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**Deliberations on**

# **The Life Divine**

**(Chapterwise Summary Talks)**

# **Volume Ten**

## **Book – II**

### **The Knowledge and the Ignorance–**

# **the Spiritual Evolution**

**Part – II**

**The Knowledge and the Spiritual Evolution Chapters: XV – XVII**

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*Dedicated to*

# **Sri Aurobindo**

***on***

*His 150th Birth Anniversary*

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## **Acknowledgements**

This is the tenth volume in the series of "Deliberations on *The Life Divine*". It comprises the explanation of the first three chapters of Book II Part II of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine*.

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I offer this volume to Sri Aurobindo on his 150th birth anniversary.

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## **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 22 of *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA) from the respective chapters. Other references have been mentioned with the quote itself.

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**Chapter – XV**

**Reality and the Integral Knowledge** We now begin with the third section of the book *The Life Divine*. It has fourteen chapters, but the numbering continues from the previous section.

Sri Aurobindo starts this chapter – “Reality and Integral Knowledge” with a quote from Mundaka Upanishad and the Gita.

This Self is to be won by the Truth and by an integral knowledge. ( *Mundaka Upanishad* III. 1. 5) Hear how thou shalt know Me in My totality... for even of the seekers who have achieved, hardly one knows Me in all the truth of My being. (Gita VII. 1, 3) (CWSA 21: 659)

The above two quotes introduce us to the concept of integral knowledge. Sri Krishna says in the Gita, “Hear how Thou shalt know Me in My totality...” That totality is what we call integral knowledge. The *Mundaka Upanishad* also says that it is only by an integral knowledge that the Self is to be known.

Before taking up the main text, I would like to read a personal note from Sri Aurobindo which shows clearly his indebtedness to the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad Gita*:

My philosophy was formed first by study of the Upanishads and the Gita; the Veda came later. They were the basis of my first practice of Yoga; I tried to realise what I read in my spiritual experience and succeeded; in fact I was never satisfied till experience

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy... The other source of my philosophy was the knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation, especially from the level of the Higher Mind when I reached that level....

This source was exceedingly catholic and many-sided and all sorts of ideas came in which might have belonged to conflicting philosophies but they were here reconciled in a large synthetic whole.

(CWSA 22: 1109)

The main text of this chapter begins, as Sri Aurobindo does normally, with a recap of the previous chapter. He recalls the definition of Ignorance, because it was the subject matter of the previous chapter. In this chapter, he will discuss integral knowledge. He begins by re-defining ignorance:

This then is the origin, this the nature, these the boundaries of the Ignorance. Its origin is a limitation of knowledge, its distinctive character a separation of the being from its own integrality and entire reality; its boundaries are determined by this separative development of the consciousness, for it shuts us to our true self and to the true self and whole nature of things and obliges us to live in an apparent surface existence. (CWSA 21: 559)

Sri Aurobindo has always maintained that ignorance is not non-knowledge, it is to have a limited knowledge.

Originally, in Sanskrit itself, Avidya is not non-Vidya; it is a limitation of knowledge. That is the central difference between Sri Aurobindo and other acharyas: he says that Ignorance is a limitation of knowledge and “its boundaries are determined by the separative

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development as reflected in the consciousness”.

To be restricted in one’s ego means to be stuck in limited knowledge or in ignorance. Ignorance, ego, separateness – they are all synonymous. If we want to go out of the ego, what do we have to do? We just have to practice the reverse process: the limited consciousness must be widened, heightened, and enlarged. It gets reflected in the ego also: it gets enlarged, widened and finally it crumbles. These are simultaneous movements.

Such is the psychological state of integral knowledge.

After defining “ignorance” Sri Aurobindo then defines knowledge:

A return or a progress to integrality, a disappearance of the limitation, a breaking down of separateness, an overpassing of boundaries, a recovery of our essential and whole reality must be the sign and opposite character of the inner turn towards Knowledge.

Ignorance is limitation, ego is the reflection of this limited knowledge; by removing the ego we move towards greater integral knowledge. Then he

says, that integral knowledge is something that is already present in the integral Reality. Why does Sri Aurobindo bring in the phrase – “integral Reality”? That will be the essence of the discussion now. Integral knowledge and integral Reality are more or less synonymous. He will explain the phrase in the next paragraph. But before that let us understand what Sri Aurobindo tells us here. This integral knowledge is “not a new or still non-existent thing that has to be created”. The beauty of it is that we already possess within us this integral knowledge. It is not that it has to be created or acquired. That is one

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of the arguments that we find so beautifully expressed in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy; he is not asking us to become or achieve something that is not already within us. This integral knowledge, this integral Reality, is already ingrained in our consciousness. It is a question of unveiling it, layer after layer. We need to uncover the veils and then bring forth this Reality that is within us. It is the very stuff of our own spiritual consciousness.

Let us move to the second paragraph wherein he defines this integral Reality. He says, An integral spiritual consciousness carries in it a knowledge of all the terms of being; it links the highest to the lowest through all the mediating terms and achieves an indivisible whole. At the highest summit of things it opens to the reality, ineffable because superconscient to all but its own self-awareness, of the Absolute. At the lowest end of our being it perceives the Inconscience from which our evolution begins; but at the same time, it is aware of the One and the All self-involved in those depths...

Integral Reality comprises the highest summit of things and at the same time the lowest end of our being.

It is not just the transcendent Reality. That is what we want to emphasise here. Integral Reality does not mean the knowledge of Brahman alone. It consists of the whole range of being from the Superconscient to the Inconscient. This is the main structure that he will now develop further. He says,

Interpretative, revelatory, moving between these two extremes, its vision discovers the manifestation of the One in the Many, the identity of the Infinite in the disparity of things finite, the presence of the timeless

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Eternal in eternal Time; it is this seeing that illumines for it the meaning of the universe. This consciousness does not abolish the universe; it takes it up and transforms it by giving to it its hidden significance.

The whole range of consciousness consists of the Supermind, the Overmind, the Illumined mind etc.

Without giving us the details, Sri Aurobindo mentions:

“the One in the Many”, so it includes the knowledge of both. And then he says “this consciousness does not abolish the universe; it takes it up and transforms it by giving to it its hidden significance”. It does not abolish the individual existence, but transforms the individual being and nature by revealing to them their true significance and enabling them to overcome their separateness from the divine Reality and divine nature. It means we get not only the experience of the One, the transcendent, but also have the universal or cosmic, which is already the beginning of the Many, and we have the individual too.

Such is the width of this integral knowledge, that it gives not only the knowledge and experience of the One but also the knowledge and experience of the universal as well as the individual. It “does not abolish the universe”

nor does it abolish individual existence. Generally, the other yogas and Indian philosophers tell us to realise the One, the Transcendent, and to forget about the universe and the individual. But Sri Aurobindo says that to realise only the transcendent Divine is to have a partial knowledge. It may be a great experience of Brahman, but for Sri Aurobindo and for Isha Upanishad, knowledge of the One alone is incomplete knowledge. That is why we define that integral knowledge as the knowledge of the One and the Many; the Many in the forms of the cosmos.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* This is the first broad definition, and now he will go into further details.

He says, “An integral knowledge presupposes an integral Reality ... ” In the previous paragraph, Sri Aurobindo stated that integral Knowledge is already there in the integral Reality. Here is the same idea, that

“an integral knowledge presupposes an integral Reality;

for it is the power of a Truth-Consciousness which is itself the consciousness of the Reality”. Here we get a new concept. The Truth-Consciousness is a synonym of the Supermind. This is the central idea: we cannot get integral consciousness on any other level except that of the Supermind. Although he has not mentioned the word Supermind, the implication is clear. As long as we are on any level below Supermind, we get knowledge of either One or the Many. Supermind alone has the simultaneous knowledge of the One and the Many. These are the basic concepts in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. Over all these centuries no yogi or acharya, of whatever spiritual height his realisation, has been able to give us a simultaneous knowledge of the world, the manifestation and the Supreme, because they all realised the levels of consciousness that are below the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo gained the experience and consciousness of the Supermind, and this gave him integral knowledge.

He says,

But our idea and sense of Reality vary with our status and movement of consciousness, its sight, its stress, its intake of things; that sight or stress can be intensive and exclusive or extensive, inclusive and comprehensive. (CWSA 21: 560)

Understanding of Reality depends on our level of

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consciousness, or as he says, “with our status and movement of consciousness”. We can see it in our day-today life also – we are not able to understand a particular thing not only because of language difficulty, not only because of the difficulty or newness of the idea but also because of our level of consciousness. If somebody lives in a purely materialistic consciousness, he/she cannot expect to understand spiritual things. For understanding the higher Reality, it is absolutely necessary to raise the consciousness to a higher level. Many times we grumble that we do not understand *Savitri* or *The Life Divine* despite having a good hold over the English language.

It is not because of the language but of our state of consciousness that we cannot understand these books neither from a much higher consciousness. That is why in spirituality there is the necessity for self-purification and a purified understanding. No wonder the ancient yogas emphasised a lot on purification. The Yamas and Niyamas are not just rules and regulations, which, people may think, are not necessary in the modern world.

To understand the higher, one of the most important steps is self-purification, which means raising one’s consciousness.

After a few sentences, Sri Aurobindo presents an alternative view, which he says has a certain validity, but it is not necessarily the integral and complete truth of things:

The reality of the individual is Brahman the Absolute; the reality of the cosmos is Brahman the Absolute; the individual is a phenomenon, a temporal appearance in the cosmos; the cosmos itself is a phenomenon, a larger and more complex

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* temporal appearance. The two terms Knowledge and Ignorance, belong only to this appearance; in order to reach an absolute superconsciousness both have to be transcended; ego-consciousness and cosmic consciousness are extinguished in that supreme consciousness and there remains only the Absolute.

For the absolute Brahman exists only in its own identity and is beyond all other-knowledge; there the very idea of the knower and the known and therefore of the knowledge in which they meet and become one, disappears, is transcended and loses its validity...

We have said that Reality consists of the transcendent, the cosmos and the individual and we must realise all these three together because that is the integral Reality.

But still, there is only one Brahman. We must clarify that when we speak of Reality, we should not think that these are three different realities. That would be wrong.

We have to speak of only one supreme Reality which has three different poises. The transcendent, the universal, and the individual. He says that there is an experience of this Reality that when one leaves the individual and reaches the cosmic consciousness the individual consciousness gets extinguished. One becomes a cosmic personality, a universal personality, where the individual has no role. Similarly, from the cosmic personality we can rise into the transcendent, and the tendency then is that the cosmos along with the individual vanishes.

He says, “the very idea of the knower and the known and therefore of the knowledge in which they meet and become one, disappears, is transcended and loses its validity”. This is a beautiful and important sentence. In the transcendent, the knower and the known disappear.

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What does it mean? It means that the distinction between the subject, the knower, and the object, the known, disappears. This distinction belongs to the separative consciousness, but this separativeness decreases as we go higher in consciousness. One of the parameters of knowing whether we are rising in our consciousness is to see whether and how much the sense of separativeness is decreasing. We have to use this parameter to judge ourselves: how trenchant is the sense of division between you and me, between this person and another? As we go into the transcendent One, the

sense of separateness decreases to the extent that it disappears completely and there is absolutely existence of the other!

He concludes this paragraph by saying: In opposition to the view we have put forward or in completion of it,—the view of the Ignorance itself as only either a limited or an involved action of the divine Knowledge, limited in the partly conscient, involved in the inconscient, - we might say from this other end of the scale of things that Knowledge itself is only a higher Ignorance, since it stops short of the absolute Reality which is self-evident to Itself but to mind unknowable. This absolutism corresponds to a truth of thought and to a truth of supreme experience in the spiritual consciousness; but by itself it is not the whole of spiritual thought complete and comprehensive and it does not exhaust the possibilities of the supreme spiritual experience.

Just as Sri Aurobindo says that Ignorance is a limited form of Knowledge, from this perspective one could say that Knowledge is just a higher form of Ignorance but not the absolute Reality which is beyond the mind

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and beyond distinctions of Knowledge and Ignorance.

This Oneness is unknowable to the mind but is self-evident. As Aswapati does in *Savitri*, we can enter into or become that Unknowable, not through the mental consciousness, but through a spiritual experience. These are truths of experience in a spiritual consciousness.

Similarly, integral knowledge cannot be known mentally, but it can be experienced spiritually only at the level of the supramental consciousness beyond the mind. We may have great spiritual experiences, you may have Nirvanic experiences, of Nirvana, nirguna and saguna Brahman but still, we will not know the integral Reality because that can be experienced by the Supramental consciousness alone.

This is more or less an introduction and first definition of integral knowledge and integral Reality. It is only now that we begin a deeper

analysis and discussion of these issues. This is typical of Sri Aurobindo – he first introduces the topic, and then analyses it from the viewpoints of other philosophers, refuting or supporting their arguments, and then in the last part he gives his own view.

