school? Is it a school that emphasises on having a brilliant mind? Or is it a school where, as the Mother said, “We do not want brilliant minds, we want living souls”. (*Mother’s Agenda* 1: 405) You may have a brilliant mind but a dead soul. This is the value system of education that we are speaking of. It is not the question of what we are teaching or how we are teaching, it is a question of what values we put into our teaching. I have seen youngsters who never touched a computer and after the 10th standard when they needed a job they went to a computer training school and within two months they were quite well equipped. So one does not have to waste this computer time already in the 3rd standard. If they put computers there they tend to make the mind mechanical.

The child may know many computer programmes, but these are techniques that one can pick up at any time if the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 261

mind is trained. A young child needs a value system, needs to learn generosity, humaneness, and needs to learn of the Divine. Why waste his time with these mechanical, technical things? But that is the modern craze. The whole system is perverted, because we have lost our ideals. Sri Aurobindo pointed out that we have the soulless education given by the Britishers. We are perpetrating the same thing in a new form. The whole ideal now is to send one’s child to America to earn extra dollars and comforts.

Even when the mind aims most at a pure impersonality of truth and reason, a sheer impersonality is impossible to it; even the most trained, severe and vigilant intellect fails to observe the twists and turns it gives to truth in the reception of fact and idea and the construction of its mental knowledge. Here, we have an almost inexhaustible source of distortion of truth, a cause of falsification, an unconscious or half-conscious will to error, an acceptance of ideas or facts not by a clear perception of the true and the false, but by preference, personal suitability, temperamental choice, prejudgment.

There is “an almost inexhaustible source of distortion of truth” in the mental ego. Why? Because we refuse to see the truth. We say ourselves, “I am a great sadhak, I am a saint, I am open, I am a child of the Mother”. I may have read the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but has it really impacted my thinking? Or is it that I only have put a label on myself as a teacher of *The Life Divine*, while nothing has really happened to my mind? Sri Aurobindo says that we do not want to see the clear perception of what is true because we are caught into the web of preferences, personal suitability, temperamental choices. As it is said in common language,

262

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* we put on yellow glasses. We look at the world as we want to see it; so where can truth have its chance? He says, Here is a fruitful seed-plot for the growth of falsehood or a gate or many gates through which it can enter by stealth or by an usurping but acceptable violence. Truth too can enter in and take up its dwelling, not by its own right, but at the mind’s pleasure.

The mind is so full of this preference and personal suitability and temperamental choice that it leaves open many gates for error to come in. Sri Aurobindo calls this mind “a fruitful seed plot for the growth of falsehood”.

It makes one humble. To my mind these things are tremendously humbling. We begin to understand that our minds with its so-called brilliance, with its university degrees, are nothing but a seed plot for the growth of falsehood in which error has free entry, whereas truth has a limited entry. Truth can come in and go out, because many gates are open, but unfortunately, it can come in only at the mind’s pleasure, and we are willfully blind to truth – this is the tragedy. I have used the word willfully only to introspect.

“Have we gone beyond greed? It is only if we remove that spider-web of self-regard that we can see the Truth rather than simply pretending that we want to see the Truth.”

Now having discussed how falsehood comes in with the twist in the mental ego, Sri Aurobindo takes us further into this structure of the mind. He says,

In the terms of the Sankhya psychology we can distinguish three types of mental individuality, —that which is governed by the principle of obscurity and inertia, first-born of the Inconscience, tamasic; that which is governed by a force of passion and activity, kinetic, rajasic; that

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 263

which is cast in the mould of the sattvic principle of light, harmony, balance.

We have here three types of mind related to the three gunas. The first is the “obscurity and inertia” of tamas, the next is the “passion and activity” of rajas, and the third is the light, balance and harmony of sattwa. He now describes them further,

The tamasic intelligence has its seed in the physical mind: it is inert to ideas, —except to those which it receives inertly, blindly, passively from the recognized source of authority, —obscure in their reception, unwilling to enlarge itself, recalcitrant to new stimulus, conservative and immobile; it clings to its received structure of knowledge and its one power is repetitive practicality, but it is a power limited by the accustomed, the obvious, the established and familiar and already secure; it thrusts away all that is new and likely to disturb it.

This is something very interesting. This tamasic intelligence is embedded in the physical mind.

The physical mind gathers knowledge by repetitive methods. We have many young persons learning not through college professors or videos but by assisting a master as an apprentice. This method was prevalent in ancient India. We did not send all our children to schools; we sent them for apprenticeship, which is education by repetitive process. But this develops the tamasic mind, which is very active in us.

This tamasic intelligence, Sri Aurobindo says, is “recalcitrant to new impulses; it is conservative and immobile”. Even when we grow into

adulthood, we don't want to accept new ideas. We stick to what has been given to us as the ultimate truth by our masters or parents. This tendency is there in

264

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* each one of us, because we are caught in this physical mind which “clings to its received structure of knowledge and its one power of repetitive practicality...it is a power limited by the accustomed, the obvious, the established and familiar and already secure...”

Why is this physical mind important in human beings?

It has its own place; let us not think that Nature has given us the physical mind just for the sake of it. The physical mind, through repetition, makes behaviours into a habit.

Both good habits and bad habits are formed by the physical mind. That is why we say that children right from a young age should be taught good habits, because what grows first is this physical mind, afterwards the rajasic mind and then the sattwic mind are developed. The habits that are taught to the child at a young age are caught by this physical mind and become difficult to break. One of the habits we form is that of food that we eat at home especially prepared by our mother. Our tongue gets so used to this repetitive taste that when we grow up it can become an obstruction. If we visit a relative, if we go to another country and the food there is different, we tend to dislike it. Now, if that is the habit of my tongue, imagine the habits of my thought! How did my father react, how did my brother respond? These are the thought habits that go into our mental formation.

Sri Aurobindo adds, the physical mind thrusts away all that is new and likely to disturb it”. This happens with everything, be it religion, food habits, dress habits – we reject any change if they disturb our inertia.

Next, Sri Aurobindo describes the rajasic intelligence: The rajasic intelligence has its main seat in the vital mind and is of two kinds: one kind is defensive with violence and passion, assertive of its mental individuality and all

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 265

that is in agreement with it, preferred by its volition, adapted to its outlook, but aggressive against all that is contrary to its mental ego-structure or unacceptable to its personal intellectuality...

One type of vital mind is defensive with violence and passion. It revolts to new ideas. If somebody says something different, we may end up quarreling with that person. It revolts against contrary views or behaviours with violence and passion. That can lead to extremes, but in typical day-to-day living it tends to get expressed when any new idea that comes in is taken up as a challenge, and then one argues about it or even end up fighting. If this is what we have learned in our childhood, it can become ingrained as a habit. If our boss says something contrary to my habitual thinking, if our colleague opines something different, we get angry, just because they have disturbed our mental structure.

Why are there so many fights amongst human beings? It is precisely because of this resistance to accept any new idea, so the vital mind revolts, rejects, quarrels and fights. When this mind rejects and starts fighting, then the rajasic vital comes in to support it. The mental intelligence rejects and then the rajasic vital comes forward and adds its strength to the quarrel. When the vital and the mental come together, it may end up in quarrel, a fight or even death. Then Sri Aurobindo describes another kind of rajasic intelligence:

...the other kind is enthusiastic for new things, passionate, insistent, impetuous, often mobile beyond measure, inconstant and ever restless, governed in its idea not by truth and light but by the zest of intellectual battle and movement and adventure.

This is the creative aspect of the mind. The first kind of rajasic intelligence rejected the new, and the tamasic

266

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* intelligence didn't even receive new things. The second kind of rajasic intelligence is excited for new ideas. As

soon as it sees something brilliantly new, it says, “wonderful”! There is a restlessness governed by the zest of intellectual battle and movement and adventure. It is attracted by new adventure.

Then, there is the third level of the intelligence: The sattwic intelligence is eager for knowledge, as open as it can be to it, careful to consider and verify and balance, to adjust and adopt to its view whatever confirms itself as truth, receiving all that it can assimilate, skilful to build truth in a harmonious intellectual structure: but, because its light is limited, as all mental light must be, it is unable to enlarge itself so as to receive equally all truth and all knowledge; it has a mental ego, even an enlightened one, and is determined by it in its observation, judgment, reasoning, mental choice and preference. In most men there is a predominance of one of these qualities but also a mixture...

The sattwic intelligence is the best one, it receives all that it can assimilate. It accept new ideas; one may even read books and gather new ideas. Unfortunately, because of its incapacity and limitations, and in spite of its goodwill, it cannot open too much; its opening also is limited. It wants to be open, but in certain circumstances, when the real test comes, it may fail because it is not felt in the deeper being.

Sri Aurobindo says that there is usually a predominance of one of these qualities. We have all the four – the tamasic intelligence, the two types of rajasic intelligence and the sattwic intelligence, but one of them is usually predominant. But we may tend to be one or another at different times. For example, on Sundays many people don't want to receive new ideas, they just want to lie

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 267

down, put on the TV or do some repetitive thing. We all have these different parts of ourselves, and sometimes we are centred in one and sometimes in the another. As Sri Aurobindo says,

...the same mind can be open and plastic and harmonic in one direction, kinetic and vital, hasty and prejudiced and ill-balanced in another, in yet another obscure and unreceptive. This limitation by personality, this defence of personality and refusal to receive what is assimilable, is necessary for the individual being because in its evolution, at the stage reached, it has a certain self-expression, a certain type of experience and use of experience which must, for the mind and life at least, govern nature; that for the moment is its law of being, its dharma. This limitation of mind-consciousness by personality and of truth by mental temperament and preference must be the rule of our nature so long as the individual has not reached universality, is not yet preparing for mind-transcendence.

This is characteristic of Sri Aurobindo . He sees human nature in its totality and gives it its proper place in the process of evolution without rejecting any part of the human personality. He says that our present mind has these three levels – tamasic, rajasic, sattwic – and all are necessary to enable us to progress from our physical base until we become the universal. This is the platform on which we can evolve.

This triple structure of man will continue to remain as long as man does not become universal. We have to become what the Gita calls *trigunātīta* – go beyond three gunas; we have neither the sattwic nor the rajasic nor the tamasic modes of being.

But it is evident that this condition is inevitably a source of

268

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* error and can at any moment be the cause of a falsification of knowledge, and unconscious or half-willful self-deception, a refusal to admit true knowledge, a readiness to assert acceptable wrong knowledge as true knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo brought in the idea of gunas because he wants us to understand due to tamasic, rajasic and sattwic intelligence, we are open to error and falsity. If the tamasic intelligence does not want to move on, take a new idea, it is committing a blunder by becoming stagnant. There will be no progress and that opens us to error. Or if this rajasic intelligence rejects

all that is new, it is again committing blunders and errors. Like that the human structure of mind is innately built so that we cannot help but admit error.

Before we move further, let us clarify that despite its resistance tamasic intelligence is important. The reason is because in nature there is a need to conserve. What is the other meaning of 'conserve'? It is to 'preserve'. If we want to conserve it means that we want to preserve. Nature cannot be constantly moving forward, what it has gained it must consolidate and preserve and make it a part of its subconscious so that future generations can use this knowledge that is stored in the subconscious. So the tamasic intelligence also has a role, because it preserves good habits also. In India we tell our children, "When you wake up in the morning and get ready for your day, go to the puja room and do pranam before the Lord." It is a habit that we gain from our parents and pass on to our children. This is conservation of a good habit. I have seen my grandmother doing that; she never had a cup of tea until she offered an incense stick to her deity as part of her prayers. Until the last day of her life she did that. That is a habit which she inculcated from her childhood.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 269

Now, moving forward, to have indicated three possible sources of falsification – the mental, the vital and the physical.

We have seen the mental now Sri Aurobindo takes up the vital being.

Here the second of the primary conditions of the evolution, the law of a separate life-being affirming itself in a world which is not-self to it, comes into prominence and assumes an immense importance. It is here that the surface vital personality or life-self asserts its dominance, and this dominance of the ignorant vital being is a principal active source of discord and disharmony, a cause of inner and outer perturbations of the life, a mainspring of wrong-doing and evil. The natural vital element in us, insofar as it is unchecked or untrained or retains its primitive character, is not concerned with truth or right consciousness or right action; it is concerned with self-affirmation, with life-growth, with possession, with satisfaction of impulse, with all satisfactions of desire.

This is the movement of the vital ego. It never wants truth; it is not concerned with truth or right consciousness or right action. However much it may claim that it wants truth, it is concerned with self-affirmation. Even when we love somebody, at the back of this so-called love, the concern is with life-growth, with possession, with satisfaction of impulse. Even when we say, “I love my child”, or “I love my wife”, or “I love my country”, or “I love my religion”, there is always behind it some self-affirmation. Vital love is basically a possession. Even the love of parents for their children is full of self-affirmation and possession. If parents can’t love their child with purity and possession, who else can they love? He says, as long as it is unchecked or untrained, it “is concerned with self-affirmation, with life-growth”. That means, it is solely

270

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* concerned with how it can possess the other person, how it can get things done by the other person.

This main need and demand of the life-self seems all-important to it; it would readily carry it out without any regard to truth or right or good or any other consideration: but because mind is there and has these conceptions, because the soul is there and has these soul-perceptions, it tries to dominate mind and get from it by dictation a sanction and order of execution for its own will of self-affirmation, a verdict of truth and right and good for its own vital assertions, impulses, desires...

It is frightening! He says this vital ego would readily carry out actions without any regard for truth or good or right or anything when it comes to self-affirmation. We are ready to disregard the truth spoken by our own Guru when it comes to self-affirmation. We have first to be frank about this otherwise, we would have been yogis by now. We always twist the truth and present it in a way convenient to us. That is why he says that without any regard to truth or right or good or any other consideration, the vital will insist on itself.

The vital is a very clever fellow! It knows what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have written about detachment etc. But it turns a blind eye to

these teachings in order to fulfill its own desires. If it can get the assent of the mind, it is quite ready to ignore all standards.

The life-individual needs place, expansion, possession of its world, dominance and control of things and beings; it needs these things for itself and for those with whom it associates itself, for its own ego and for the collective ego; it needs them for its ideas, creeds, ideals, interests, imaginations: for it has to assert these forms of I-ness and my-ness and impose them

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 271

on the world around it or, if it is not strong enough to do that, it has at least to defend and maintain them against others to the best of its power and contrivance.

This I-ness of the vital ego extends itself to the family and family prestige. We have to keep up the family prestige, and that means we must assert our family against other families which may have damaged our family prestige. It is the same with “my religion”, “my nation”. If I go to America and see an Indian doing something wrong, I feel how is it possible that being an Indian he can behave like that? I assert my vital ego of being an Indian. All the time it is asserting itself. It may call itself an Indian, a Hindu, of a particular family or clan etc. every where it makes the same assertions. In every garb the vital wants to assert itself.

It needs to possess things for itself. “It may try to do it by methods that it thinks or chooses to think or represent as right; it may try to do it by the naked use of violence, ruse, falsehood, destructive aggression, crushing of other life-formations”. The principle is the same whatever the means or the moral attitude.

We have terrorists today who are doing the same thing; it is an extreme vital assertion. This self-assertion may start with dominance over our child to begin with. It can go to the extreme of becoming a terrorist who says, “Do my command or I will blow up the plane”. It is the same human nature that goes to the extreme by using violence or falsehood or destructive aggression, even by crushing other life-formations.

It is not only in the realm of interests, but in the realm of ideas and the realm of religion that the vital being of man has introduced this spirit and attitude of self-affirmation

272

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and struggle and the use of violence, oppression and suppression, intolerance, aggression...

It is a blanket description of human nature. This violent self-assertion occurs also in the realms of religion and ideas. It takes many garbs to assert itself. It may suppress or dominate or attack those with different ideas or a different religion, or ethnic or cultural background.

...it has imposed the principle of life-egoism on the domain of intellectual truth and the domain of the spirit. Into its self-affirmation the self-asserting life brings in hatred and dislike towards all that stands in the way of its expansion or hurts its ego; it develops as a means or as a passion or reaction of the life-nature cruelty, treachery and all kinds of evil; its satisfaction of desire and impulse takes no account of right or wrong, but only of the fulfillment of desire and impulse. For this satisfaction it is ready to face the risk of destruction and actuality of suffering; for what it is pushed by Nature to aim at is not self-preservation alone, but life-affirmation and life-satisfaction, formulation of life-force and life-being.

Here we get an understanding of why people take to terrorism, and why there have been ruthless dictators. The suicide bombers are ready to kill themselves, and many terrorists undergo suffering because of the same vital self-assertion. The terrorist says, "I don't mind killing myself; if I can kill 15 people around me". He sacrifices his own life but basically it is the same vital ego that motivates him.

Now we understand why Sri Aurobindo insists upon a change of nature. It's not sufficient to have an inner realisation, we have to transform the outer nature. We may have a state of bliss, a beautiful consciousness of oneness, but then we may still get these disturbances of the vital ego.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 273

Psychic transformation begins this process of changing the outer nature, Spiritual transformation takes it further, but it is only when the Supramental transformation takes place that the transformation can become complete. Otherwise, the world will remain what it is. This is the basic structure and nature of mankind. One may become a sadhu or a saint without changing one's nature. How many sadhus and saints have become victims of their sex urges and vital energies?

It is because they still have the same untransformed vital nature. The sadhu may have realised the psychic being, but the outer being has remained untransformed and he may get overwhelmed by it and become greedy, take money, use women or take to power games. That means the psychic realisation by itself is not sufficient. A greater and more permanent transformation is required.

We have seen how the vital ego leads to evil and to what extent it can go. Sri Aurobindo has said that it can take us to hatred and suffering and suppression and intolerance and aggression. Now he brings out the positive side: It does not follow that this is all that the vital personality is in its native composition or that evil is its very nature.

It is not primarily concerned with truth and good, but it can have the passion for truth and good as it has, more spontaneously, the passion for joy and beauty.

Just as the mental ego can have a passion for truth, so the vital ego can have a passion for beauty and joy. When we talk about having a passion for aesthetics or music or sculpture –

any artistic work – there is behind that a passion for joy and beauty, which is due to the vital personality. He says, In all that is developed by the life-force there is developed at the same time a secret delight somewhere in the being, a delight in good and a delight in evil, a delight in truth and

274

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a delight in falsehood, a delight in life and an attraction to death, a delight in pleasure and a delight in pain, in one's

own suffering and the suffering of others, but also in one's own joy and happiness and good and the joy and happiness and good of others.

Here is an answer to the question of how is it that people who are evil seem to take delight in it. Sri Aurobindo says that the vital personality takes delight both in life and death, delight in pleasure and pain. People may also take pleasure in pain and in suffering, both in one's own suffering and in the suffering of others. We have seen in some religious functions in South India people put needles through their mouth and even hooks into their skin and pull carts. One wonders what is happening, how are they suffering like this? It may be in the name of religion or in the name of a god but obviously there is pain. But even in this pain there can be a delight. Ultimately, we see that even behind suffering there is delight.

For the force of life-affirmation affirms alike the good and the evil: it has its impulses of help and association, of generosity, affection, loyalty, self-giving; it takes up altruism as it takes up egoism, sacrifices itself as well as destroys others; and in all its acts there is the same passion for life-affirmation, the same force of action and fulfillment.

Sri Aurobindo says that there is this "force of life-affirmation" – that is, this pranic energy, the force of life, which wants to affirm itself, wants to exist, wants to show itself. In this flow of pranic energy it doesn't matter what is the experience or what is the act. It may be self-torture or giving a beautiful present to another person – pranic energy flows in both. It affirms the good and the evil alike, because the pranic energy is amoral. If there is a river flowing, and we dig a canal from it into the fields, it becomes useful, it

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 275

helps our paddy fields to grow. But the same canal, if it goes into the village and overflows, can become destructive. It is not the fault of the river. Similarly, this pranic energy can go into a beautiful gift and give happiness or it can go into the making of a bomb and kill.