\*\*\*

Sri Aurobindo writes,

The absolutist view of reality, consciousness and knowledge is founded on one side of the earliest Vedantic thought, but it is not the whole of that thinking.

The idea that the transcendent alone is Real and the universe and individual are not is only one side of the Vedantic thought; there are Upanishads which stress this absolutist view. But other Upanishads, especially the Isha,

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the Katha and the Kena, present an integrated view of Reality.

In the Upanishads, in the inspired scripture of the most ancient Vedanta, we find the affirmation of the Absolute, the experience-concept of the utter and ineffable Transcendence; but we find also, not in contradiction to it but as its corollary, an affirmation of the cosmic Divinity, an experience-concept of the cosmic Self and the becoming of Brahman in the universe. Equally, we find the affirmation of the Divine Reality in the individual: this too is an experience-concept; it is seized upon not as an appearance, but as an actual becoming. In place of a sole supreme exclusive affirmation negating all else than the transcendent Absolute we find a comprehensive affirmation carried to its farthest conclusion.

Sri Aurobindo contrasts the two views with the terms

‘exclusive affirmation’ and ‘comprehensive affirmation’.

The former is that the transcendent alone is real, whereas the latter is that Reality is the transcendent plus the cosmic, plus the individual – they are all

‘equally real’. We say ‘equally real’ because there are some other schools of thought which say that the transcendent is the first Reality, and the cosmos and the individual are secondary realities. But here they are equally real. The word ‘equally’

has a great importance, especially in the Isha Upanishad.

A phrase that we should note here is “an experience-concept”. It is a new coinage. These are concepts but not simply mental concepts; the Upanishadic rishis have given us these concepts based on experience and not just on mental cognition. Based on this experience they have

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* said that these three poises of the Reality are “equally real”.

Further Sri Aurobindo elaborates, The Isha Upanishad insists on the unity and reality of all the manifestations of the Absolute; it refuses to confine truth to any one aspect. Brahman is the stable and the mobile, the internal and the external, all that is near and all that is far whether spiritually or in the extension of Time and Space; it is the Being and all becomings, the Pure and Silent who is without feature or action and the Seer and Thinker who organises the world and its objects; it is the One who becomes all that we are sensible of in the universe, the Immanent and that in which he takes up his dwelling.

This is an explanation of what the Brahman is – it is both the mobile and the immobile, time and eternity, the internal and the external, Being and the Becoming.

The thing that we need to emphasise is that the Isha Upanishad insists on the reality of these oppositions.

It refuses to say that Brahman is only the transcendent and not the Immanent. ‘The Immanent’ means the One dwelling within each being in the universe. All these are equally true.

Then Sri Aurobindo writes,

The Upanishad affirms the perfect and the liberating knowledge to be that which excludes neither the Self nor its creations...

Having already discussed the concept of integral Reality in the first few paragraphs, he now comes to the integral knowledge. It is that knowledge which excludes

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neither the Self nor its creations. It means to have knowledge of both the supreme Transcendent and the creation, of the Being and the Becoming, the Self and its manifestation.

To live in the cosmic Ignorance is a blindness, but to confine oneself in an exclusive absolutism of Knowledge is also a blindness: to know Brahman as at once and together the Knowledge and the Ignorance, to attain to the supreme status at once by the Becoming and the Non-Becoming, to relate together realisation of the transcendent and the cosmic self, to achieve foundation in the supramundane and self-aware manifestation in the mundane, is the integral knowledge; that is the possession of Immortality.

Here let me quote the verse to which Sri Aurobindo is actually alluding in the Isha Upanishad, Verse 9: Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the Knowledge alone. (CWSA 17: 8) In fact, this paragraph and the next are basically an explanation or expansion of this verse from the Isha Upanishad. Sri Aurobindo says, to live in cosmic ignorance is blindness. The Isha Upanishad says it is blind darkness. The meaning is simply this, that if we concentrate on the knowledge of this world, on the knowledge of this Becoming, we are following the path of "Ignorance". And if we concentrate on the supreme Reality alone, we enter a "greater darkness. Mark the comparison, one leads into "a blind darkness", the other to "a greater darkness". Normally, we think that to know the Supreme Brahman, to know the Sachchidananda, is great knowledge and that liberates us. We say we get

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* liberation, mukti, freedom and salvation by knowing the Brahman or the Sachchidananda. But for the Isha Upanishad, exclusive knowledge of Sachchidananda, leads one to greater darkness than those who know only the external world. It is a bit paradoxical.

Most yogas say that the world is an illusion, is a *mithya*, and therefore strive only to enter into the Brahman and leave the world behind. But the Isha Upanishad calls this a greater darkness. Why does it say so? Because one leaves the world and pursues only the Brahman; that means, one is likely to be in greater spiritual ego. No one can convince that person to look back to the world to see that it is also inhabited by the Lord.

Concluding this thought, Sri Aurobindo writes: It is this whole consciousness with its complete knowledge that builds the foundation of the Life Divine and makes its attainment possible.

This is, in fact, a very crucial sentence for us because when Sri Aurobindo talks of integral philosophy or “All life is Yoga”, this view of integral knowledge forms its basis. He does not accept that we should leave the world to find the Truth; he has realised that Truth is also there in this manifestation. We remember the Mother's advice that it is important to live the Truth in life and not outside of it. This builds the foundation of a life divine.

This entire book *The Life Divine* and its philosophy is based essentially on this Upanishadic trend of thought.

When Sri Aurobindo wrote his commentary on the Isha Upanishad, he titled its chapters “The Life Divine” for there is a very close link between the concepts presented

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in the Isha Upanishad and his own experience which he wrote in *The Life Divine*.

It follows that the absolute reality of the Absolute must be, not a rigid interminable oneness, not an infinity vacant of all that is not a pure self-existence attainable only by the exclusion of the many and the finite, but something which is beyond these definitions, beyond indeed any description either positive or negative. All affirmations and negations are expressive of its aspects, and it is through both a supreme affirmation and a supreme negation that we can arrive at the Absolute.

In Indian philosophy we have a popular phrase – *neti, neti* and *iti, iti* – the non-affirmative or negative Brahman and the affirmative Brahman. In fact, the truth is neither this nor that; Truth exceeds all oppositions. I remember long back in the 1970s when there were serious problems in Auroville, the Mother had given a message that truth is never on one side. We cannot say, “we are true and you are wrong”. That is supposed to be the spirit when we have committees and endless meetings. Truth is never on one side. The moment we say, truth is on ‘my’ side, it becomes falsehood. The very assertion that truth is only on one side is itself a false assertion, because it has this divisive way of looking at things. Truth is always beyond any opposition. Similarly, Brahman, the integral Reality is neither affirmative nor negative, it is beyond both, because Truth cannot be divided into this and that. The fundamental idea of *The Life Divine* is just this, that there is integral Reality, which must be known and lived; not only known in the mental sense, but lived in the day-to-day life. Knowing is one thing, but living it is yoga-

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* sadhana. We can know intellectually, but when we live it as part of sadhana, then we begin to get “the experience concept”.

Sri Aurobindo now takes up the discussion of these two views, the affirmative and the negative. He is going to discuss them one after the other and present the salient points of each of them. He says, On the one side, then, presented to us as the Reality, we have an absolute Self-Existence, an eternal sole self-being and through the experience of the silent and inactive Self or the detached immobile Purusha we can move towards this featureless and relationless Absolute, negate the actions of the creative

Power, whether that be an illusory Maya or a formative Prakriti, pass from all circling in cosmic error into the eternal Peace and Silence...

This is the Advaita view that there is only the silent and inactive Self. When we think of the nirguna Brahman, it is the silent and inactive Self and detached immobile Purusha. That would mean that there is neither the world nor the individual; That alone is true. This also is a truth.

One can be an absolutist and go into the transcendent and negate the world; it is possible. Sri Aurobindo will explain in the next paragraph why one may negate the world when one goes into the transcendent. But the essence of the view is that there is this negative, eternal, silent, inactive Brahman.

The other view is that of the reality of Becoming. The Becoming is a true movement of the Being and both the Being and the Becoming are truths of one absolute Reality. The whole of Indian philosophy has been a kind of a swing between these two; if not a complete swing,

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at least both these aspects are strongly present. One affirms that Reality is only nirguna, the other says it is only saguna; one says Being alone is real; the other says Becoming is also real. Essentially, these are the two poles of Indian philosophy.

Now Sri Aurobindo gives us his own criticism of the first view, of the sole reality of the nirguna Brahman: The first view is founded on the metaphysical conception which formulates an extreme perception in our thought, an exclusive experience in our consciousness of the Absolute as a reality void of all relations and determinations: that imposes as its consequence a logical and practical necessity to deny the world of relativities as a falsity of unreal being, a Non-Existent (Asat), or at least a lower and evanescent, temporal and pragmatic self-experience...

Sri Aurobindo says this experience of the nirguna Brahman is an extreme perception of our thought and it denies the world of relativities. Why does he use the phrase – “extreme perception”? When Adi Shankaracharya had this experience of the nirguna Brahman, it was not just an intellectual

thought, it was a real spiritual experience. But later on thought intervened. He says that when one goes to great heights of consciousness there is a kind of a gap, a gulf is created between those great heights and the world. For example, if I want to speak about absolute Reality and integral knowledge, and I go to a company with a business-minded group of people and start speaking about all that, it may seem very abstract to them and they will not catch my ideas. Their minds may be intelligent, and they may be great business people, but for them, this kind of

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* knowledge is something very remote. The more abstract the thinking becomes, the farther it seems to be from practical reality. That is why they say that philosophers are not practical people because they have this abstract way of thinking; they live in a different world away from practical reality. Similarly, as the mind goes higher into the experience of the Self, it loses contact with the world, it loses even memory of the world and its past knowledge.

When a spiritual person rises to the heights of the spiritual consciousness, he experiences those heights, but his mind forgets its own past knowledge. Due to the imposition of the mind, the world appears to be a mithya. The moment the mind is asked to judge, it says, the world is an unreality. It is not telling a lie! At that level the mind loses its grip on the reality of this world; it loses its grip because it is incapable of holding that higher consciousness and this world together. As we said earlier, it is only the Supermind that can hold that spiritual Reality and this world reality together, simultaneously, without losing the importance of either.

Even an intelligent mind, an illumined mind, or even an overmind will not be able to hold together the absolute Being and the Becoming simultaneously. Anything short of the Supermind cannot experience their simultaneous reality.

Some people ask, Adi Shankaracharya had the nirguna experience, so did he not experience the Supermind? No, he did not it. He had a great spiritual experience, but to realise the Supermind is completely different. That is

why Sri Aurobindo says that this experience of the sole reality of the nirguna “is founded on a metaphysical conception

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which formulates an extreme perception in our thought”.

It occurs in our thought, it is not on the experiential level.

When the experience is reflected in the mind, it says there is no world; because the mind at that level cannot remember the world. At the level of the mind there is an exclusive experience in our consciousness of the Absolute as a Reality void of all relations and determinations. It cuts away the experience from the consciousness of the world in order to arrive at a liberation of the spirit from its false perceptions and inferior creations.

If that is the Truth, then in our life, what do we want to do? We want to escape from life. We say this world is a mithya, let me get rid of it in the fastest way possible.

One of the fastest ways is to leave all action, all works, and withdraw or retreat, because works anchor us in the world. So we think that it is better to leave this world, leave all actions, all relations, all people, all society because if we are in the society we have to work, earn a living, have relations with others, and the tentacles of these relations spread wide and we get caught in these relations. Therefore, the Advaitins ask us to get rid of this world.

The second view is based on the conception of the Absolute as neither positively nor negatively limitable. It is beyond all relations in the sense that it is not bound by any relativities or limitable by them in its power of being: it cannot be tied down and circumscribed by our relative conceptions, highest or lowest, positive or negative; it is bound neither by our knowledge nor by our ignorance, neither by our concept of existence nor by our concept of non-existence. But neither can it be limited by any

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* incapacity to contain, sustain, create or manifest relations: on the contrary, the power to manifest itself in infinity of unity and infinity of multiplicity can be regarded as an inherent force, sign, result of its very absoluteness, and this possibility is in itself a sufficient explanation of cosmic existence. The Absolute cannot indeed be bound in its nature to manifest a cosmos of relations, but neither can it be bound not to manifest any cosmos. It is not itself a sheer emptiness; for a vacant Absolute is no Absolute,—our conception of a Void or Zero is only a conceptual sign of our mental inability to know or grasp it...

This is a crucial passage in this book and two sentences here are worth highlighting. First “The Absolute cannot indeed be bound in its nature to manifest a cosmos of relations, but neither can it be bound not to manifest any cosmos”. When we say the word ‘Absolute’ we cannot put a condition that the “Absolute cannot manifest”. We say in philosophy that the Supreme is nirguna, without qualities, that it does not manifest, that it cannot divide itself. Sri Aurobindo asks the question “who is putting all these conditions on the Absolute?” We grant the Absolute supreme freedom and then put in a parenthesis,

“you are not allowed to become the world! You are not allowed to come into this world or into human beings”?

It is the human mind, not the Absolute, which puts these conditions because of its inability to know or grasp the Absolute. It is the mind’s incapacity to know the Brahman that is reflected in this notion that Brahman cannot determine itself, and cannot become form. When we say it is the void, or nihil, or zero, or Nirvanic nothingness, who says so? The moment we say the Absolute is the void, it reflects our incapacity to experience it. If we

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had risen to the Supermind we would never say that the Absolute is a void because we would have the capacity to know the Absolute through knowledge by identity. This concept of the void has come into philosophy because of the incapacity of the human mind to delve into the unknowable Absolute.

Indian philosophies suffer because we use the terms the void and the nihil and the zero so freely. That is why I highlighted the phrase that “a vacant Absolute is no Absolute”; there cannot be a vacant Absolute. In the Upanishadic sense, when we say the Supreme is a ‘nihil’, it is void to our mind. On the contrary, it is not “void” to the Supreme itself. For example, if you have a transparent glass of water, if the water is filled up to the brim, we can’t say whether it is full or empty. If we just tilt it, then we see the movement of the water. Similarly, the Absolute is a fullness, not an emptiness. Sri Aurobindo continues, It is this realisable actuality actualised or this permanent truth deploying its possibilities that we call manifestation and see as the universe.

When the Absolute starts manifesting on its basis of complete quietness and calmness of consciousness, there is a kind of a self-pressure, and with that self-pressure, there is created a ripple in that sea of consciousness.

This ripple builds into bigger ripples that become waves, and those waves are called vibrations. In India we call the original vibration AUM. It is not just a word, it is a creative vibration which is said to be the original sound which multiplied until the vibrations grew denser and became matter. Today science also tells us that energy is a kind of vibration and that energy is convertible into

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* matter. This is what Sri Aurobindo is trying to suggest in the above lines.

He further writes,

Our mental consciousness, when it passes beyond its limit, loses its own way and means of knowledge and tends towards inactivity or cessation; it loses at the same time or tends to have no further hold on its former contents, no continuing conception of the reality of that which once was to it all that was real: we impute to absolute Parabrahman, conceived as non-manifest for ever, a corresponding inability or separation or aloofness from what has become or seems now to us unreal...

He says that this incapacity is due to our mental consciousness trying to define that which is beyond its limits. I had earlier given the comparison of the business executives unable to grasp the abstractions of spiritual philosophy. The mind loses its footing and contact with the world when we have spiritual experiences at higher levels. This happens even to yogis who have realised some higher consciousness, or have had the psychic or atman realisation – they sit somewhere giving blessings and people come to them, but they lose contact with the day-to-day world. They do not go into business and earn money; they say, “no thank you, I am living in a blissful condition, I am liberated, I have attained mukti”. The moment they are liberated they think they should not go into the world. They become saints and sannyasins and start blessing people. It is not their fault, the fault is that their mind loses contact with the world, and as Sri Aurobindo says, “it loses its own way and means of knowledge and tends towards inactivity or cessation”.

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This is a danger to spirituality. The mind tends to become inactive. That is why Sri Aurobindo emphasises that psychic realisation in isolation is not sufficient –

it should be in the midst of life, while living in society.

Otherwise, the mind ceases to function and there is a kind of *vairagya*, a kind of disgust and turning away from the world. We may say all this is *mithya*, all these relations have no value, all this is useless; it is best to remain in bliss and meditation. We can imagine that for the greatest acharyas who have gone into those great Brahmic heights – that their mind loses contact with the world completely and thereby the world ceases to exist for them. There is nothing inexplicable in what they have said. That is why if we want to gain integral knowledge or realise the integral Reality, we must follow Integral Yoga. Without it, we are bound to be attracted by the transcendent consciousness and lose connection with the world. This will not happen if we follow Integral Yoga because it gives us a solid basis in which we are rooted to the earth.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

...we impute to absolute Parabrahman, conceived as non-manifest for ever, a corresponding inability or separation or aloofness from what has become or seems now to us unreal; it must, like our mind in its cessation or self-extinction, be by its very nature of pure absoluteness void of all connection with this world of apparent manifestation, incapable of any supporting cognition or dynamic maintenance of it that gives it a reality...

Here we get a wonderful analogy of how we have imposed our thinking and behaviour on Brahman.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Just as we lose touch with the world when in higher consciousness, philosophers argue that Brahman too is in higher consciousness and has got disconnected from the world after creating it. We have analysed Brahman with our mental consciousness which is itself limited.

The consciousness of the Supermind was absolutely, urgently required for Sri Aurobindo. He could have created a synthesis of philosophy and synthesis of yoga, but it would not be realisable or realistic without the bridging consciousness of Supermind. That is why, perhaps in 1910 when he came to Pondicherry, he intensified his tapasya to bring down the Supermind.

Once the supramental consciousness pervades and sinks into the human consciousness, the distance between God and the world is lost – and losing this distance itself becomes a part of Integral Yoga. This is how yoga and philosophy are completely interrelated. We have been thinking that God is up there and so we have been trying to go up; but Supermind says God is up there, but it is here also, it is in you and around you. We do not have to go to the temple to pray; we can pray from where we are or we can take up a pen and write on the board and that also becomes a prayer, an expression of the divine consciousness.

The conviction of the mind, a change of the vision of the mind will lead to a change of the vision of life itself. Such is the importance of reading Sri Aurobindo's words – at least it helps us to change our mental vision.

It takes time for it to sink into the life plane, no doubt!

But if we can start changing the mind's parameters, our mind-set, it makes a big difference. Today we say "matter and spirit", but tomorrow we may say "matter-spirit" or

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"spirit-matter". They are one and the same. But it will take some time before people think along these lines in the normal life pattern.

Let me read the last line of the paragraph: But there is no binding reason to suppose that this chasm must exist; what our relative human consciousness is or is not capable of, is no test or standard of an absolute capacity; its conceptions cannot be applied to an absolute self-awareness; what is necessary for our mental ignorance in order to escape from itself cannot be the necessity of the Absolute which has no need of self-escape and no reason for refusing to cognise whatever is to it cognisable.

The term "chasm" to which he is referring here is between the Parabrahman and the world. If the mind wants to escape, it can escape into the Parabrahman and say there's no world; but where is the need for Brahman to escape from his own world? For as the world is he himself, there is no need for him to escape. Sri Aurobindo cautions the human mind, not to impose its thinking, its incapacity, its logic, its escapist tendencies on Brahman and treat him equal to the human being. He is different, he is the Creator, and he doesn't need to escape. On the contrary, he is fully involved in this world.

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We have discussed about integral knowledge and integral Reality, which are very close to each other.

The integral Reality according to Vedanta and Sri Aurobindo consists of the transcendent, the universal and the individual aspects of the Divine. It is not only the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* supreme transcendent that is real, but the manifestation is as real as the supreme transcendent, the Absolute himself. And the integral knowledge includes both knowledge of the world, of the manifestation, and of the Supreme Reality. Or, to put it in another way, it is the knowledge of the Being and the Becoming. This integral knowledge is knowledge by identity and is attained only when we rise to the supramental consciousness; it is not available on any other level of the mind below. This was the fundamental argument that we discussed earlier.

We can contrast this view with an opposing view.

That opposing view stresses the reality of the Supreme alone and it says that all else is false. The integral view is that the Becoming also is real as the Being himself.

Sri Aurobindo gives us an explanation of why the mind considers only the Being as the Real. It is because it superimposes its own incapacity upon the supreme Brahman. What is that incapacity of the mind? When it goes into abstract higher spiritual levels, it loses contact with the world and with its past knowledge. The gulf between the mental consciousness and the higher consciousness is so vast that it loses this contact. Then our human mind tends to superimpose this incapacity on Brahman saying that Brahman and the world are so far apart that the consciousness of Brahman has lost the knowledge, the consciousness of the world. But obviously, this cannot be true because the manifestation is not something outside of Brahman. There is no logic in creating this gap in the Brahman and dividing it into the higher and the lower. For the mind the Supreme may seem high and far above, but for Brahman, there is no far and near because everything is within himself. There is

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no meaning in the idea of Brahman losing or escaping from this world.

Now he takes up a different argument about dualism.

For we have in this unfolding of knowledge the two terms of the One and the Many, as we have the two terms of the finite and the infinite, of that which becomes and of that which does not become but for ever is, of that which takes form and of that which does not take form, of Spirit and Matter, of the supreme Superconscient and the nethermost Inconscience; in this dualism, and to get away from it, it is open to us to define Knowledge as the possession of one term and the possession of the other as Ignorance.

This is a wonderful description which is very useful for our spiritual life. I have often said that *The Life Divine*, although it is metaphysical in its essence, forms the foundation of Integral Yoga. We need to relate this philosophy to yoga, then only we will find it useful.

Otherwise, we may think it is to be only metaphysics and something beyond our reach and outside of practical reality. On the contrary, we can see in this paragraph how Sri Aurobindo deals with metaphysics. We have two terms of existence – the Brahman is the One and the Many, the supreme Reality and the manifestation. These are the two terms and related to these two terms we have all these differences between the Superconscient and the Inconscient, Spirit and Matter, the higher and the lower, Knowledge and Ignorance. We are fixed in this mind-set: when we say “One and Many” or “Brahman and the world” that the One is knowledge and the Many is ignorance, that the One is higher and the Many is lower

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* and is not important. Philosophically we need to make these distinctions, but when it comes to life, how does it reflect itself?

In this solution there is supposed to be a fixed opposition, an ultimate irreconcilability in each case between the two terms of our being.

The human mind tries to go towards what it considers to be higher, or get the knowledge of the One. As Sri Aurobindo says, we attempt –

...a leap from the Ignorance to the Knowledge and a rejection of the Ignorance, a departure from the many into the One, from the finite to the infinite, from form into the formless...

We discriminate between the higher and the lower and the common tendency is to go from the lower to the higher, from ignorance to knowledge, from matter to spirit. But what happens if we go along with this tendency? We accept the higher and reject the lower.

Most the yogis and saints and sannyasins have told us that the world is misery because of this mental mind-set. We have always said, “God is Peace, and Ananda, but the world is only suffering and sorrow”. We are almost convinced that the world is not what it should be. We do have suffering and sorrow and pain and all that and we have to accept it. Most of the religions and many yoga systems propagate this idea and attract people to religious practices which could supposedly reduce their sorrows and suffering. A religious follower may think, if there is a heaven where there is no suffering, then I would like to go there. Such people go to the religious priests and pundits and came into their clutches because they wanted to get away from this suffering by hook or

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crook. This is how religionism was born. I am using the word ‘religionism’ precisely because there is a distinction between religion and religionism. Religion, in its true essence, is nothing but spirituality. But religionism has a structure, a dogma, rituals and church and temple and all that gets built around spiritual experience. This is how religionism was born out of a psychological need. There is an innate need in human beings to go to the higher and the religionists allured us with the idea of heaven.

But Sri Aurobindo is trying to explain here the psychological division in man between the higher and the lower and the reason behind man’s rejection of the lower and acceptance of the higher. This trend in human thinking has made it into an ultimate irreconcilability and a fixed

opposition. We say, God and the world can never become one for the condemned to be in this ignorance. Not only that, we have permanently branded earth to be a place of suffering and sorrow and therefore no religion talks of transforming the earth.

Sri Aurobindo on the contrary, says that earth can become heaven, it can be transformed. At present it is what it is, but it doesn't mean that for eternity it is condemned to be in Avidya. Normally, we have conceptualised the world and paradise to be two opposite zones. Our philosophies, religions, psychology, social sciences make us believe in this division. Sri Aurobindo here gives a wonderful description of the human endeavour through these millennia.

Dissatisfied with the confusions of the multiplicity, disdainful of even the highest light and power and joy that it can reveal, we must drive beyond to the absolute one-pointedness and one-standingness

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* in which all self-variation ceases. Unable by the claim of the Infinite upon us to dwell forever in the bonds of the finite or to find there satisfaction and largeness and peace, we have to break all the bonds of individual and universal Nature, destroy all values, symbols, images, self-definitions, limitations of the illimitable and lose all littleness and division in the Self that is forever satisfied with its own infinity.

Disgusted with forms, disillusioned of their false and transient attractions, wearied and discouraged by their flitting impermanence and vain round of recurrence, we must escape from the cycles of Nature into the formlessness and featurelessness of permanent Being. Ashamed of Matter and its grossness, impatient of the purposeless stir and trouble of Life, tired out by the goalless routine of Mind or convinced of the vanity of all its aims and objects, we have to release ourselves into the eternal repose and purity of the Spirit.