Sri Aurobindo says,

This character of vital being and its trend of existence in which what we term good and evil are items but not the mainspring, is evident in subhuman life; in the human being, since there a mental, moral and psychic discernment has developed, it is subjected to control or to camouflage, but it does not change its character. The vital being and its life-force and their drive towards self-affirmation are, in the absence of an overt action of soul-power and spiritual power, Atma Shakti, Nature's chief means of effectuation, and without its support neither mind nor body can utilise their possibilities or realise their aim here in existence.

This is the conclusion, that this vital being and its life-force are the chief means of effectuation. Of course, in sadhana also, Sri Aurobindo tells us that this vital energy is of great importance, because if we do not have the vital energy or the vital being supporting our sadhana, our sadhana collapses.

This vital force is a kind of Shakti, it is power. If we have a wonderful car but don't have petrol in it, it cannot run. The vital drives the engines of life. We need the collaboration of the vital in all that we do. Sometimes, we get pleasures, sometimes sufferings, but through these there is a kind of fulfillment of the vital. One cannot be all the time studying books, one does sometimes go for entertainment and take vital pleasure in it. If we dry up the vital, then we have no way of moving forward. He says, unless and until we reach the level of the Atma Shakti, that means the power of the soul, you must

276

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* use the driving force of the vital. Until we realise the psychic being, what drives man is this vital energy. Once we have a contact with the psychic battery, that new battery comes into operation and we can have the whole mind, body, life being driven by the psychic force or the Atma Shakti. Until then, he says, we can't help it, the vital is our nature's chief force.

Now, to recapitulate we have seen the argument that the it is the intervention of the mental ego that brings in falsehood.

Not only do we have a mental ego, but we also have a vital ego. He has also described the different types of mental egos – the tamasic and the rajasic and the sattwic – and all of them, whatever their positive roles, give a lot of scope for error. Each type of mental ego has its own entry for error.

Then he moved on to a description of the vital ego, which is dangerously false. It has a tremendous amount of falsehood because it can go to extremes of violence and destruction.

But it also has a positive side and helps us. In general, the vital being is the energy of life, it pushes life forward, but in its action, it is a neutral force and drives ahead whether the actions are painful or are full of pleasure. The vital energy is utilised for both – acts of pain and acts of pleasure. Here also, there is a lot of falsehood that is let in.

Now Sri Aurobindo will explain why nature adopts these means of the mental and the vital ego.

This then is the origin and nature of error, falsehood, wrong and evil in the consciousness and will of the individual; a limited consciousness growing out of nescience is the source of error, a personal attachment to the limitation and the error born of it the source of falsity, a wrong consciousness governed by the life-ego the source of evil.

This is the sum and substance of the arguments he has been making. First of all, what is the source of error? It is

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 277

the limited consciousness growing out of nescience. That means, when this deeper consciousness force evolves up to the mind, because of the limitations of its knowledge, there is the possibility of error. Next, “a personal attachment to the limitations and errors born from it are the source of falsity”.

Why does he say it is personal attachment? Because we are attached to our mental ego, and we are driven by the vital ego.

Our attachment to the errors they make becomes a source of falsehood. Lastly, “a wrong consciousness governed by the life-ego is the source of evil”. In fact, he is going to develop a little more on this evil too, so we will see what he has to say.

But it is evident that their relative existence is only a phenomenon thrown up by the cosmic Force in its drive towards evolutionary self-expression and it is there that we have to look for the significance of the phenomenon.

For the emergence of the life-ego is, as we have seen, a machinery of cosmic Nature for the affirmation of the individual, for his self-disengagement from the indeterminate mass substance of the subconscious, for the appearance of a conscious being on a ground prepared by the Inconscience; the principle of life affirmation of the ego is the necessary consequence. The individual ego is a pragmatic and effective fiction, a translation of the secret self into the terms of surface consciousness, or a subjective substitute for the true self in our surface experience...

We have been told about the mental ego and the vital ego and their role in falsity and evil, but why is there this ego at all. What is the purpose of this ego? Sri Aurobindo throws light on this question by saying that it is “a machinery of cosmic Nature for the affirmation of the individual, for his self-disengagement from the indeterminate mass substance of the subconscious”. Sri Aurobindo has said in an aphorism

278

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* that “Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar”. (CWSA 13: 199) How is ego the helper? It is a helper because it allows us to become an individual out of the subconscious. We have explained this before that we need to become an individual.

The subconscious is just energy and a mass of body, it is not individualised. When we were born as children, we did not have a developed individuality. The child develops the ego, the tamasic ego, the rajasic ego, the mental ego. That is a natural process. It does not depend on our education, culture, wealth or anything. Every being born on this earth naturally grows into an individual. Well, sometimes it may not be an individual in the sense of a

polished individual with a specific swadharma. But certainly, there is a divine towards becoming an individual. In fact, we are supposed to become individuals in the true sense true through yoga. Otherwise, development of ego on different levels is a natural process with every human being. The life-affirmation of the ego is the necessary consequence. Nature gives birth to form. If we take some clay and put it on the potter's wheel, we don't call it a form, it's a lump of clay. But this lump of clay is turns into a beautiful vase on the wheel by the potter.

We are like a ceramic vase. All of us have a physical form, a name, a home, a country and a culture. But we knows that unless a vase is baked properly, it is not yet a strong individual.

The common man who is not educated, who does not do sadhana, is more like an unbaked vase. He has got a form, a name, a home address but he has not yet undergone the heat of tapasya. Nature wants its vase to be formed and well-baked. It is ego that helps us to grow out of this Inconscience.

Sri Aurobindo says,

“Ego is the helper”. In this evolution the secret self, the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 279

consciousness comes forth in the form of ego. Why does it do so? First of all, it wants to create a conscious being out of the inconscience. The whole effort of this evolutionary process is that the infinite waves thrown up by the massive oceanic inconscience must slowly become more and more conscious. If every wave becomes self-conscious, then this inconscience may exhaust itself. There is a constant effort of the subconscious and inconscient to throw up waves, waves in these forms of plants, animals and people. Form is essential for bringing out the consciousness. That is why Sri Aurobindo says, “The individual ego is a pragmatic and effective fiction, a translation of the secret self into the terms of surface consciousness, or a subjective substitute for the true self in our surface experience.”

It is a little difficult to understand this idea. How is ego a subjective substitute for the true self? The psychic being connects itself with the outer being. It influences the life when it comes out into the surface being, and the connecting point is called the ego. The ego is the contact point of the psychic being with life. To put it differently, ego is the outermost point of the psychic being which is in contact with the world outside.

So ego is not a mistake or a useless entity but it is part and parcel of our own inner being, and is used as a contact point to the outside world. It is the junction between the inner and the outer consciousness. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says, it is a

“subjective substitute”. That means that the ego is a substitute for the true self in our surface experience.

The ego can be transformed or gotten rid of, but how? What do we mean by – “become egoless”? outside, it is not an extra piece that has been added to our being that we can take it out.

It is part of my own psychological structure. The more one

280

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* walks towards the psychic being the more he walks away from the ego. Becoming egoless means walking away from the ego towards the psychic being. We can't say “abolish the ego”; there is nothing to abolish. That is the secret of becoming egoless.

This idea is of paramount importance to all of us.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

...it is separated by ignorance from other-self and from the inner Divinity, but it is still pushed secretly towards an evolutionary unification in diversity; it has behind itself, though finite, the impulse to the infinite.

The ego also has an impulse to go towards the infinite, because it is an extension of the infinite consciousness called the psychic being. The ego, in

all its activities, is somewhere secretly driving towards the Divine because, it also wants to know the Divine. It wants to know its true self. The ego questions – who am I? We can say that ego is the mask of the psychic being, which everybody can see.

Sri Aurobindo adds:

But this in the terms of an ignorant consciousness translates itself into the will to expand, to be a boundless finite, to take everything it can into itself, to enter into everything and possess it, even to be possessed if by that it can feel itself satisfied and growing in or through others or can take into itself by subjection the being and power of others or get thereby a help or an impulse for its life-affirmation, its life-delight, its enrichment of its mental, vital or physical existence.

This is a beautiful explanation, a wonderful paragraph.

The ego is the outermost extreme of the psychic being that is facing the world. For example, each person in this Ashram

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 281

has a room. Some of the elderly persons are there on the third floor, and they are almost imprisoned in their rooms because they can't climb the stairs. So what do they do? They come to the balcony, and from that balcony, they see the outer nature – they see the cars go by, the people walk by, the shopkeepers and the people chatting and the flower market etc. They cannot stay inside their rooms indefinitely, so they come out into the balcony and enjoy the world. Similarly, the ego, which is as if standing at the gate of our building, sees the outside people coming and going. So what does it do?

It starts communicating with those people, enjoying those people, making relations, because they are closer to it; the outside world is closer to the ego than the psychic being itself.

Instead of turning within and walking to the seminar hall of our institution, which is pretty far, it is much easier for the gatekeeper to make friends with

people on the street. This is what our ego does. Instead of turning in and going into the subliminal and towards the psychic being and finding out the true divine connection, the true force and love etc. it searches for entertainment outside. The ego starts getting into contact with other human beings, and in these connections, there comes in possessiveness and attachment. The moment we start talking with people, relationships form, we make friends, fall in love, get possessive, and there is an expansion of the vital and mental ego. Once we are involved with this outer world, there is life-affirmation, life-delight, and enrichment of the mental and vital ego. It is a natural process. Psychologically, we don't need to blame ourselves, that "I am egoistic" The only way to get away from this vital and mental attachment is to ask the watchman, the gatekeeper to come inside. Otherwise, the poor watchman says, "Sir, I am very happy here, why should I come in, the seminar-hall is empty?" The watchman

282

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* has all the relations in the outer world! So too our ego is like the watchman of the world; it embraces the world, and in the relations it angry, becomes possessive and gets attached.