Sri Aurobindo brings out a contrast here. We know that infinity is peace, greatness, beauty and Ananda. We want to get rid of the sorrow and

suffering of this world.

We know that matter is gross and resistant whereas spirit is all transparent and luminous. So we think we must get rid of matter, we must get rid of material life.

As he says, we are “Unable by the claim of the Infinite upon us to dwell forever in the bonds of the finite or to find their satisfaction...” The Infinite implies a release from ignorance. Who wouldn't want that release? In the human beings there is a deep anxiety and to come out of this bondage. We have been rejecting this world because we have this sense that this is lower and That is higher.

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We need to understand why Sri Aurobindo is emphasising on this aspect – it is because it is crucial for a divine life. If we have a sense of the hard division between the lower and the higher then we will never focus on the earth. That is what is important. We will always have the attitude that this earth is a place of suffering, something lower, something ignorant, something to reject. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy brings us back to this understanding that the earth is not lower, the manifestation is not secondary; it is as important as the One. There comes a balance! Up until now, there was a complete disequilibrium; we thought that only the One is important and that the Many, the world are not important. Once we have this conviction of the importance of the Many, then we will try to manifest the divine upon the earth and not try to run away from it. That is how this paragraph is crucial; he is trying to bring back the balance that has been lost over the last millennia.

Then we have further explanation, which is really the most essential one. He says,

For we see that these apparently opposite terms of One and Many, Form and the Formless, Finite and Infinite are not so much opposite as complements of each other...

Until now the religions and the philosophers pitted spirit versus matter, earth versus heaven, and paradise versus this world; there was always an opposition.

Sri Aurobindo takes away this opposition and says that they are “complements of each other”. This single word complement throws a lot of light and speaks of the absolute importance of the earth. When we say they

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* are complementary it means they are essential to each other. It is like the famous line the Mother said regarding Sri Aurobindo and Herself: “Without him, I exist not, without me he is unmanifest”. (CWM 13: 32) This is the relation. The One can exist by itself but it cannot manifest itself without the world. The world is his manifestation.

And the manifestation cannot exist without the One.

They are necessary for each other. If the Brahman wants to express himself he has to become this multiplicity, and the multiplicity, to sustain itself, needs the consciousness of Brahman. Such is the essential link between them.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

...not alternating values of the Brahman which in its creation perpetually loses oneness to find itself in multiplicity and, unable to discover itself in multiplicity, loses it again to recover oneness, but double and concurrent values which explain each other; not hopelessly incompatible alternatives, but two faces of the one Reality which can lead us to it by our realisation of both together and not only by testing each separately, – even though such separate testing may be a legitimate or even an inevitable step or part of the process of knowledge.

Here he uses another revealing phrase: they are “two faces of the one Reality”. We should remember these two phrases: the One and the Many are complements of each other and they are “two faces of the one Reality”.

They are two facets, they are not different. He says, Knowledge is no doubt the knowledge of the One, the realisation of the Being; ignorance is a self-oblivion of Being, the experience of separateness in

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the multiplicity and a dwelling or circling in the ill-understood maze of becomings...

When we speak of Knowledge, it means knowledge of the One, of the supreme Brahman or the supreme Reality and ignorance is partial knowledge of this multitude.

Now there is a question that Sri Aurobindo has to answer. If we say that both One and the Many are complements of each other, that both the higher and the lower are two faces of the same Reality, what does that imply for our understanding of knowledge and ignorance? If knowledge is of the One and ignorance is knowledge of the Many, should we have knowledge or should we choose ignorance? The Isha Upanishad said, as we discussed previously, that we should not be exclusively immersed in the world – that is darkness; but if we are exclusively immersed in the Brahman, it is an even greater darkness. But if I say, the One and the Many are complements, equally true, then as a human being, as a sadhak, as an aspirant, what should I do? The answer he gives is:

...but this is cured by the soul in the Becoming growing into knowledge, into awareness of the Being which becomes in the multiplicity all these existences and can so become because their truth is already there in its timeless existence.

Sri Aurobindo as well as the Vedantin's answer is that although our mind, vital and physical are presently in Ignorance, we can have knowledge of the One and the Many by living inwardly. This is what the Gita also told us, that we must live within while acting outside. Our outer actions must be based on an inner realisation. In simpler terms, it is to contact and realise

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the psychic being and the Self, and based on this inner consciousness, act externally. This inner consciousness reflects the One, the Brahman, and the actions of the mind, vital and physical must reflect the true Self. That's exactly what happens with Brahman too. Brahman is the One who expresses himself in the Many. We can also emulate Brahman's actions. Sri Krishna says the same thing, to live within, and act externally.

One may ask, "Is it possible?" It is only great saints and yogis who have done that. It's true that everybody is not a yogi, but what Integral Yoga tells us is that today we may not be able to do it, but ultimately humanity will come to this realisation and moreover it is the only way out.

Sri Aurobindo says,

...the knowledge of the Becoming is a part of knowledge; it acts as an Ignorance only because we dwell imprisoned in it, *avidyāyām antare*, without possessing the Oneness of the Being, which is its base, its stuff, its spirit, its cause of manifestation and without which it could not be possible.

We are imprisoned in Avidya because we have not realised the Being within. The solution that Sri Aurobindo gives us is that we can continue to live upon this earth doing our works, our daily endeavours, but if we do this only, then we are imprisoned in Avidya, but if we realise the Atman, then we will not be a prisoner of this ignorance but, as we say in our Indian terms, we will become a *jivanmukta*, we will be liberated.

Speaking of the Brahman, Sri Aurobindo writes: Aware of the works of the dividing mind but not itself limited by it, It finds its oneness as easily in the

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many, in relations, in becoming as in any withdrawal from the many, from relations, from becoming.

Ourselves also, to possess even its oneness fully, must possess it,—since it is there, since all is that,—in the infinite self-variation of the cosmos. The infinity of the multiplicity finds itself explained and justified only when it is

contained and possessed in the infinity of the One; but also the infinity of the One pours itself out and possesses itself in the infinity of the Many.

This is the idea that I have already explained – that the One sustains this manifestation and that it expresses itself in the Many. This is their relationship.

Further, he explains:

The finite self-variations of the Self in which the mind losing self-knowledge is caught and dispersed among the variations, are yet not the denials but the endless expression of the Infinite and have no other meaning or reason for existence; the Infinite too, while it possesses its delight of limitless being, finds also the joy of that very limitlessness in its infinite self-definition in the universe.

Why does the supreme Brahman require the Many?

Sri Aurobindo says that the Infinite “finds the joy of that very limitlessness in its infinite self-definition in the universe”. An important word here is “self-definition”, which is another word for “self-limitation”. Self-limitation or self-definition imply “formation” and “form”. Form means manifestation and it in turn means multiplicity.

Mark the links now. The Divine started defining himself, limiting himself, and that means he started becoming forms. Through the process of self-limitation the infinite

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness manifests in small forms, like this table, like you and me, and in these forms, he brings out this multitudinous manifestation. But the line which is most important here is that he finds the joy of its limitlessness in this infinite self-definition of itself in forms.

The transcendent Sachchidananda is unmanifest Ananda, but he enjoys this Ananda in his self-definition in infinite forms. In each form, he has the

same Ananda.

We should not think that the Divine in becoming the multiplicity is dispersing its Ananda. Human beings find happiness in a few things and in other things we don't find joy. Or if we do ten different activities, we disperse our energies and become tired; in the beginning, in the morning we are fresh and feel joyful in our activities, but towards the end of the day as the energy dips joy also decreases. But it is not so with the Divine. From the ant using all its energies to make an ant-hill all the way up to human beings writing a poem, in every small or large thing the Divine experiences an equal Ananda.

The Brahman has equal joy in manifesting as a mountain that lasts millions of years and in becoming a beautiful delicate rose. This is the secret and the purpose of manifestation. Vedanta tells us that Ananda or bliss is the foundation of this creation; bliss is the beginning, bliss is the middle, bliss is the end. If this be the truth, as it seems to be, then there is nothing lost in the Divine becoming multiple. He can define himself infinitely and for eternity and in every form of its infinite manifestation there is the same Ananda, the same Tapas, the same Chit.

In continuation of this argument he says, The Divine Being is not incapable of taking innumerable forms because He is beyond all form in

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His essence, nor by assuming them does He lose His divinity, but pours out rather in them the delight of His being and the glories of His godhead; this gold does not cease to be gold because it shapes itself into all kinds of ornaments and coins itself into many currencies and values...

With a kilo of gold, we can make five ornaments or five thousand ornaments but the gold remains the same. Similarly, Brahman, though he may manifest in infinite ways for eternity, he remains the same in all his manifestations.

And then he concludes by saying,

Matter, – substance itself, subtle or dense, mental or material,—is form and body of Spirit and would never have been created if it could not be made a basis for the self-expression of the Spirit...

In Integral yoga one of the fundamental concepts that we need to understand is that Matter and Spirit are one in essence. That means they are inter-convertible; they are not opposites we make them out to be. As we said earlier they are complementary to each other. The Divine takes as much delight in the manifestation as in non-manifestation. The important line here is that Matter is form and body of the Spirit. In human beings there is the same relation: the body is a form of the soul; we can say that the soul has a body, it's not that the body has a soul. Normally, we say, "I have a soul" – this is a wrong understanding. The spiritual understanding is that the soul has this body and this nature and personality.

Similarly, this entire creation is the body of Brahman, the body of the spirit. Why did Brahman take up this body?

Here he says it "would never have been created if it could

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* not be made a basis for the self-expression of the Spirit".

Sri Aurobindo, again and again, reiterates this point that matter is the self-expression of the spirit, and that matter gives the spirit the needed stability. For us the body is required because it provides stability for the experience of the soul upon this earth. When I leave the body, my soul cannot experience what it wants to experience upon this earth. The importance of the body is that it provides for the soul the basis of self-experience and self-expression.

That is why the Mother explained many times that people who commit suicide put themselves into a great danger. They think that killing their body will help them get rid of sufferings and problems but is not so. Once the body is gone the soul and the other parts of our being

– the vital and the mental – lose the body’s protection.

The body provides tremendous protection, not only in its stability and its ability for self-expression, but also protection against undivine forces. Once the body is removed, then, as the Mother says, the soul is attacked by all these forces and our mental and vital beings are in a tremendous torture because there is nobody takes shelter.

We all have experienced that our dreams that when we have violent, bad dreams rush back into the body and feel safe that we are more in danger. But in a suicide, when the body is dead, where is the shelter? She says that those who commit suicide undergo much more suffering than what they would have suffered had they continued to stay in the body. This is spiritual and occult knowledge that most people do not know. These days youngsters commit suicide at the very first failures in life. They do not choose to face the battle or challenge. One disappointment in

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relationship, job, society, family and they choose to end their lives. They do not realise that problems and troubles do not go away after the body is dead.

We have said the matter is the body of the spirit and that these are inter-convertible. What do we mean by

“inter-convertible”? It is the Spirit that has densified or limited itself and become Matter. A simple example is that of vapour, water and ice. Water by the process of self-densification, self-crystallisation, becomes ice. And by the reverse process of rarification ice can become water.

That means if we heat ice it converts into water. What is the difference between water and ice? Except for the form, there is no difference. Chemically both have the same formula of H O, the essence is the same only the 2

form is different – liquid, vapour or solid. Similarly, spirit and matter are essentially the same, only their mode of existence is different.

It is the application of heat which converts ice into water, or water into vapour. Similarly, the application of heat makes possible the inter-convertibility or the transformation of the physical. That, of course, is the essence of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Yoga implies Tapasya or concentrated effort of sadhana, which also means tapas. Through the process of tapasya physical matter can be transformed into an essential spiritual matter.

This is crucial, because otherwise when we speak of the transformation of the physical, nobody will believe or accept it. He is showing that philosophically, although according to the old notion matter and spirit are opposites, they are opposites only in form, essentially they are the same. If we understand this, then we can

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mentally accept that one day physical transformation will be possible.

For that transformation to become possible, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given us the Integral Yoga and have brought down the supramental consciousness which can bring about the transformation.

It is not just the heat and Tapasya of the individual yogin, it is actually the heat and Tapasya of the Divine Mother and the supramental power that transforms. The combination of the Divine Mother and the supramental power is required for the transformation. Otherwise, one can meditate for years together but nothing will happen.

One may get peace or Ananda, but the physical will not be transformed. The physical transformation requires the supramental consciousness and power, which the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have brought down and made available to the humankind.

Sri Aurobindo concludes this argument by bringing a synthesis and telling us that the One and Many, the Divine and the world are not oppositions, they are complements of each other. The transcendent Divine in becoming the Many does not reduce or lose himself; on the contrary, there is as much joy in the self-definition of the Divine as there is in the non-manifestation.

Now, he takes up another argument, But there are other conceptions of reality, other conceptions of the nature of knowledge which demand consideration. There is the view that all that exists is a subjective creation of Mind, a structure of Consciousness, and that the idea of an objective reality self-existent, independent of Consciousness, is

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an illusion, since we have and can have no evidence of any such independent self-existence of things.

This is what we call the subjective view of Reality – in this all that exists is a subjective creation of the mind.

As long as I am looking at the world, experiencing the world, the world seems real to me, but the moment I stop looking, when my mind is not functioning, when I am sleeping, the world does not exist for me. This objective world loses its reality for me. For one who is awake, it is there; but for the mind which is sleeping, which has withdrawn itself, the world does not exist. Even if you say I can show you photographs before 1900, before you were born, this is how New York looked, this is how New Delhi looked, I can say for me it is all mystery and history, I don't believe in that. There is no proof of the existence of the world, no objective existence of the world beyond my personal experience of it. This is the view presented by one school of thought.

This way of seeing may lead to the affirmation of the creative Consciousness as the sole Reality or to the denial of all existence and the affirmation of Non-Existence – or a nescient Zero as the sole Reality.

This philosophy can lead us to the belief that the mind or a creative consciousness alone exists, or it can lead to the belief that nothing at all exists, it is all merely an illusion.

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The idea is that when I leave this body there is a complete cypher or zero, a nihil; I do not exist either does the world. It is an extreme view of

subjectivity. One may argue – “but there are other people who will still live”, I

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* can say, “fine, let them, but for me it’s irrelevant”. This view has led to another line of thinking: For, in one view, the objects constructed by consciousness have no intrinsic reality, they are merely structures; even the consciousness that constructs them is itself only a flux of perceptions that assume an appearance of connection and continuity and create a sense of continuous time, but in reality these things have no stable basis as they are only an appearance of reality.

This comes close to the Buddhist view which says that everything is a “flux of perceptions”. It suggests that the

‘I’, this so-called Mr A, who is looking at the world, is also an illusion. How is it so? Every minute, every second, we are changing. The Mr A who was talking at 9:30 is not the same Mr A who is talking now at 11. He is an illusion.

They use the analogy – you cannot step twice into the same river as it is always changing. As time passes our consciousness changes, we are not the same. We may think we are the same, but we are not. Sri Aurobindo says that we “assume an appearance of connection and continuity and create a sense of continuous time...” It is only an assumption; it is not true. In reality, many cells in our body have died, and many things in the body have changed. There is nothing stable in our body or in our consciousness. Therefore, even our subjective consciousness which thinks it is observing the world is an illusion; there is no stable ‘you’ that exists. “You”

are only *kshanik*; you are there only for a *kshana*, for a moment.

What the Buddha and Buddhism have told us is that there is nothing that is Permanent. According to Vedanta,

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there is a permanent which is called the Atman, the eternal, the unmoving, the unchanging. Vedanta says that Prakriti or Nature is always changing but in Buddhism it is believed that everything is in flux and there is no soul.

This philosophy is like the philosophy of Heraclitus in the West, who believes that change is the only permanent thing; it is the only eternal thing, and there is nothing static or unmoving. Each of these philosophies is based on an experience concept. It is not that Buddha just sat and started thinking. He experienced this flux, this eternal change and concluded that there is neither an Atman nor God. What became important for him was the path. In contrast, Vedanta says we can reach the Parabrahman or Sachchidananda or Purushottama, we can reach the Divine. Buddhism says that there is nothing Permanent, there is no God, no soul, no Self, nothing; there is only nirvana, extinction, a kind of zero, a vacancy, an Asat. And that has been put forward as the best solution for the problems of life.

Sri Aurobindo is not finding faults with Buddhism.

It was a philosophy which was necessary for that time in India because the Vedas and the Vedanta had been turned into a kind of a religion of ceremonies, customs and functions and had lost the essence of spirituality.

People only concentrated on the external *karma-kanda* of the Vedas and forgot its real import. There are hundreds of Vedic ceremonies and functions which continue to exist even today. Right from the birth of a child to marriage and death. In every region of India, we have different Vedic customs. In those times, when the whole nation-soul was following this external path, the Buddha as an Avatar had to come and stop this blind emphasis

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* on religiosity. Historically, it was necessary to put India back onto the track of true spirituality. Buddha taught us not to think about the other world, Brahman, liberation, mukti, moksha and the soul. An Avatar works for a particular time, for a particular turning of the human tide.

Philosophers say that Buddha was against the Vedanta, but that is the philosopher's opinion. India's soul did not call Buddha a philosopher, he was called an Avatar who came for a particular manifestation. Due to his rejection of the Brahman, the soul and God, we looked back upon earth and began again to concentrate on how to live a good life on earth and try to escape the sorrow and the suffering. What Sri Shankaracharya said later became the Advaita; he told us to leave this world because it is full of problems. Buddha asked us not to leave this world, live here, but live a good life according to the fourfold order, the Middle Path which avoids extremes. He had to come to bring in a more sane life because India was moving either towards Brahman or towards the Charvaka's philosophy which was absolutely gross materialism.

We had materialism on one side and the Vedas on the other side. Buddha wanted to take the Middle Path; be neither too materialistic nor too spiritual. He advocated a practical, pragmatic life.

However, philosophically he got rid of both the material and spiritual terms of existence. He said, There would be a double and complete self-extinction, the disappearance of Purusha, the cessation or extinction of Prakriti; for the conscious Soul and Nature are the two terms of our being and

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comprehend all that we mean by existence, and the negation of both is the absolute Nirvana.

Buddha rejected Purusha and got rid of one of the major problems because in trying to realise God we rejected the world; but here in the world there is sorrow and suffering and death. He said get rid of these by following the eightfold path and at the end reject Prakriti also. Reject in the sense, not leave the world, but the ultimate aim is not to be born again and attain a complete nirvana. From the philosophic, metaphysical point of view, this subjective argument leads us to nirvana. If we insist too much on the subjectivity of everything then even the subject becomes an illusion and there is no Truth; it's all flux and which ends up in nirvana.

What is real, then, must be either an Inconscience, in which this flux and these structures appear, or a Superconscience beyond all idea of self-existence.

But this view of the universe is only true of the appearance of things when we regard our surface mind as the whole of consciousness; all looks like a flux and a construction by an impermanent Consciousness. But this cannot prevail as a whole account of existence if there is a greater and deeper self-knowledge and world-knowledge, a knowledge by identity, a consciousness to which that knowledge is normal and a Being of which that consciousness is the eternal self-awareness; for then the subjective and the objective can be real and intimate to that consciousness and being...

We should make a little distinction between the Buddha and Buddhism, especially when it comes to philosophy, because the Buddhist Acharyas brought

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* in a lot of logic which is not necessarily there in the Buddha's teaching. Buddhism wanted to have an edge over other philosophies in India, like Sankhya and Nyaya and Vaisheshika, which were very strong logically. So Buddhism brought its own logic in order to counter the Nyaya and Vaisheshika and Advaitin philosophies. It was a kind of battle of schools of thought.

Sri Aurobindo says that this conclusion of the Buddhist philosophers would be true only if the mind was considered the whole of the consciousness. What is the meaning of 'the subject'? If we ask the Buddhists what is meant by the subjective consciousness, they basically said that as long as I experience with the mind, then the world is true for me, the moment I go to sleep or my mind is silent, the world does not exist. Sri Aurobindo says this is true if your definition of subjective consciousness is mind-consciousness, but it is not so. According to Vedanta, there are other levels of consciousness, what we call the consciousness of the soul. For the Vedantin, the subjective consciousness or the true subject is the Atman, and the Atman never sleeps. Even if a person is in coma the Atman is awake, the world continues to exist.

Nowadays, there is a lot of discussion about whether a patient who has been in a coma for a long time can be given a graceful end and allowed to die. A Vedantin's argument would be that the patient is not just the body.

The doctors may think that the body is suffering so why should he live? Give a suitable injection and quietly let him pass away.

I will give one little incident which throws much light on this issue. Champaklal-ji was one of the great yogis of the Ashram. He was with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

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for decades together and spiritually he had advanced very much. That was confirmed by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo themselves. He came many times to the Institute of Human Study, at Hyderabad. Once, he visited my uncle's house. One of my cousins, was unable to communicate since his birth. He was completely bedridden. He was not in a coma but was non-responsive.

Champaklalji went and sat beside his bed and looked into his eyes. Of course, he himself did not speak, as most of you know, towards the end of his life. But in a speechless communication, he and the child communicated so much that the child started laughing. Not only with his eyes, his whole face was beaming with laughter. Both of them got into a fit of laughter. The parents were surprised as they had never seen this boy responding before. When Champaklalji returned home in the evening he explained in a long session of questions and answers in which he wrote that the boy had a very living soul, and that he is experiencing the world and wanted to experience it this way.

Therefore, we could say that the question of putting an end to a patient because he is in a coma would be completely wrong from the Vedantin's point of view. The soul may sometimes go into a state of coma because it wants to experience something that way. You see, in that state it is not all the time doing this or that thing, going to the office and shopping and going to the parties.

That is not necessarily the only way of expression. Do you think a yogi is not expressing himself? One who is meditating quietly eight hours a day, do you think he is non-active? That's what people thought about Sri Aurobindo, that he was inactive, that he had gone to

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Pondicherry to withdraw into his room. But look at his articles, his books, his communication! If there was any man active in this world, it was he. We are active eight hours a day, but he was active 24 hours a day. It is a fallacy to think that outer action alone matters, that only when the body moves we are active. When the body does not move we think we are non-active. The reality is that the true subject is not the mind or the body; they are the expressions, the instruments of the soul.

Now we can better understand Buddhism and Sri Aurobindo's answer to Buddhism. Each topic Sri Aurobindo takes up from different perspectives and then he gives his own view. Here he takes up the subjective view and then gives his answer. Perhaps because of its atheistic position, Buddhism has attracted many people from the West. Not that there is no God in the West, but there has been a reaction against Christianity and that swings closer to Buddhism than to Hinduism. In Hinduism we speak much about God. But for a materialistic civilisation it's nice to have a format of a religion without God. That is why we see Buddhism expanding greatly in the western world but not in India.

In Bihar there are some attempts to spread it but it has not caught on to Hindu psyche because it needs the Brahman and the personal godheads. That is one of the reasons why Buddhism could not flourish in India for long. But the Buddha himself was not rejected and even now we worship him as an Avatar.

As we know, the whole of Thailand is Buddhist. It has a Chinese consciousness which is strongly materialistic.

This is what I have observed in my short stay of three years there. Of course, the West is also very materialistic

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– I also went to West a few times – and I saw that wherever there is this materialistic consciousness, Buddhism suits well. This of course is my own analysis and interpretation.

Sri Aurobindo says that the Vedantic view is that the true subject is the Atman, not the mind, and then he goes further to writes

...there is a greater and deeper self-knowledge and world-knowledge, a knowledge by identity, a consciousness to which that knowledge is normal and a Being of which that consciousness is the eternal self-awareness; for then the subjective and the objective can be real and intimate to that consciousness and being, both can be something of itself, sides of its identity, authentic to its existence.

He says there is a higher level that of the supramental consciousness, where the subject and the object are real and intimate, there is no separation. He says we can reach, through yoga, a consciousness where the subject, the Atman, and the outer world are both real and intimate.

Now Sri Aurobindo takes up the argument given by Sankhya philosophy. He has responded to Buddhism, and now he discusses Sankhya. We have discussed views in which there is either only the mental consciousness and “a flux of fleeting perceptions” or there is the transcendent Brahman. Sankhya is another philosophical school in India which posits that there are two realities

– one is the Purusha and the other is Prakriti. Prakriti is nature, the creative energy of existence; Purusha is the godhead, the witness Divine. This philosophy says that it is Purusha who is watching Nature. It says that the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* subject is real and the object is real, but it is not in the sense of oneness as in the supramental consciousness, but as a duality. However, there is a problem in the relationship between Prakriti and

Purusha. The problem is that although there are two realities – Purusha and Prakriti – the Purusha has forgotten itself in Prakriti.

That means the witness consciousness is involved in Prakriti.

It is as if looking into the water we see our reflection and think that it is myself. Similarly, the Purusha has completely lost himself in this world. It is because it has lost itself that we have all this sorrow and suffering, and the solution is that the Purusha must come back to its own original status as the Witness. The Purusha is supposed to watch, he is not supposed to involve himself. This self-forgetfulness is the cause of all this human misery. There is another school of thought called – Sankhya Yoga. It is given by Maharshi Patanjali.

His Ashtanga yoga has eight levels of sadhana to attain the Samadhi state. In this sadhana, one is able to reach a state where one arrives at this realisation that one is actually the Purusha separate from Nature. With yoga and tapasya we can split this identification of the Purusha with Prakriti and then realise we are the Purusha watching Prakriti. Sankhya tells us that we have to separate ourselves from Prakriti and reject this false identification.