But because it does these things as a separate ego for its separate advantage and not by conscious interchange and mutuality, not by unity, life-discord, conflict, disharmony arise, and it is the products of this life-discord and disharmony what we call wrong and evil.

We have already seen the explanation of error and falsehood and wrong; now in the last explanation we are going to see about evil. Why has this evil coming in? Falsehood comes from the twists given to our mistaken perceptions. Evil comes

"because it does these things as a separative ego for its separate advantage." This watchman, if he says, "I want everything in that shop for my own enjoyment" and goes and grabs all the fruits for himself, that becomes evil. We can enjoy the world, but our possessive nature, makes us evil. Instead of conscious interchange and mutuality, we begin to dominate. Instead of saying that we are all friends, let's have harmony, you start struggling,

trying to dominate, and say everything on this street is mine. This leads to disharmony and a life in which we have wrong and evil.

Nature accepts them because they are necessary circumstances of the evolution, necessary for the growth of the divided being; they are products of ignorance, supported by an ignorant consciousness that founds itself on division, by an ignorant will that works through division, by an ignorant delight of existence that takes the joy of division.

This is the deeper explanation. There is no doubt that there is this disharmony, discord, evil, selfishness, etc. but

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 283

we are trying to understand why. We have said that the ego naturally tries to grab everything for itself, and it has vital and mental energy to do that. Sri Aurobindo says that “Nature accepts them because they are necessary circumstances of the evolution, necessary for the growth of the divided being”. On the mental level, we are all divided and there is a struggle for existence. Each one is trying to outwit the other and through this struggle there is growth. If we are tamasic and lazy, and if we don’t have some suffering and struggle, we will never come out of the inconscience. The pain and suffering help us to come up out of this inconscience.

Sri Aurobindo says that nature accepts all this because the divided human beings need these punches and pushes, they need these vital pleasures and pains. Nature needs ego as an instrument. At this stage these instruments ego, evil, error etc. are brought in by nature to help us move towards the Divine. Nature has given us many prompts, vital things that poke us, that give us some enjoyment and satisfaction, and some disappointments and suffering. This life presents us with thousands of things so that we can move through them all towards the Divine. The aim is to push us towards the true self. Sri Aurobindo further explains: The evolutionary intention acts through the evil as through the good; it has to utilise all because confinement to a limited good would imprison and check the intended evolution; it uses any available material and does what it can with it: this is the reason why we see evil coming out of what we call good and good coming out of what we call evil; and, if we see even what was thought to be

evil coming to be accepted as good, what was thought to be good accepted as evil, it is because our standards of both are evolutionary, limited and mutable.

284

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Nature is trying to win us over by any and every means. For example, if a four or five year old child is crying continuously, what do the parents do? They give a chocolate, or a doll, or this food or that food, or they take the child to the garden or to the terrace, they will try various alternatives to see that the child stops crying. Nature is doing that with mankind.

It gives us all kinds of gifts good and bad, it uses all means, all possibilities, just to make us happy, in the true sense –

happiness that comes by reaching the Divine. If we take the wrong road, sometimes it will give us a slap, but the slap is only to say “come back to the main road”.

Sri Aurobindo makes a broad statement – “the evolutionary intention acts through both good and evil”. What a magnificent consciousness there is in Nature! Sometimes parents use punitive measures to correct a child. Similarly, Nature sometimes utilises pain and suffering “because confinement to a limited good” would check the “intended evolution”. If the child is only told, “Please child, go and study, don’t watch the TV”, he may not change his behaviour. Similarly, if Nature gives us only good things, and makes us comfortable, we don’t progress. We sit in our air-conditioned room with a big TV

and say “I am so happy”, but there is no self-improvement, no aspiration, no inner progress, and ultimately we begin to think that these material things are our God and we don’t need anything else. That’s the impression we sometimes get with friends; people don’t even think of God until Nature comes out heavily with the hammer and gives a good blow.

Sri Aurobindo concludes the paragraph by saying, And yet it is the same Nature, the same Force that has burdened man with the sense of good and

evil and insists on its importance: evidently, therefore, this sense also has

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 285

an evolutionary purpose; it too must be necessary, it must be there so that man may leave certain things behind him, move towards others, until out of good and evil he can emerge into some Good that is eternal and infinite.

It is because of Nature's anxiety, if we can call it that, to take mankind forward in its evolution, that it uses all means possible. One of its means is that it has given us a strong sense of good and evil, sin and virtue. It is to help us come out of this entanglement and move towards the higher divine nature.

We have said that Nature uses this evil and error and falsehood and suffering and pain for our progress. Now, Sri Aurobindo takes up what are the broad activities by which mankind is being moved forward or impelled by Nature.

But, how is this evolutionary intention in Nature to fulfil itself, by what power, means, impulsion, what principle and process of selection and harmonization? The method adopted by the mind of man through the ages has been always a principle of selection and rejection, and this has taken the forms of a religious sanction, a social or moral rule of life or an ethical ideal...

Here he focuses on human action. What are the human actions that have helped towards this upward evolution?

The first important one has "taken the forms of a religious sanction, a social or moral rule of life or an ethical ideal".

Mankind has moved forward on this path of religion or morality or ethics. He continues,

But this is an empirical means which does not touch the root of the problem because it has no vision of the cause and origin of the malady it attempts to cure; it deals

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* with the symptoms, but deals with them perfunctorily, not knowing what function they serve in the purpose of Nature and what it is in the mind and life that supports them and keeps them in being.

It is good to have religion and ethics and morality, but they are superficial; they do not touch our deeper being. They do not explain to us the origin of falsehood and evil. They do not explain that we have a mental and vital ego which need to be transformed. They focus on outer things, like we must come to the church on Sunday, that we have to confess the sins we have committed, that we have to do this puja or that ritual etc. There is no deeper psychological analysis to understand why we made this mistake, why we got this knock from Nature. There is no self-analysis, only a kind of external communication with the priest about the rules of the religion.

It focuses on the symptoms but not the deeper causes of the malady. It is like the difference between allopathy and homoeopathy. One path treats us based on symptoms – for example if I have a headache I take a pill to relieve the pain.

Similarly, the priest says, take coconuts to the temple and do this puja, offer 101 rupees. It is an external medicine.

Headache may go away but it comes back twenty four hours later.

Sri Aurobindo explains further:

Moreover, human good and evil are relative and the standards erected by ethics are uncertain as well as relative: what is forbidden by one religion or another what is regarded as good or bad by social opinion, what is thought useful to society or noxious to it, what some temporary law of man allows or disallows, what is or is considered helpful or harmful to self or others, what accords with

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 287

this or that ideal, what is prompted or discouraged by an instinct which we call conscience, —an amalgam of all these viewpoints is the determining heterogeneous idea, constitutes the complex substance of morality...

Sri Aurobindo describes morality as a principle. He explains that ethical values are uncertain as well as relative. What is good for you may be bad for me, what is good in Arab countries may be bad in south India. It is relative, and it is uncertain also. He says,

...in all of them there is the constant mixture of truth and half-truth and error which pursues all the activities of our limiting mental Knowledge-Ignorance. A mental control over our vital and physical desires and instincts, over our personal and social action, over our dealings with others is indispensable to us as human beings, and morality creates a standard by which we can guide ourselves and establish a customary control; but the control is always imperfect and it is an expedient, not a solution: man remains always what he is and has ever been, a mixture of good and evil, sin and virtue, a mental ego with an imperfect command over his mental, vital and physical nature.

The role, the function of morality, with all its relative and superficial rules, does give us some control over ourselves.

It brings a mental control over our desires and instincts. But it varies from place to place and from time to time. In each society there are some controls over desires and instincts. He says that it “creates a standard by which we can guide ourselves and establish a customary control”. A level of social harmony and structure is maintained. But then, he adds, “the control is always imperfect and it is an expedient, not a solution”. How long can we keep controlling our vital? A constant suppression

288

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* has a limited success. He says that “man remains always what he is and has ever been, a mixture of good and evil”. This suppression, this control of the mind over the vital cannot be indefinite, the desires burst forth and revolt against the mind.

What we notice is that in India too, like its Western counter parts, the vital has revolted against the mental standards and all our so-called rules of Hindu dharma have taken a back seat. We may feel bad about it but this was bound to happen.

What is the cause behind it? The cause is that morality, religion and ethics are mental controls over the vital. The vital has not given in on its own. This mental control is there in the form of dharma, in the form of ancient culture, or family background; whatever name we give it, it is essentially mind's control over the vital.

This control cannot last forever. It has lasted for a long time, but there was a little leak and then the hippies in the 1960s gave a big blow to the mental control. Once that crack came in, it widened more and more and today there are no bars on immorality, non-religion, non-ethics. Everything has crumbled because the mind could no longer hold the vital.

All that we see in the movies and on the streets is because the mind cannot control the vital any more.

Where does the civilisation and humanity stand now? The vital has become very strong because for centuries it has been under the control of the mind, and now it has erupted. Now the mind cannot control it; there must be a greater force than the mind that must play that role and that greater force is not religion. Religion tried to control the human being and for a time it did so more or less successfully, but today it cannot.

Religion, ethics and morality cannot control the vital because all are centered in the mind. There is now an evolutionary

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 289

necessity for a spiritual force to control and to really change us. Religion and ethics and science could not change us.

All these centuries of development through religion, ethics and science have left mankind where we were: "a mixture of good and evil, a mixture of sin and virtue"; no transformation has taken place. There has been a partial

control, but no transformation. That's the word that Sri Aurobindo brings in with so much emphasis: 'transformation' – not suppression.

For this transformation the energy that is required is spiritual energy, and the consciousness that is required is the supramental consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo started his intense tapasya long back to realise the Supermind so that mankind, when the barriers of mind and religion and everything collapse, could hold on to some saving Force and Consciousness.