The false identification is to think that “I am the body”, “I am the mind”, or “I am the vital”. In a single day we hardly ever think that I am the Divine, I am the Purusha, I am the soul. If somebody asks us who we are – we mention our name to them. Basically, we

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introduce a physical existence to them. When asked about our profession we may say – “I am a lecturer”,

“I am a philosopher”. It means we think that “I am the mind”. If you were to say, I am a businessman, running this big company – it means an identity with the vital being. We are always associating ourselves either with the body or with our work or with our mental or vital expression or with our egoistic tendencies. But there is hardly a person who says, I am the soul who uses this body which is called Mr X. That is a false identification we have. It is only when we ask a yogin who are you that he will say I am the

soul. It is only a yogin who can say that. This entire process of realisation is nothing but the soul realising itself as the Purusha. It's coming back to its own proper role. The whole point of all this Tapasya and realisation is nothing but just this, that I realise, that we are not Prakriti, we are Purusha. That is why it is called self-realisation. One realises one's own status, and who one really is. It is not realising something else beyond me, it is realising what I am in my original being.

In the next paragraph, he says Sri Aurobindo writes, This would depend largely on whether it is only Mind as we know it that is in action or a deeper and greater Consciousness, of which Mind is a surface instrument, executrix of its initiations, medium of its manifestations. If it is the former the universe constructed and seen by Mind can only have a subjective and symbolic or representative reality: if the latter, then the universe and its natural beings and objects can be true realities of the One Existence...

Sri Aurobindo agrees that this false identification must be withdrawn, but philosophically, he would say that we

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* should not judge all this on a mental level. He says that it is again our mind which is dividing Prakriti and Purusha, it is our mind dividing the inner and the outer and the higher and the lower. He does not have much confidence in the mind, especially when it tries to get into the realms beyond itself. The Mind is a good instrument to rule the lower, but not to understand the higher.

The next paragraph is very beautiful but I will read just a few lines to show how Sri Aurobindo analyses the mind. He says,

It is clear that a Mind of the nature of our surface intelligence can be only a secondary power of existence. For it bears the stamp of incapacity and ignorance as a sign that it is derivative and not the original creatrix; we see that it does not know or understand the object it perceives, it has no automatic control of them; it has to acquire a labouriously built knowledge and controlling power. This initial incapacity could not be there if these objects were the Mind's own structures...

We need to remember that the mind is ignorant, it is incapable of knowing the truth and it is a secondary power. He says,

But the nature of Mind as we know it is an Ignorance seeking for knowledge; it is a knower of fractions and worker of divisions striving to arrive at a sum, to piece together a whole...

Mind, due to its incapacity can never see the whole truth, it always divides and tries to sum up. It only adds up the pieces and says, this is the truth; but the truth is not an addition of pieces, it is something beyond, something greater, something holistic. The mind can

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never, due to its own nature, see the total truth. It is not a matter of whose mind it is it does not have the capacity due to its own nature. Depending on the keenness of the mind, we can analyse more, and divide things into smaller pieces, but it is always ‘a knower of fractions and worker of divisions striving to arrive at a sum’. In this one little paragraph, he explains the fundamental nature and limitation of the mind, because of which it has no right to judge spirituality, to judge the spirit, the Purusha.

Further down in the same paragraph he begins arguing about another point. He says,

A consciousness possessing the essential and integral knowledge, proceeding from the essence of the whole and from the whole to the parts, would be no longer Mind, but a perfect Truth-Consciousness automatically possessed of inherent self-knowledge and world-knowledge. It is from this basis that we have to look at the subjective view of reality. It is true that there is no such thing as an objective reality independent of consciousness; but at the same time there is a truth in objectivity and it is this, that the reality of things resides in something that is within them and is independent of the interpretation our mind gives to them and of the structures it builds upon its observation.

We are now coming to the conclusion of this argument in which Sri Aurobindo gives his own view, that there is a subjective consciousness in

the supramental consciousness and it finds meaning, a reality, in the objective world also.

The mind looks at the world with its senses and says it is real, but the mind can also refute this reality by saying

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the world is constantly changing, it has no stable reality, it is our mind that constructs stability through our perceptions where there is none. But now Sri Aurobindo looks at the world from the higher consciousness and says that these senses and perceptions of the mind are not necessary as instruments, the world can be known by identity with it. My senses cannot identify with the world, they have only indirect knowledge, they only touch something on its surface, whereas the supramental consciousness penetrates the world and knows it directly by oneness with it. It knows that the reality of things resides in something that is within them and is independent of the interpretation our mind gives.

Whereas the mind gives us indirect symbols of the reality of the world, he says that these symbols are not entirely unreal:

...they are self-expressions of That, movements and powers of the Being. Each form is there because it is an expression of some power of That which inhabits it; each happening is a movement in the working out of some Truth of the Being in its dynamic process of manifestation. It is this significance that gives validity to the mind's interpretative knowledge, its subjective construction of the universe; our mind is primarily a percipient and interpreter, secondarily and derivatively a creator. This indeed is the value of all mental subjectivity that it reflects in it some truth of the Being which exists independently of the reflection,—whether that independence presents itself as a physical objectivity or a supraphysical reality perceived by the mind but not perceptible by the physical senses.

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Sri Aurobindo says that there is a truth in each form.

He now leaves behind Sankhya Yoga and Buddhism and their arguments. From the Vedantic point of view, the object is real even if we don't see it or even if we pass away from this world the object continues to exist.

How? Because this form is an expression of some power of That which inhabits it. Any form is a densification of the spirit, or as we said earlier, a self-limitation of the spirit. This spirit we call Sachchidananda or Brahman.

It is Sachchidananda who is residing in the form. The form does not exist simply because we see it; it does not depend on your perception, it has its own inherent validity and truth. That truth is Sachchidananda itself; which is there in the form.

Remember, Sachchidananda is Sat-Chit-Ananda. It is Sat, pure existence, which becomes the form. It is the Chit, the consciousness, that observes or experiences the form. And it is Ananda, the delight of existence, that unites the form and the consciousness. That is why we say that the world is a creation out of Ananda, because the form and the consciousness stay together because of the delight of existence.

Why should I do this work that I am doing if I don't get joy in it? All that we do out of joy manifests fully and manifests well. Even in our everyday life, if I do something because somebody is forcing me, not out of joy in the work, then I cannot manifest that work well.

That is why the Mother always asked us to do the work in hand with joy. She says, we should feel the joy not only in things of our interest but in everything that we do. If there is something I must do that I don't like, then I can change my attitude and do it with happiness. How can I

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* do that? I can surrender it to the Divine. That is where yoga comes in. When we offer our work to the Divine then automatically there is the joy of offering, and it is that joy that can make the work perfect. Similarly, on the original creative level, it is Ananda, the bliss, that unites the outward form and the inner consciousness and enables them to coexist.

Sri Aurobindo says that every form that we see in this universe is a diminution of Sachchidananda himself.

Therefore, it doesn't matter if we see it or not. This world was born long before human beings were born, long before these animals were born; it is the Eternal, the Infinite, who is in the form, it is always there. It doesn't vanish with our going, it is not born with our coming.

This is how these subjective and objective views get reconciled and synthesised in Sri Aurobindo's view and in Vedanta. When we talk about Sri Aurobindo's view, let us also keep in mind that all this is also in Vedantic thought. Sri Aurobindo links up philosophy to yoga.

Vedanta gave the metaphysical angle but Sri Aurobindo translated it into yoga. That means that this metaphysics becomes relevant to life and is not just another bookish theory.

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We have been discussing about the subjective view of reality. In it more importance is laid on the subjective element, and the objective reality depends on the subject. In fact, to a great extent, it is true except that the existence of objective reality does not completely depend on the subjective view. What we could say, perhaps, is that the interpretation of the objective reality depends on the subjective. For example, let's take up this bottle

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on my table which is being seen by each one of us in the class. Your interpretation, your response, and your reaction to the same object is quite different from each other. Everyone here is looking at this object differently.

This means that the subject, that is your consciousness, looking at the bottle – interpreting it. What we can say is that the interpretation of the object depends on the subject, but not its existence. Even if we are not here tomorrow and no one sees the bottle, it will not vanish.

Sri Aurobindo says that the object does exist irrespective of your interpretation or our confirmation because the object itself is a form of Sachchidananda. It does not depend on our attitude or interpretation.

Now we will take up the opposite view, the objective view of reality. Sri Aurobindo says, There is a precisely opposite view of reality and knowledge, which affirms an objective Reality as the only entire truth and an objective knowledge as the soul entirely reliable knowledge. This view starts from the idea of physical existence as the one fundamental existence and the relegation of consciousness, mind, soul or spirit to the position of a temporary outcome of the physical Energy in its cosmic action,—if indeed soul or spirit has any existence.

This is the opposite extreme, where the object is the entire truth and objective knowledge is the only knowledge. It would mean that only physical existence is real. It would also mean that whatever my physical senses see and experience, those things alone have true existence. It tells us that physical existence is the one fundamental existence. Anything else – it could be the mind, the consciousness, or the soul or spirit

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– would not exist. A strong, committed scientist may not agree to something called the soul or the spirit or the consciousness. He says, what I see through my microscope and telescope, that alone is true; the rest is debatable.

All that is not physical and objective has a lesser reality dependent on the physical and objective; it has to justify itself to the physical mind by objective evidence or a recognisable and verifiable relation to the truth of physical and external things before it can be given a passport of reality.

That is a problem we have in psychology when one claims that there is something called consciousness or the subliminal or the inner being of a person, these thinkers would say you have got to justify your assertion by giving physical proofs. If Sri Aurobindo talks of the subliminal being, the

scientists would ask him to prove it and make it verifiable in relation to the truth of physical and external things. If we talk of a soul, they will say, “can you prove it physically?” “Can you give us an experiment by which I can verify if you have a soul?” If a yogi offers to give them verifiable proofs but not related to the physical, they would not agree. They would ask for a physical proof.

This is, in fact, the most prevalent view in the world today because the world is passing through this materialistic philosophy of life. Obviously, this philosophy does not accept the truth of deeper realities.

When we speak of the soul and the psychic being and the Atman, they would say that this may be all an illusion, or it might be an effect of human glands. There are all kinds of arguments, but they say that nothing beyond

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the physical exists. For them soul is an imagination or perhaps a chemical reaction, a glandular effect in the body. Whatever their arguments, the basic thing is that they will reject anything non-physical.

Here is Sri Aurobindo’s answer to this view-point: But it is evident that this solution cannot be accepted in its rigour, as it has no integrality in it but looks at only one side of existence, even only one province or district of existence, and leaves all the rest unexplained, without inherent reality, without significance. If pushed to its extreme, it would give to a stone or a plum-pudding a greater reality and to thought, love, courage, genius, greatness, the human soul and mind facing an obscure and dangerous world and getting mastery over it an inferior dependent reality or even an unsubstantial and evanescent reality.

Sri Aurobindo argues that if we extend this argument of the objective reality it means that a “plum-pudding”

or a stone is “a greater reality than love, courage genius, greatness.” Is a stone greater than these qualities? Have they no reality at all? He says this becomes a lopsided and extreme argument and he does not accept it. There

is a sonnet by Sri Aurobindo where he illustrates this idea of objective reality; it is called “A Dream of Surreal Science:”

One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink At the Mermaid, capture immortality; A committee of hormones on the Aegian’s brink Composed the Illiad and the Odyssey. (CWSA 2: 614) This is what scientists think, that it is only a committee of hormones that have written the Illiad and the Odyssey or a gland that wrote Shakespeare’s Hamlet. They do

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* not give any credence to genius or greatness or higher imagination.

This is the surreal objective view of the scientist which converts everything into hormones and glands and chemicals. They do not believe in the reality of human genius or the subliminal worlds or a higher consciousness. Now Sri Aurobindo gives his explanation.

As usual, he has given the viewpoint of others, then one or two critical remarks, and then an explanation of his view. He says,

But it could be held, on the contrary, that the objective assumes value only as it has a relation to the soul; it is a field, an occasion, a means for the soul’s progression in Time: the objective is created as a ground of manifestation for the subjective.

What is the view of the Vedantin when it comes to this objective reality? The Vedantin says that the object, the world, Matter is only a field for the experience of the soul. It turns the tables completely and says that it is the soul that gives importance or value to the object; the outer is a field for an inner experience. If the soul were not there, then these outer things would not have any value. Especially for those of us who know a little bit about yoga, we have seen that no work has any value except in the way it is done and if it is offered to the Divine. Every work its value gets its importance to the extent it is offered to the Divine. Otherwise, all work is the same be it sweeping the floor or ruling a country. The outer gets its importance by the

inner. Sri Aurobindo says that “the objective is created as a ground of manifestation for the subjective”.