At least for those who are aspiring for a higher consciousness he brought the new consciousness and has kept it as a support for those aspirants. If we want to be swept away in the flood of the vital we can! But if we want to cling to some truth which can stand up in this flood of corruption and destruction, cling to the supramental truth. Sri Aurobindo foresaw the problem, and he has forestalled it with the supramental consciousness and force.

To continue with Sri Aurobindo's explanation: The endeavour to select, to retain from our consciousness and action all that seems to us good and reject all that seems to us evil and so too re-form our being, to reconstitute and shape ourselves into the image of an ideal, is a more profound ethical motive, because it comes

290

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* nearer to the true issue; it rests on the sound idea that our life is a becoming and that there is something which we have to become and be. But the ideals constructed by the human mind are selective and relative; to shape our nature rigidly according to them is to limit ourselves and make a construction where there should be growth into larger being. The true call upon us is the call of the Infinite and the Supreme... This indeed is the way out usually indicated by religion; a divinely enjoined morality, a pursuit of piety, righteousness and virtue as laid down in a religious code of conduct, a law of God determined by some

human inspiration, is put forward as a part of the means, the direction, by which we can tread the way that leads to the exit, the issue.

This is an expansion of the idea that we have just discussed.

We have been given a strong sense of morality and ethics and we are constantly told to go on this path to reach the higher being. But here the line that is important to note is that “the ideals constructed by the human mind are selective and relative; to shape our nature rigidly according to them is to limit ourselves”. Who has given us these dos and don'ts?

what is good and what is bad? Religion, morality and ethics, however helpful they may be in the beginning, which they are, obviously, but to a spiritually awakened person, they become a binding, because they “shape our nature rigidly”.

We may be good Hindus, but then we are rigidly bound by Hindu law, Hindu shastras, Hindu scriptures. With all its good intentions, religion binds us. For a spiritual aspirant, religion becomes a bondage. But the question is, how many are truly spiritual aspirants? Not many! So religion and ethics have their own roles, but there must be a stage at which, just as the mental control gets defused by the vital urge, religion

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 291

gets defeated by the spiritual urge. Unfortunately, this spiritual urge is in very few people; but we can see grass-roots growth of spirituality, and though it is not very prominent now, the young generations all over the world are feeling some unease with religion, that it is binding them.

Further,

The true call upon us is the call of the Infinite and the Supreme; the self-affirmation and self-abnegation imposed on us by Nature are both movements towards that...

There is “the call of the Infinite” – it is a beautiful phrase –

spirituality is the call of the Infinite. This is the call that the younger generation is feeling now, that there is something beyond religion. They are listening to that call, and feel that they are sacrificing a lot with religion, materialism and everything else, because the call is getting stronger. Ultimately, we have to listen to this call because religion and morality are only half-measures.

Sri Aurobindo says,

This indeed is the way out usually indicated by religion; a divinely enjoined morality, a pursuit of piety, righteousness and virtue as laid down in a religious code of conduct, a law of God determined by some human inspiration, is put forward as a part of the means, the direction, by which we can tread the way that leads to the exit, the issue. But this exit leaves the problem where it was...

We put everything in the name of God and use God only to enforce the human law. We are not really open to the Divine. We not follow truly what is even what is written in the Bhagavad Gita or in the Bible. Every priest or pope twists the truth in order to suit himself, to enforce his power so that

292

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* he remains in power. That is why, although this law is given in the name of God it doesn't really help us.

...it is only a way of escape for the personal being out of the unsolved perplexity of the cosmic existence. In ancient Indian spiritual thought there was a clearer perception of the difficulty; the practice of truth, virtue, right will and right doing was regarded as a necessity of the approach to spiritual realisation, but in the realisation itself the being arises to the greater consciousness of the Infinite and Eternal and shakes away from itself the burden of sin and virtue, for that belongs to the relativity and the Ignorance.

Here we have to understand morality in a little broader perspective. There has been a tendency in religion, mostly in the Semitic religions, to make moral claims in the name of God, but in the ancient Indian spirituality this tendency of imposing morality as the law of God was not there. They said,

follow your dharma of a Brahmacharya, a Grihastha, a Vanaprastha, and a Sannyasi. They based our growth considering our psychology and age. Sri Aurobindo is doing now what our Indian psychology did before – he takes all life as a single movement. The Indian tradition did not encourage suppression of desires. Depending on our dharma and stage of life we could enjoy wealth or sexual impulses etc. for everything was considered as a part of life. The Brahmachari, the student, was given ample scope to develop the mental ego.

Education was emphasised and it was undiluted with social activities unlike the students' life in the recent times. There were no pubs and clubs and dances, the vital hardly came in; there was purely mental knowledge and development.

This stage in which the mind was developed was followed by another stage in which the vital was given its satisfaction,

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 293

the householder stage in which one had a family and pursued earning a livelihood. What we call the vital ego had its full play. Having completed these stages the person moved on to the third stage of life, the Vanaprastha, the forest dweller stage in which one became unburdened of one's vital and mental desires and ambitions and social responsibilities. One is much more free; it emphasised ethico-religious development. And then even after that stage of religious identification, in which one said "I am Hindu" or "I am Buddhist", one passed into the fourth stage of the Sannyasin, where one became spiritually detached from identification with the world. In this fourfold system, one's entire psychological being – mental, vital and social, religio-ethical, and spiritual – was satisfied, there was no suppression.

That is what Sri Aurobindo is referring to here, that in Indian spiritual thought there was a clearer perception of the difficulty and complexity of our psychological being. "...the practice of the truth, virtue, right will and right doing was regarded as necessary in the approach to spiritual realisation".

Dharma or the rules of conduct for each of the four ashramas or stages of life were considered as parts of the process of spiritual realisation. The *grihastha* stage was not considered to be an obstruction. It was the philosophy of renunciation brought in later by Buddhism and emphasised by Adi Shankaracharya that divided life into the mundane and the spiritual, and said in the pursuit of the spiritual realisation, marriage and social life were considered as hindrances. This was not the ancient Indian ideal which recognised that we have to gradually move towards the consciousness of the infinite and eternal while shaking away from us the burden of sin and virtue that belongs to the relativity and ignorance. In

294

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* a way, what they did was to give what was due to ignorance, give what was due to vital and mental satisfaction, and then they took us beyond these towards the Infinite.

Behind this larger truer perception lay the intuition that a relative good is a training imposed by World-Nature upon us so that we may pass through it towards the true Good ...

This was a fantastic ideal. The first two stages of life were a training, a passage; then the next two levels of life were the real spiritual life.

To resume our main discussion, Sri Aurobindo gave us three questions – how does this error, falsehood and evil arise? How do they maintain themselves and grow? And what is the solution, how can we escape from them? The first two questions have been answered and we are now entering into a discussion of the solution to falsehood and evil. He writes: There can be no artificial escape from this problem which has always troubled humanity and from which it has found no satisfying issue. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil with its sweet and bitter fruits is secretly rooted in the very nature of the Inconscience from which our being has emerged and on which it still stands as a nether soil and basis of our physical existence; it has grown visibly on the surface in the manifold branchings of the Ignorance which is still the main bulk and condition of our consciousness in its difficult evolution towards a supreme consciousness and an integral awareness... It would follow that there can be no final

solution until we have turned our inconscience into the greater consciousness, made the truth of self and spirit our life-basis and transformed our ignorance into a higher knowledge. All other expedients will only be makeshifts

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 295

or blind issues; a complete and radical transformation of our nature is the only true solution.

He says that we are born out of the inconscience, our being is rooted in this nether soil, and the only solution is to transform it into a greater consciousness. This is a universal solution to the problem; it is not a temporary solution. We can escape these problems by going to a temple or say repeat a mantra. The inconscience, which is the very root of all our human existence, has to be changed. This is a massive work!

Sri Aurobindo knew that the solution to all human problems is not any of the superficial expedients. During the last 15,000

or 20,000 years human civilisation has almost exhausted all the other possibilities. Sri Aurobindo says that we have had many possibilities to try and change ourselves, but nothing has really changed the root of the problem is in Inconscience.

We did not realise this earlier. We thought we could solve the problems with our brilliant mind and a developed vital nature, a superficial change of the personality. But the external personality is just the surface of our being, like the one-tenth of the iceberg that shows above the water while nine-tenth lies below. Sri Aurobindo comes to the conclusion that until this nine-tenth of ourselves are changed, we cannot have a solution to the problems of the one-tenth of our surface being.

This is why it was necessary for the Mother to come. When she came to stay in 1920 they both together plunged into the Inconscience because the work was to be done there.

The Mother is the Shakti aspect, the Tapas, the Force, while Sri Aurobindo is the Consciousness, the Chit. Unless there is Tapas, Chit cannot act effectively. And without Chit, Shakti is directionless. There had to be the combination of Chit and Shakti, Chit and Tapas and they are Sri Aurobindo and

296

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Mother. They came together and started descending into the Inconscient of the world, of the universe itself. That was a stupendous and aeonic task they undertook, and what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have done is to initiate the change in the Inconscience. For the results to come up to the surface, and penetrate and influence the earth and humanity, it's bound to take time.

When a tree is attacked by white ants and if we sprinkle some powder on the outer surface of the tree it doesn't cure the problem. Maybe 5000 white ants are destroyed but within another week they appear again. Humanity has been doing this, trying to solve its problems by superficial remedies, but Sri Aurobindo has dug deep into the ground and found out that the white ants are attacking the tree at the roots. The tree dies because its roots are being affected. Hence, unless we change the Inconscience nothing will radically change.

All other remedies will only be makeshifts or blind issues; a complete and radical transformation of our nature is the only solution.