The objective world is only an outward form of

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becoming of the Spirit; it is here a first form, a basis, but it is not the essential thing, the main truth of being. The subjective and objective are two necessary sides of the manifested Reality and of equal value, and in the range of the objective itself the supraphysical object of consciousness has as much right to acceptance as the physical objectivity; it cannot be a priori set aside as a subjective delusion or hallucination.

We cannot set aside the higher or subjective elements.

He says that the outer, form and matter is only a basis; it is not essential thing. It is there as a field, as we say in Sanskrit, it is *kshetra* – for man’s experience. The philosophy of involution explains that Matter was the last expression of the higher spiritual consciousness. In involution it is Sachchidananda which descends down the ladder of involution step by step to Supermind, to Overmind, to the spiritual mind planes, and then it comes to Mind, then Life, then to Matter. In this integral philosophy matter is only an expression of the supraphysical. Although the supraphysical is first and matter is second, still matter and spirit have an equal value because it is the same supreme Sachchidananda who becomes matter.

For example, let us take a gold ring. Which is more real, the lump of gold that the goldsmith had or this ring?

They both have equal reality because the ring is made of the same gold. We cannot give this ring a lesser reality because it has a form. Perhaps, from the evolutionary point of view, this form is more useful in a way in that it gives an expression. For example, some people may have latent talents. Someone could write poetry, someone

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* can paint or be an architect. If it is lying latent and unexpressed then the world does not see the talent. It remains as a hidden potential within, only a possibility.

But if one expresses himself brings out that possibility into form and share it with the collectivity it affects in two ways. One is that the world itself enjoys and becomes richer by the art that has been expressed, by the person and the other is that he/himself feels unburdened because that which was there as a potential within comes out in a beautiful form. That is called self-expression, giving form to what is latent within. If we apply the same idea to Brahman, then Brahman too has the latent potential to manifest in all these wonderful myriad forms, and it too unloads or downloads his possibilities in becoming this world, this myriad manifestation.

And in this myriad manifestation itself there is a great joy. What the artist does in a painting or sculpture is an expression of joy; otherwise, there would only be a kind of passive Ananda. I may be quiet and passive and have an inner contentment, but when I express myself there is a tremendous fountain of joy that bursts forth. That is how this world is a fountain of delight, a pouring out of Brahman. All creativity takes place through this great verve of delight. This world is a kind of an overflow of the divine Delight. Therefore, this expression is not less real.

In fact, the Mother in one of her talks says that this universe in its evolutionary process is returning to the Divine and will give us the joy of reunion, which is much greater than the original Delight. On our own level we have experienced that when we meet a friend after a long time, there is a great joy in it. Similarly, when the

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soul returns to the Divine after its evolution, it has great delight. The joy of this reunion is more intense than the union that was before the separation. This is the secret of evolution.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo says, In fact, subjectivity and objectivity are not independent realities, they depend upon each other; they are the Being, through consciousness, looking at itself as subject on the

object and the same Being offering itself to its own consciousness as object to the subject...Indeed, we have no means of knowing the objective universe except by our subjective consciousness of which the physical senses themselves are instruments; as the world appears not only to that but in that, so it is to us. If we deny reality to the evidence of this universal witness for subjective or for supraphysical objectivities, there is no sufficient reason to concede reality to its evidence for physical objectivities...

Sri Aurobindo gives one little clarification and one more point. We have already seen that it is the subject which looks at the object and interprets it. Sri Aurobindo says that in fact this interpretation depends on one's personal consciousness. When I look at an object – for example this glass on my table – the normal scientific view is that light falls on the glass and then that light reflects in my eye, the eye formulates a picture and then my mind recollects this form and says, “it's a glass”. But from the Vedantic psychological view it is not the eye that sees, it is the consciousness which projects itself through the eye; the eye is only an instrument. For example, I may be looking at a thing but if my consciousness is

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* not behind my eye, I don't see it. It happens many times in our lives. My eyes may be open but I may not see anything. We have to put our consciousness behind the eye; then only the eye becomes the instrument of sight.

If we deny reality to this witness consciousness, then it becomes difficult to accept the reality of the objective existence.

He continues,

In each case understanding, discrimination, verification are necessary; but the subjective and the supraphysical must have another method of verification than that which we apply successfully to the physical and external objective.

This is one major argument that we should remember, that everything that we claim as truth should be verifiable. A scientist asks for a verifiable

method.

Similarly, a claim of reality for something subjective should be verifiable, and the yogi and the Rishi also accept that there must be verifiability of subjective claims. But what is to be verified and how?

What is physical should have a physical verifiability and what is non-physical should have a non-physical verifiability. This is where scientists commit an error.

What is non-physical cannot be brought under the scrutiny of physical verifiability. The yogi could give us the proof, but because we are speaking about something non-physical, the experiments also will be on the non-physical level. If one goes into meditation and does exactly what the yogi says, the experience of the soul will be fully verifiable. Only his instruments are different.

The yogi has his own methods. Even a scientist needs proper instruments. If we want to look at the mountains

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on the moon, we cannot use a microscope, we need a telescope! Similarly, we must use the right instruments to verify subjective claims. That is the basic thing we should keep in mind, otherwise, there will be an eternal quarrel between the scientist and the yogi.

Further,

...subjective experience cannot be referred to the evidence of the external senses; it has its own standards of seeing and its inner method of verification: so also supraphysical realities by their very nature cannot be referred to the judgment of the physical or sense mind except when they project themselves into the physical, and even then that judgment is often incompetent or subject to caution; they can only be verified by other senses and by a method of scrutiny and affirmation which is applicable to their own reality, their own nature.

Sri Aurobindo concludes that the supraphysical realities by their very nature cannot be referred to the judgment of the physical instruments. That is why the yogi gives us practice and training in order to experience the supraphysical realities. I once saw a program on TV

about the Chinese martial art Tai Chi. They harness energy for physical prowess, but it is a supraphysical not energy that one can physically observe or capture.

Scientists have questioned the veracity of this energy asking if it really exist. They tried filming it but could not catch the energy on the camera. But, as Sri Aurobindo tells us here, sometimes supraphysical realities project themselves into the physical. They in fact gave an example that the Tai Chi master gives a simple normal push to someone like we might give, and a healthy

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* person was swept back about 20 feet! Even if we push with all our might, we cannot push back a person by 15 or 20 feet! But because of this supraphysical Tai Chi force, he moved the opponent's body 20 feet back. When energy is projected into the physical in this manner we understand that there is a Tai Chi force. The Tai Chi master himself feels the force in his hands, but it is not visible. The argument is that subjective experiences cannot be subjected to evidence of external senses; the supraphysical has its own experiments by which it can be proven, but we should not insist it to be translated into the physical, even though sometimes it is possible.

Following the same trend, Sri Aurobindo next argues that the physical world is one order of reality, and the supraphysical is another order. He says, "There are different orders of reality; the objective and the physical is only one order".

Sri Aurobindo explains that the physical, objective reality is not something wrong or false; it is a reality, but it is only one level of reality. In Vedanta, we say that matter is Brahman, – *annam brahman*. Then we say that life is Brahman and mind is Brahman. These are all different orders of Reality,

one above the other. There is a hierarchy. We can claim that is the only absolute Reality.

Sri Aurobindo admits that matter is a Reality, but it is only one of the realities.

It is convincing to the physical or externalising mind because it is directly obvious to the senses, while of the subjective and the supraphysical that mind has no means of knowledge except from fragmentary signs and data... Our subjective movements and inner experiences are a domain of happenings as real as any

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outward physical happenings; but if the individual mind can know something of its own phenomena by direct experience, it is ignorant of what happens in the consciousness of others except by analogy with its own or such signs, data, inferences as its outward observation can give it. I am therefore inwardly real to myself, but the invisible life of others has only an indirect reality to me except in so far as it impinges on my own mind, life and senses.

Sri Aurobindo says that “our subjective movements and inner experiences are a domain as real as any outward physical happenings”. Now, arguing about the reality of the subjective worlds or the supraphysical worlds, he says human beings have emotions, get angry, have compassion and sympathy or anger I myself can know whether at this moment I am experiencing sympathy, but can someone else know what is going on within me?

Our own inner feelings we know we do not know about others. Such feelings are non-physical. Sri Aurobindo points out that the non-physical can be experienced by us within ourselves. That is the utmost we can do; we have no contact with these feelings within others. Still, there is a possibility that in the future when our consciousness enlarges that we could know what is happening with others. That is called knowledge by identity. But as of today our consciousness does not permit us to know and penetrate into the heart and minds of others. We only know about ourselves. Sri

Aurobindo says, I am therefore inwardly real to myself, but the invisible life of others has only an indirect reality to me except in so far as it impinges on my own mind, life...

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* I do not know if you have sympathy for me, but if you come and talk to me in a very soft and loving voice and use comforting words, then when your behavior and words affect my mind and thought, I can say, “this person has sympathy for me, he has a love for me”. Otherwise, left to myself, I don’t know. It is only if the other person expresses that sympathy and love and it touches my mind or heart that I can say, “I didn’t know that person had so much love for me, it is only now I come to know”.

Sri Aurobindo says that the subjective world within our own self can be known only by us; the objective world can be known by an interaction in the collective.

And then Sri Aurobindo concludes the paragraph, This is the limitation of the physical mind of man, and it creates in him a habit of delivering entirely only in the physical and of doubting or challenging all that does not come into accord with his own experience or his own scope of understanding or square with his own standard or sum of established knowledge.

He concludes by saying that this is the drawback of the human being at present. In the future there is the possibility that with the coming of the supramental consciousness the senses will be enhanced, and they will become more accurate and more powerful. We know that some animals can hear much better, can see much better, and can smell much better than humans – these abilities that we have lost in the human range may come back to us. Not only will these senses be restored, but they will be enhanced and multiplied; there will be other senses that develop in consonance with our greater consciousness.

This is something unique we need to understand. In his view, the physical changes itself and accommodates

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itself to suit the evolving consciousness. That means the instrumentation develops to suit the new consciousness.

For mental consciousness, the instrumentation that we have now is sufficient for the mind to express itself, but these five senses are not sufficient for the supermind to express itself. Nature will provide new senses and new instruments that are much better and sharper.

Long back in my childhood, we had only typewriters to express our thoughts but today we have computers that operate at greater speed, and every year the speed is increasing because somewhere our own mental consciousness itself is increasing rapidly. As the mental consciousness grows it finds newer instruments.

The computer is not like a sense, it is true, but it is an instrument of the present human consciousness.

Imagine tomorrow when the human consciousness develops manifold, even the present computer will not be an adequate instrument. We will need not only supercomputers, but new instruments of senses in the human being. This is the law of evolution, nature changes the physical to suit the innate consciousness; – that has been the whole evolutionary process.

Just to expand this idea a little further, when the consciousness of the supermind comes, the body will also become transformed automatically. We may say that the supermind has already come, but it has not yet really established itself on earth; the full Supermind has not yet manifested. Millions of years ago when the human animal did not yet have a mind and had only the rudiments of mental consciousness, the physical body was huge and bulky with hair all over and the head resembled that of the Chimpanzee. As the mental

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness developed, the physical also became more and more refined. This refinement will continue till the

supramental species comes, and it will continue-till the body becomes luminous.

Sri Aurobindo through his Tapasya and yoga has only hastened this evolutionary process; he has not brought in something new outside the plan of Nature. He follows Nature's evolutionary pattern and only giving it a kind of push. Otherwise, left to itself mankind perhaps after thousands of years would have brought about this new consciousness and new body, but now it will happen much earlier thanks to Sri Aurobindo's efforts. The basic logic is that the body always responds to consciousness.

The higher the consciousness, the better the body. It will become better in the sense of becoming more luminous; it will, in fact, become immortal. The body must become not only luminous but has to become immortal to adequately suit the consciousness of the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

The ego-centric attitude has in recent times been elevated into a valid standard of knowledge; it has been implicitly or explicitly held as an axiom that all truth must be referred to the judgment of the personal mind, reason and experience of every man or else it must be verified or at any rate verifiable by a common or universal experience in order to be valid.

But obviously this is a false standard of reality and of knowledge, since this means the sovereignty of the normal or average mind and its limited capacity and experience, the exclusion of what is super normal or beyond the average of intelligence.