It is because the Inconscience imposes its original obscurity on our awareness of self and things and because the Ignorance bases it on an imperfect and divided consciousness and because we live in that obscurity and division that wrong knowledge and wrong will are possible: without wrong knowledge there could be no error or falsehood, without error or falsehood in our dynamic parts there could be no wrong will in our members; without wrong will there could be no wrong doing or evil: while these causes endure, the effects also will persist in our action and in our nature.

This is the final analysis. The root of the problem is here:

“Inconscience imposes its original obscurity on our awareness

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 297

of self and things” and this “Ignorance bases it on an imperfect and divided consciousness...” Sri Aurobindo gives us a step by step analysis. Because of inconscience, there is the ignorance; ignorance brings in the divided consciousness; because of this divided consciousness there is wrong knowledge and wrong will; because of this wrong knowledge and wrong will there is error and falsehood; and because of this error and falsehood in the dynamic parts of our being we have wrong action and evil. He has traced the root to the Inconscience. There is a logical progression: inconscience, ignorance, division, error, falsehood, evil and all the consequent suffering. It is almost a chain reaction. Therefore, he says that if we want to treat only the wrong will, it is not possible. Unless we go to the roots nothing can truly be done. This is bold not only in its discovery but in facing the truth. Other saints and yogis didn't analyse the problem in this bold manner because they perhaps did not attempt to go to the inconscient. They talk about social problems, religious problems, disharmony of religions, a dialogue of societies etc. Nobody gave the deeper solution because it lies in the Inconscient. Sri Aurobindo further notes, But since the root of the difficulty is a split, limited and separative existence, this change must consist in an integration, a healing of the divided consciousness of our being, and since that division is complex and many sided, no partial change on one side of the being can be passed off as a sufficient substitute for the integral transformation. Our first division is that created by our ego and mainly, most forcefully, most vividly by our life-ego, which divides us from all other being as not-self and ties us to our ego-centricity and the law of an egoistic self-affirmation. It is in the errors of this self-affirmation that wrong and evil first arise: wrong

298

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness engenders wrong will in the members, in the thinking mind, in the heart, in the life-mind and the sensational being, in the very body-consciousness; wrong will engenders wrong action of all these instruments, a multiple error and many-branching crookedness of thought and will and sense and feeling.

It is a kind of recap: the root of the problem is inconscience, but the first step out of inconscience is ignorance and ignorance brings the sense of division. The very basis of ignorance is the sense that I am divided from you. This sense of division is most forceful in our life-ego which divides us from other beings and “ties us to the law of an egoistic self-affirmation”. These divisions have come in, but how have we tried to heal them?

The modicum of imperfect sympathy, knowledge and goodwill that the law, need and habit of association engender, is a poor quantum of what is required for a true action.

Because of ignorance and the sense of division it brings, we are now trying to reunite with others through various means such as “imperfect sympathy”. When somebody is in trouble we go and help him; when there is an earthquake, we send help. But there is no innate, inner oneness; there is no feeling of togetherness; it is more an external action to show that we are with you. Even these sympathies are sometimes more a show and not really genuine.

Altruism taken as a rule of life does not deliver us; it is a potent instrument for self-enlargement and for correction of the narrower ego, but it does not abolish it nor transform it into the true self one with all; the ego of the altruist is as powerful and absorbing as the ego of the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 299

selfish and it is often more powerful and insistent because it is a self-righteous and magnified ego.

When we say that altruism is not much accepted in Integral Yoga, it is because the egoism behind it is as powerful and absorbing as the ego of the selfish person. The man who sits on his multi-crore business and the other man who says I will give money to the people suffering from the earthquake are both stuck up in their ego as much as the other. Sri Aurobindo says that the ego behind altruism is often more powerful because it is a self-righteous and magnified ego, whereas the miser is selfish but he doesn't have such a magnified ego. The philanthropist gives money in the name of religion, in the name of humanity, but at the same time publishes

his name in the newspapers for donating the amount and his ego gets magnified.

Self-immolation may be necessary at times, exceptionally, for a cause, in answer to some demand of the heart or for some right or high purpose but cannot be made the rule or nature of life; so exaggerated, it would only feed and exaggerate the ego of others or magnify some collective ego...

Sri Aurobindo says that self-immolation, self-sacrifice is needed sometimes for the call of the nation, or the call of the times, but it cannot be made a rule for action, and if it were exaggerated, it would feed and exaggerate the ego of others.

He further says,

Sacrifice and self-giving are indeed a true principle and spiritual necessity... but that too must be done with a right consciousness and will founded on a true knowledge. To develop this sattwic part of our nature, a nature of light, understanding, balance, harmony, sympathy, good-will,

300

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* kindness, fellow-feeling, self-control, rightly ordered and harmonised action, is the best we can do in the limits of the mental formation, but it is a stage and not the goal of our growth of being.

The best the mind can do is to become sattwic, but it's not the goal, it's not the highest that human beings can reach. The mental being with all its hypocrisy and ego and limitations can develop into a sattwic individual with fellow-feeling, self-control, sympathy, harmony, etc. We can try to become a good person in the society. True, it can become a stage, but a good and sympathetic person is not the same as being spiritual. That is the fallacy we live in. Somebody who is good we immediately say he is spiritual. That is not true. Sri Aurobindo says,

These are solutions by the way, palliatives, necessary means for a partial dealing with this root difficulty, provisional standards and devices given us

as a temporary help and guidance because the true and total solution is beyond our present capacity and can only come when we have sufficiently evolved to see it and make it our main endeavour.

The true solution can intervene only when by our spiritual growth we can become one self with all beings, know them as part of our self, deal with them as if they were our other selves; for then the division is healed, the law of separate self-affirmation leading by itself to affirmation against or at the expense of others is enlarged and liberated by adding to it the law of our self-affirmation for others and our self-finding in their self-finding and self-realisation.

According to this analysis, the solution requires a spiritual

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 301

growth to the point where we can have oneness with others.

That is what we have been emphasising; this division of consciousness in the human beings prevents us from overcoming this falsehood and evil. At our mental level we are trying all kinds of methods to bring some semblance of harmony. Religion says that we should love our neighbours and treat them as we treat ourself. There are good words in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and other religions, but they can take us only so far. It is at best a high demand of our nature, an effort of our will to live a higher life. There is some effort, some aspiration, some demand of the mind, but we cannot go too far, because unless and until we evolve to the level of spiritual consciousness or unless and until we get into the psychic being, they are empty

“palliatives”. The mental consciousness can never achieve a true experience of ‘love thy neighbour’. What is necessary is to go beyond the mental consciousness into the psychic consciousness to experience true love. Then what the religions have said can become a reality, but not until then.

Sri Aurobindo gives us a beautiful sentence explaining this.

He says “even oneness with others is not enough by itself, if it is a oneness with their ignorance...” We are uniting with others in as ignorance – we may unite with someone have sympathy for him, but he is ignorant as we are.

He continues,

Our oneness with others must be fundamental, not a oneness with their minds, hearts, vital selves, egos—but a oneness in the soul and spirit and that can only come by our liberation into soul-awareness and self-knowledge.

Some religions have emphasised the surficial oneness of the mind and heart – the ideals of love thy neighbor, be

302

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* sympathetic and altruistic. Indian spirituality never spoke of altruism; it said that you can really help others only by becoming one within. We had this famous line in the Upanishad which said something like: “I love my wife because she is a soul, an extension of my own soul.” That is the oneness we are seeking, not the oneness of the mind, or the vital or the emotional. This so-called oneness does not really help or change us. We must become spiritual and have a conscious spiritual unity with others, that alone will be a permanent help.

To be ourselves liberated from ego and realise our true selves is the first necessity...That is one reason why a spiritual call must be accepted as imperative and take precedence over all other claims, intellectual, ethical, social, that belong to the domain of the ignorance.

We are trying to find out the solution, the escape from falsehood and error and wrong and evil. First he has given us the analysis that what all religions are teaching, what all morality is preaching, is not the solution; it is palliative, but it's never going to be a permanent solution. He says that the permanent solution can come only with the cure of the inconscience. But how can we cure the inconscience by becoming spiritual? And how can we become spiritual?

What is the meaning of becoming spiritual? He is giving us the three steps.

The first is the discovery of the soul, not the outer soul of thought and emotion and desire, but the secret psychic entity, the divine element within us. When that becomes dominant over the nature, when we are consciously the soul and when mind, life and body take their true place as its instruments, we are aware of a guide within that knows the truth, the good, the true delight and beauty of existence, controls heart

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 303

and intellect by its luminous law and leads our life and being towards spiritual completeness.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have been guiding us – to realise the psychic being. This is the first step in our spiritual life. Why? Because when the psychic becomes dominant over our nature, it can really give us the truth, the good, the true delight and beauty of existence. The psychic will take us away from all falsehood and error and evil. We have been beating around the bush for thousands of years. Religions have come, thousands of rules of morality have been given, but they have not taken us out of our error, falsehood and evil. We have been told in the Vedas and in the Gita, and now again we are being told by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, that we must go to the psychic, otherwise we are only wasting our life. It is only the psychic governance that can help us, to move away from falsehood and evil. He writes, This is the first step of self-realisation, to enthrone the soul, the divine psychic individual in the place of the ego.

This is the passage, to go from the ego to the psychic. And then,

The next step is to become aware of the eternal self in us unborn and one with the self of all beings. This self-realisation liberates and universalises; even if our action still proceeds in the dynamics of the Ignorance, it no longer binds or misleads because our inner being is seated in the light of self-knowledge.

The first step is psychicisation and the second step is spiritualisation. The realisation of the eternal Brahman will bring in a universal consciousness

and that will liberate us from this ignorance. In the psychic contact, we are still in

304

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* ignorance; but are guided by the psychic being to do the right things, to the right will and right action. But it could be that if there is some great pressure of ignorance we will not be able to do the correct thing. But when we become spiritualised, then this ignorance is banished, it is kept away, we are no more in ignorance and are liberated. He says, "...it no longer binds or misleads because our inner being is seated in the light of self-knowledge".

Then comes the third step:

The third step is to know the Divine Being who is at once our supreme transcendent Self, the Cosmic Being, foundation of our universality, and the Divinity within of which our psychic being, the true evolving individual in our nature, is a portion, a spark, a flame growing into the eternal Fire... Aware of the Divine as the Master of our being and action, we can learn to become channels of his Shakti, the Divine Puissance, and act according to her dictates or her rule of light and power within us. Our action will not then be mastered by our vital impulse or governed by a mental standard, for she acts according to the permanent yet plastic truth of things...

This is still an explanation of spiritualisation. At the end he says that "evil is the fruit of a spiritual ignorance and it will disappear only by the growth of a spiritual consciousness and the light of spiritual knowledge". When this spiritual knowledge comes forth, then slowly falsehood and evil will vanish. But there is still the last step to be made, the supramental transformation.

But the last division to be removed is the scission between this Nature and the Supernature which is the Self-Power of the Divine Existence. Even before the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 305

dynamic Knowledge-Ignorance is removed, while it still remains as an inadequate instrumentation of the spirit, the supreme Shakti or Supernature can work through us and we can be aware of her workings; but it is then by a modification of her light and power so that it can be received and assimilated by the inferior nature of the mind, life and body. But this is not enough; there is needed an entire remoulding of what we are into a way and power of the divine Supernature.

Even if we are spiritualised and become a channel of the Divine Shakti, it is not sufficient. The Divine Shakti will still be working in an inferior instrument. He says there has to be a complete transformation of our outer being. This lower nature must become the Supernature, a divinised nature, and this transformation can come only when truth-consciousness or Supermind possesses us. Once the Supermind possesses our being, then only will we have spontaneously a “truth awareness, truth-will, truth-feeling, truth-movement, truth-action”. All this falsehood and error and evil will vanish, but not until then.

This has been a magnificent chapter, a very fundamental chapter, on one of the deepest problems of philosophy.

We see in this chapter an in-depth and subtle analysis.

Sri Aurobindo doesn't hide facts. He has held up a mirror to our vital being, to our mental being, to our physical being, to our inconscience. He has shown the origins of error, falsehood and evil, and having gone into the depth of their cause, he gives us the solution. The solution is that the inconscience has to be transformed, and for that the necessary consciousness and force is the Supermind. Here is a philosopher who is a seer, a yogi and an Avatar. This is something wonderful about

306

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo; he doesn't declare himself to be an Avatar. He comes to us as a philosopher to explain our problems. Because he is a yogi, he can go into the depths of our being and see where our problems originate. An armchair philosopher will not be able to get to the roots of the problem, he will have a superficial analysis. A yogi can get

deep into the human nature and find out that the problem is in the Inconscient.

But even a yogi's realisation is not sufficient; there is also needed a sufficient force to transform the inconscience, and for that is needed the Avatar. He has brought the Supramental consciousness to cure that inconscience.

We have obscured that from 1956 there seems to have come up about many convolutions and revolutions, many violent things both good and bad. We have seen that when nature moves it doesn't worry about destruction. If there is a Tsunami or earthquake, just like with massive political warfare, it pulverises everything. There is a tremendous dynamic force which is churning the whole human consciousness. It seems to be in haste to bring down the new consciousness, and that is because of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Otherwise, we would have been under the control of this Inconscient for an eternity.

This brings us to the end of Book-II, Part-I. Sri Aurobindo has taken us through the philosophies of India and the West.

He has shown us many view points and has established their validity in the march of time. In the next part we move to Integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. It will surely be a great exploration for us.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 307

Lecture Notes

I. Introduction

a) If ignorance is understood to be only a self-limiting knowledge, oblivious of integral self-awareness, and if it is an exclusive concentration in a single field, then it is not difficult to accept ignorance. But what is important is to see if we can accept the necessity of falsehood and error.

b) Second, if Brahman is the source of all manifestation, then such phenomenon of falsehood and error and evil cannot be explained as something that has come per chance or by an intervening accident.

c) Thirdly, we need to see that even falsehood and error have some kind of meaning and significance in this evolutionary process,

d) Sri Aurobindo takes up this problem for falsehood and evil from three points of view: i) Its relation to the absolute

ii) Its origin and place in the cosmic workings iii) Its action and point of hold in the individual being

II. The relation of falsehood and evil to the Absolute a) It is said that just as truth and good have their absolutes, so too falsehood and evil have their absolutes. This is the main problem.

b) Falsehood and evil are, unlike truth and good, the results of ignorance and therefore they cannot exist independently. If ignorance disappears into knowledge at any further stage of evolution, then

308

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* evil and falsehood can no longer endure. As evil and falsehood are based on unconsciousness and wrong consciousness they have no absoluteness about themselves. It is only a by-product and not a permanent factor relating to existence.

c) Falsehood and evil cannot by definition pre-exist in absolute Brahman or the supreme Reality because the Reality is in essence knowledge, unity, bliss and consciousness.

III. Physical pain as evil

a) It may be acceptable that falsehood and evil come in a later part of manifestation and it may be and it becomes even inevitable. But the main question is regarding the issue of physical pain, i. e., the physical evil, the evil of pain and bodily suffering.

b) Fundamentally, all pain and suffering is the result of an insufficient Consciousness-Force in the surface being. The bodily suffering and the physical pain would not exist if there was an integral presence of the luminous consciousness and the divine force.

c) Therefore, falsehood and evil, in any form have no fundamentality, no power of infinity or eternal being because just as a shadow depends on its light for its existence and not the other way round, so too falsehood and evil are like the shadow and they exist because of the lack of luminous consciousness and force.

IV. The origin and place of falsehood and evil a) The origin could be traced to the fact that once Truth or good manifests, the conception of evil and falsehood becomes a possibility because whenever

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 309

there is an affirmation, negative elements become conceivable.

b) It is only in cosmic manifestation that falsehood and evil become a possibility because they cannot preexist in the timeless being which is full of Sat, Chit and Ananda.

c) They come in the cosmic manifestation primarily because of a limitation of Truth, by a breaking-up of the unity of existence and consciousness into separative consciousness and separative being.

d) The important point is to understand exactly at what point do these falsehood and error come into existence? That is, do falsehood and error come in the mental and vital plane of evolution? Or do they exist in supraphysical mind and life? Or do they exist in the universal mind and life on the involutionary planes?

V. Traditional knowledge regarding good and evil a) In our traditions we know about the conflict between the powers of light and darkness—good and evil or cosmic harmony and cosmic anarchy.

It is a universal tradition in all ancient myth and religion and in all occult knowledge.

b) The fundamental meaning behind this knowledge is that just as there are powers of knowledge or the forces of light, so there are powers of ignorance and tenebrous forces of darkness too, because manifestation is supported by a force or forces. These forces are usually named as Titan or Demon or Asura and Rakshasa and Pisacha or Satan, etc.

310

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* c) Modern science does not accept any invisible forces other than those revealed by science. But it does not accept unfortunately that there are invisible forces that act upon the body of inanimate objects and which science does recognise. Then the point is to see why science cannot accept invisible cosmic forces on the mental and vital nature which act upon human mind and life-force.

VI. Can these forces be Absolute?

a) When we dip into ourselves we find that the mind, heart and the sensational being are moved by forces not under their own control; and that man is only an instrument in the hands of these forces, b) These forces seem often to surpass the measures of human relativity. They are in their larger action superhuman, divine, Titanic or Demoniac.

c) If these forces are cosmic and universal, can we then deny absoluteness of evil? But in answer we can say that the immeasurable is not the sign of absoluteness for the absolute is not itself a thing of magnitude. It is beyond any measure. But not in the sole sense of vastness but in the freedom of its essential being.

d) If pain becomes immeasurable, it ends itself or ends that in which it manifests. In rare cases it may turn into an ecstasy or Ananda. So pain is not an absolute in itself. So too evil cannot be absolute because it will ultimately destroy that which it supports. Basically falsehood and error are cosmic powers but relative in their nature, not absolute since they depend for their existence on the perversion or the contradiction of their opposites

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 311

VII. Are these forces cosmic?

- a) From the evidence of the surpaphysical and prephysical existence given of these dark forces, can we say that they are originally the cosmic principles?
- b) It can be said that these forces may appear cosmic but they do not extend higher than the lower supraphysical life-planes. They belong to the mid-worlds where the vital principle is predominant.
- c) It must be understood that these evils or these dark forces do not belong to the descending involution.

They are basically an outcome of the return of inconscience to the consciousness.

VIII. No falsehood in Matter

- a) With the evolutionary process beginning from the inconscience, the first emergence is that of matter. In matter, it is not possible for falsehood and evil to exist for matter is neutral and irresponsible.
- b) It is only by contact with the conscious beings that material objects exercise powers and influences which can be called good or evil. These values do not belong to the material object but to some force that uses it or they are created by the consciousness that contacts it.
- c) Therefore, just as superior nature transcends good and evil, so too this material nature falls below this concept of good and evil. The duality of good and evil is not native to the material principle. It is absent from the world of matter.

IX. The duality of falsehood and error a) This duality begins with conscious life and it emerges fully with the development of mind in life.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* b) In animal life the fact of evil is there, the evil of suffering, violence and cruelty. But there is no duality of sin or virtue for all action is neutral and permissible for the preservation of life and its maintenance and for the satisfaction of the life-instincts.

c) There is nonetheless an awakening to the sense of good and evil when the mental consciousness takes over. This awakening may come as a detached reason which can look on all that is admitted by nature or it can take the shape of a philosophic and scientific reason that seeks to understand but considers it futile to judge the activities of the cosmic energy.

X. How does this awakening proceed?

a) First the awakening comes in the vital mind, i. e. the vital mind accepts all that is pleasant, helpful and beneficial for the ego as good and all that is injurious and unpleasant as ego. This is on the individual level.

b) Next comes the social or the utilitarian level, i.e.

whatever is conducive to the development or satisfaction of associated life, that is held as good; and the contrary effect is considered as evil.

c) Then the mind of the individual seeks to go beyond the social and utilitarian order, it gets into an ethical system founded on reason or aesthetics, emotional or hedonistic basis which are supported by religion.

d) There is beyond all this a deeper abiding truth, i.e. the real sanction is within, the spiritual and the psychic.

This is what we call a deeper spiritual sense or the soul's discernment which is at the basis of all our

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 313

awakening to the sense of good and evil.

XI. The soul's discernment is a spiritual necessity a) The spiritual sense or the soul's discernment brings in the sense of sin and evil because by this

sense the human being may become aware of the nature of this world of inconscience and ignorance.

b) Or else its spiritual use may be to purify the nature by the pursuit of good and negation of evil until it is ready to perceive the supreme good and turn the world towards God.

c) It may serve to prepare the dissolution of the ignorant ego-complex and escape from personality and suffering.

d) Lastly, this awakening could be a spiritual necessity of the evolution itself—a step towards the growth of the being of ignorance to the truth of divine purity.

e) Ultimately, it is the soul in us which turns always towards the truth, good and beauty.

XII. If evil and falsehood are natural products of the Inconscient...

a) How do they arise? Here there are two factors.

First, the emerging consciousness, hidden in the Inconscience, is at first heavily burdened and enveloped with the inconscience of Matter. Secondly, the emergence takes place in individual forms of life which have to resist the constant pull of material inertia towards death and then fight constantly against the life forms which try to affect in themselves for their existence.

314

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* b) On what do they depend for their existence? In the

'struggle of existence' when the individual animal being comes up, it has two sources of knowledge: i) The deeper secret Consciousness-Force which sends up to the surface a minimum of intuition necessary of the being to maintain its existence and to go through the operations indispensable to life. This intuition possesses but not possessed by the animal. Later, on the surface and the collective level this intuition becomes an automatic instinct

which though is a guide for the animal being can sometimes make mistakes because when the surface consciousness interferes with it, it blunders.

ii) The second source of knowledge is the surface contact with the external world slowly results into intelligence in the individual being. It is this contact which is the cause first of a rudimentary surface-awareness and sense perception.

XIII. Direct knowledge and Intuition a) Is it possible that the subliminal consciousness could come to the surface and have a direct meeting between the subject and the object resulting in direct knowledge? It is not possible firstly because of the evolutionary forces of obstruction of the inconscience and secondly because the evolutionary intention is to develop slowly through an imperfect but a growing surface awareness in an already prepared indeterminate conscious structure.

b) When the mind principle slowly disengages itself from the animal physical and vital impulses and emerges as man and brings out its innate qualities of thinking and judging and observation, etc., the

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 315

automatic life of instinct and light of intuition at once caught by the mind and translated into terms of mental intelligence. This admixture with mental stuff takes away the intuitive character of knowledge, leading to the possibility of error.

c) It seems that the rapid development of Truth-Consciousness is not the intention of Nature and that is why we have to pass through a slow process of evolution, and that our imperfect mental intelligence is a necessary stage of transition before this higher transformation can be made possible.

XIV. Possibility of error

a) If the mental intelligence is a necessary stage, then error is a necessary accompaniment, almost a necessary condition, an instrumentation in the slow evolution towards knowledge.

b) To shut out our error which comes through observation, relations, inferences, judgements, interpretations, etc., is not possible without limiting the chances of acquisition of knowledge. There is a constant misprision of the facts by the senses and the sense mind, and all these put together there is a confusion of data resulting in imperfect and erroneous knowledge.

c) To misprision and wrong interpretation of facts, there is added misapplication of knowledge, miscombination, misconstruction, etc., and with all this a great confusion of half-grasped material the inevitability of error takes permanence which could lead to falsehood.

316

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* XV. Error and falsehood

a) Error however would not amount to falsehood in itself. It is only an imperfection of truth, a trying an essay of possibilities. But knowledge is not and cannot remain solely impersonal mental process.

There is the intervention of the ego.

b) There are different levels of ego: the physical-ego, the life-ego (which is based not on self-knowledge and discovery of truth but on vital satisfaction) and the mental-ego (which is also bent upon personal self-affirmation). Because of these three levels of ego we have an almost inexhaustible source of distraction of truth or what we can say a fruitful seed plot for the growth of falsehood or a gate or many gates through which falsehood can enter by stealth. Truth too can enter and take up its dwelling not by its own right but at the mind's pleasure.

XVI. Three types of mentality

a) In the language of Sankhya, man can be classified with three types of mentality. The first is the Tamasic intelligence which has its seat in the physical mind.

Its nature is that it is inert to ideas and it is unwilling to enlarge itself. It is recalcitrant to new stimulus and conservative and immobile,

b) There is a Rajasic intelligence which is of two kinds.

One is the defensive with violence and passion and the other is the enthusiastic one for new things, passionate, insistent and impetuous.

c) Thirdly, we have a Sattwic intelligence which is eager for knowledge as open as it can be, careful to consider a very fine balance. In most men, there is a

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 317

predominance of one of these qualities but also there is a mixture. These three types of mentality are an inevitable source of an error and may cause at any moment the falsification of knowledge.

XVII. Will and action

a) Apart from the three types of mind, there is in man, the aspect of will and action. This is the region of the vital being or the vital-ego as we say.

b) The vital being is not concerned with the truth, or right consciousness, or right action. It is concerned with self-affirmation, with life-growth, with possession, with satisfaction of impulse, with all satisfactions of desires,

c) The vital being in its self-affirmation and self-asserting life brings in hatred and dislike towards all that stands in the way of its expansion. It brings in cruelty and all kinds of evil. For its satisfaction it is ready to face the risk of destruction and actuality of suffering. It is primarily concerned not only with self-preservation but life-affirmation and life-satisfaction.

And because of this the evil of suffering comes in, in a predominant manner.

d) The vital being also, the vital personality, is not exclusively concerned with evil or that its nature is evil. The vital personality has a passion for truth and good as it has the passion for joy and beauty.

Strangely, the vital personality develops a delight in truth as much as a delight in falsehood, a delight in life and an attraction to death, a delight in

pleasure and a delight in pain. Because of this contradictory

318

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* acceptance, the vital personality can take up altruism as it takes up egoism, sacrifices itself as well as destroys others,

e) The vital being and its life-force are nature's chief means of effectuation. And without its support neither mind nor body can utilise their possibilities.

This is the other side of the vital being's nature.

XVIII. The origin and nature of error.

a) We could conclude that the origin and nature of error is found in these three aspects:

i) A limited consciousness growing out of nescience is a source of error;

ii) A personal attachments to the limitation and the error born of it the source of falsity; iii) A wrong consciousness governed by the life-ego.

b) Nature seems to accept the wrong and evil as necessary circumstances of the evolution, necessary for the growth of the divided being. The evolutionary intension acts through the evil acts through the good.

It utilises all because confinement to a limited good imprison and check the intended evolution. For evolutionary nature, there is no preference either of the opposites. It uses good and evil, both, for its own purposes.

XIX. Fulfilment of the evolutionary intention a) How does the evolutionary intention nature in itself fulfil itself? By what power, means, impulsion?

b) Normally, the method adapted by the mind of man is what we can call a religious sanction or a social or moral rule of life or an ethical ideal.

The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil 319

c) If we analyse, we find that the human good and evil are relative and standards erected by ethics are uncertain, as well as relative. Everywhere there is a constant mixture of truth and half-truth and error.

And this way, all our dealings are really under the mixture of good and evil, sin and virtue. Ours is a mental ego with an imperfect command over this mental, vital, physical nature.

d) If we cannot go beyond this mixture and fulfil the true call upon us, the call of the Infinite or the Supreme, then either the push of life will be too strong for our narrow ideal of perfection or else we will feel the push away from life, and escape from life will seem to be the only remedy. But this kind of an escape is not the solution, it leaves the problem where it was.

XX. How to escape from this problem of falsehood and evil?

a) There can be no artificial escape from this problem.

Because the root of the difficulty is in man: he is a split and limited the separative conscious existence.

Therefore the cure lies in the healing of the divided consciousness of our being.

b) A mental control can only be a control, not a cure.

A mental teaching, rules, standards can only impose an artificial groove, in which our action revolves mechanically. So the only way is a total change of consciousness. A radical change of nature is the one remedy and the sole issue. Because this total transformation can alone bring in the unity, the oneness of the consciousness.

320

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* c) In this move towards oneness, spiritual knowledge gives us three steps. The first step is of self-realisation: that is, to enthrone the soul. It is the realisation of divine psychic individual in the place of the ego. The next step is to become aware of the eternal Self in us,

unborn and one with the Self of all things. This self-realisation liberates and universalises. It also brings in a oneness with others, a oneness that is the oneness of the soul and not just a oneness with the minds and hearts and vital self and egos. The third step is to know the divine being who is at once our supreme transcendent self, the cosmic being, the foundation of our universality.

d) Beyond this liberation and these three realisations, there is the highest need, i.e., the last division to be removed between the nature and the supernature.

This removal of the last division brings in a total transmutation of our being, and eternal truth consciousness will possess us and sublimate all our natural modes into its own modes of being, knowledge and action; then will follow the great, the last, spiritual, supramental transformation.

End of deliberations on Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus*

The Life Divine

Book Two - Part I

Chapters I to XIV

Document Outline

- [TOC](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK3](#)
- [OLE_LINK4](#)
- [Hlk52614358](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK3](#)
- [OLE_LINK4](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK1](#)
- [OLE_LINK2](#)
- [OLE_LINK3](#)
- [Acknowledgements](#)
- [Chapter – XI](#)
 - [The Boundaries of the Ignorance](#)
- [Chapter – XII](#)
 - [The Origin of the Ignorance](#)
- [Chapter – XIII](#)

- [Exclusive Concentration of Consciousness-Force and the Ignorance](#)
- [Chapter – XIV](#)
 - [The Origin and Remedy of Falsehood, Error, Wrong and Evil](#)