Nowadays, everything that is to be accepted as "truth

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must be referred to the judgment of the personal mind and reason and experience of every man". This is a fallacy. And then we add that it should be useful and understandable to everyone. This is one of the complaints against Sri Aurobindo, that many people cannot understand him. Many people expect that Sri Aurobindo should have been approachable to the

most ordinary person. He says that is a fallacy, a false standard of reality and knowledge. It is also ego-centric. Why must the higher spiritual truth be brought down to the doorstep of every man who may or may not want it, who may be trained or not trained, whose mind may be capacitated or not capacitated? He says that “this ego-centric attitude has in recent times been elevated into a valid standard of knowledge”. People say if I don’t understand Sri Aurobindo that means Sri Aurobindo is “no good”, for me at least. This is ego-centric. Everybody wants to look at things from his personal angle. But it may be asked is our mind developed enough to understand *The Life Divine*? Have we made efforts to rise higher in our consciousness to suit the purpose? Perhaps it is a commercial thing, because now every TV and every computer has come down to the level of the common man so that they can use them! Matter can come down to the common level, though even there not everyone knows what a computer is. But that is the aim. But supraphysical things, spiritual things, cannot be judged by the common level of mental consciousness. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that this is obviously a false standard of reality and knowledge.

In its extreme, this claim of the individual to be the judge of everything is an egoistic illusion, a

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* superstition of the physical mind, in the mass a gross and vulgar error.

We know that there are teachings of some spiritual masters which are put in a simple manner so that every common person, the mass mind can understand them.

But Sri Aurobindo says that would be vulgarising the spiritual consciousness, commercialising the spiritual truths. Today a lot of religions get commercialised, but it is not that the people involved are really interested in taking spirituality to the people; more often they are interested in getting money from them. Sri Aurobindo says that is a “vulgar error”. If one wants to understand something higher, he has to rise to that higher level.

The higher will not be brought down to our doorstep at the lower level. This kind of a judgment, he says, is “an egoistic illusion”.

We cannot bring down Sri Aurobindo to the level of the common man and try to appease or please his mind.

That is one thing that I am personally very careful about.

I try to keep closer to the text without mixing my own ideas in it. To tamper it down to the common feeling, to the common understanding is a vulgar, “egoistic illusion”.

He calls it “a superstition of the physical mind” – a beautiful phrase! The physical mind thinks that it should be able to understand, but everything in life is not meant to be received on the same mundane level.

The truth behind it is that each man has to think for himself, know for himself according to his capacity, but his judgment can be valid only on condition that he is ready to learn and open always to a larger knowledge.

These days we talk about human rights! Well, each

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person has the right to read Sri Aurobindo and judge him, but “on condition that he is ready to learn and open always to a larger knowledge.” If we come with a closed mind to Sri Aurobindo, we will not understand.

It is reasoned that to depart from the physical standard and the principle of personal or universal verification will lead to gross delusions and the admission of unverified truth and subjective fantasy into the realm of knowledge. But error and delusion and the introduction of personality and one’s own subjectivity into the pursuit of knowledge are always present, and the physical or objective standards and methods do not exclude them. The probability of error is no reason for refusing to attempt discovery, and subjective discovery must be pursued by a subjective method of enquiry, observation and verification; research into the supraphysical must evolve, accept and test an appropriate means and methods other than those by

which one examines the constituents of physical objects and the processes of Energy in material Nature.

This concluding sentence is perhaps the most wonderful one because Sri Aurobindo has done this himself. He says “subjective discovery must be pursued by a subjective method of enquiry, observation and verification” . Sri Aurobindo has done such a methodical enquiry himself through long years of tapasya that has been recorded in his personal yogic diary called the *Record of Yoga*.

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Sri Aurobindo was having subjective experiences during 1910-1918 which were noted in *Record of*

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*Deliberations on The Life Divine Yoga*. But he found a method of verification and used it repeatedly. He would observe the movements of birds, he would watch the running of the ants and then he examined whether what he foresaw in his inner experiences was confirmed by their movements outside.

For example, whether the ant would go left or right.

He was making very small experiments because he was living in a single room, he didn't have a laboratory.

Whatever view nature provided him through the window he used for his experiments. He says here that subjective discovery must be pursued by a subjective method of enquiry, and this was the *raison-d'etre* of the *Record of Yoga*. He says,

...research into the supraphysical must evolve, accept and test an appropriate means and methods other than those by which one examines the constituents of physical objects and processes of Energy in material Nature.

Sri Aurobindo was a yogi-scientist who during 1910-1918 tested and evolved methods of subjective enquiry.

Today if any yogi or sadhak wants to achieve what Sri Aurobindo achieved he can refer to Sri Aurobindo notes and letters and verify his own experience. Like a scientist would say “this is my formula for making an atomic bomb”, Sri Aurobindo says, “if you want to achieve a yogic consciousness, these are the formulas and these are the experiments”. “If you can do them, you will find the same success, if not at the same speed”. Next, he says,

To refuse to enquire upon any general ground preconceived and *a priori* is an obscurantism as prejudicial to the extension of knowledge as the

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religious obscurantism which opposed in Europe the extension of scientific discovery.

This is his verdict on the scientist who will not agree even on a rational basis that subjective things should have or could have a subjective methodology. For answering objective questions there is an objective methodology, so far as subjective questions are concerned there should be a subjective methodology. If the scientist or the materialist does not agree to this proposal, then that person is as much an obscurantist as the religious people who oppose Science. In the early stages of Science it was much opposed by religious leaders. It is only in the last couple of centuries that Science has taken over our lives and beliefs. In its beginning, religious leaders were obscurantists and today, Sri Aurobindo says, the scientist is the obscurantist because he has closed his mind to other paths of knowledge.

The greatest inner discoveries, the experience of self-being, the cosmic consciousness, the inner calm of the liberated spirit, the direct effect of mind upon mind, the knowledge of things by consciousness in direct contact with other consciousness or with its objects, most spiritual experiences of any value, cannot be brought before the tribunal of the common mentality which has no experience of these things and takes its

own absence or incapacity of experience as a proof of their invalidity or their non-existence.

Sri Aurobindo is pretty strong against these scientists and the materialists who say that “these subjective experiences cannot be brought before the tribunal of the common mentality”. Scientists do not accept that there can be knowledge by the direct contact of consciousness,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* or that there is a universal will or intelligence. If we talk to the common person about spirituality, he may say, “there is no soul, only what I can see is the truth”.

Scientists will say that such things are non-acceptable because they cannot be judged by the common mind.

As Sri Aurobindo argued before, the common man can become spiritual but only if he has an open mind and is ready to take up the process of spiritual endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo says,

Physical truth or formulas, generalisations, discoveries founded upon physical observation can be so referred, but even there a training of capacity is needed before one can truly understand and judge...

An intelligent person who has read *The Life Divine* and looked into Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual thought has a mind that is a little trained and is in a somewhat better position to judge spiritual things, but a person who is completely unexposed to any spiritual thought has no right to judge the supraphysical.

All reality, all experience must indeed, to be held as true, be capable of verification by a same or similar experience; so, in fact, all men can have a spiritual experience and can follow it out and verify it in themselves, but only when they have acquired the capacity or can follow the inner methods by which that experience and verification are made possible.

We have already talked about this, that we can acquire the spiritual capacity only if we are ready to follow the inner methods suited to it. It is so clear and simple, and yet people do not understand this and it is the reason why people are so sceptical about spiritual experiences.

To have these inner experiences consistently one has to

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follow an inner methodology, just as for outer forms of knowledge one must follow an outer methodology! If people would accept this basic statement, things would be much easier.

It is of supreme importance for the human spirit to be free to sound the depths of inner or subliminal reality, of spiritual and of what is still superconscient reality, and not to immure itself in the physical mind and its narrow domain of objective external solidities; for in that way alone can there come liberation from the Ignorance in which our mentality dwells and a release into a complete consciousness, a true and integral self-realisation and self-knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo concludes this point by saying that it is very important that the human spirit and the human mind remain open and flexible. That is perhaps one of the signs of the development of the mind. One may be a great biologist, a great allopathic doctor or a great scientist and yet if we close his mind and are stuck in the narrow domain of objective external solidities, then he may be great in his field, but from a spiritual perspective, his mind is still narrow. One needs to be open enough to recognise other possibilities of knowledge.

For sadhana it is important to accept other viewpoints.

If we say, "I don't experience my soul so how can there be anything supraphysical?" Our mind will get bogged down, as Sri Aurobindo says, in "external solidities". For sadhana one needs to be open to other truths so that when we go within and come across new experiences we are able to accept and realise them. Otherwise, our inner and subliminal experiences

may not come to us or even if they come we would not realise or accept them.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo explains further,

An integral knowledge demands an exploration, an unveiling of all the possible domains of consciousness and experience. For there are subjective domains of our being which lie behind the obvious surface; these have to be fathomed and whatever is ascertained must be admitted within the scope of the total reality. An inner range of spiritual experience is one very great domain of human consciousness; it has to be entered into up to its deepest depths and its vastest reaches.

The supraphysical is as real as the physical; to know it is part of a complete knowledge. The knowledge of the supraphysical has been associated with mysticism and occultism, and occultism has been banned as a superstition and a fantastic error.

As a yogi, Sri Aurobindo discovered that there are many ranges and domains of consciousness. Because we live in just the physical consciousness, we see only the physical world as the reality, but if we explore our consciousness we will discover that there are other levels and ranges of consciousness beyond the physical.

By going within, we can experience our subliminal consciousness. Both the wider horizontal range of consciousness and the higher and lower vertical levels of consciousness are wonderfully explained in *Savitri*. It is an ideal book for those who get into the 'adventure of consciousness'. There are many levels of consciousness which are as real as the physical.

We have become blind because of this scientific and materialistic outlook and technology that constantly brings us new material things. We have a mobile phone and can talk to people in America and can even fly

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there in a few hours. Due to technology our mental consciousness is getting narrower and bogged down in external, objective solidities. What we can do today with our mobile phones and internet, the Vedic Rishis did long ago without any need for a physical medium.

They could communicate and travel to other places in the subtle physical dimension and could know what was happening even in the physical.

Sri Aurobindo says that integral knowledge is knowledge of this world and the Absolute and all that is in between. To put it in a different manner, we can say that integral knowledge is knowledge of the earth, of the heavens and the transcendent. These three ranges of knowledge come together as integral knowledge. If we concentrate on the earth, it is not integral knowledge. If we concentrate only on the transcendent, it is incomplete knowledge. If we think only of the heavens in between, it is insufficient knowledge. Therefore, if we want integral knowledge, then we have to have knowledge of the supraphysical also.

Normally, when we think of the worlds beyond, immediately we think of mysticism and occultism.

Occultism, because of its bad practices, like black magic, has a bad reputation and is banned as a superstition and a fanatic error. Today most scientists and people with a western-minded would not believe in anything that is occult. But Sri Aurobindo says very clearly that it is a part of existence:

Occult is a part of existence; a true occultism means no more than a research into supraphysical realities and unveiling of the hidden laws of being and Nature, of all that is not obvious on the surface.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Look at this definition – it is beautiful! “Occultism is an unveiling of the hidden laws of being and Nature”. The hidden laws of meaning are those levels of being that are beyond the physical and their laws. In a later sentence, he says that even science is a kind of occultism because science is discovering and unveiling the secret

laws of nature. It has unveiled many secrets of Nature if we did not know and that we cannot see with our naked eyes.

But they have made deep studies and have seen and shown us and explained the secrets of Nature. So can we not call Science occultism? And if science can be called occultism and if it is accepted, why not other methods that look into the secrets of our being?

In the spiritual domain, which is occult to the surface mind in so far as it passes beyond normal and enters into supernormal experience, there is possible not only the discovery of the self and spirit, but the discovery of the uplifting, informing and guiding light of spiritual consciousness and the power of the spirit... Science itself is in its own way an occultism; for it brings to light the formulas which Nature has hidden and it uses its knowledge to set free operations of her energies which she has not included in her ordinary operations and to organise and place at the service of man her occult powers and processes, a vast system of physical magic...

We have been biased against occultism, but if an uneducated person from a remote village comes into this room and I flip a switch and he sees all the ten lights turn on, what would he feel? That it is magic that enables you a button to light up a room. For us it is not magic; there is electricity going through a wire to the bulb. We

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know the process, so for us it is not magic; but for the villager it may look like magic. Similarly, for a common person, if we say that occult forces are influencing human beings, they may say that it is magic, but for a yogi who knows the process, it is not so. We know that the Mother could see little beings from the vital world playing havoc with the ship she was on creating huge waves in the sea but for the captain of the ship it was simply a big storm.

For the Mother, it was not so. It was some vital beings playing mischief. It all depends on our knowledge of the supraphysical dimensions of existence. Therefore, occultism is a kind of a science which you can master.

There are many sadhus in India who can occultly produce gold rings. It is an occult science; it has nothing to do with spirituality. It is just like I flipped the switch and turned on the lights. Occultism has nothing to do with spirituality; it is a practice, a science which can be learnt and mastered.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

It may even be found that a supraphysical knowledge is necessary for the completion of physical knowledge, because the processes of physical Nature have behind them a supraphysical factor, a power and action mental, vital or spiritual which is not tangible to any outer means of knowledge.

An integral knowledge must have supraphysical well as physical knowledge because the former completes the latter. Sri Aurobindo continues,

All instance on the sole or the fundamental validity of the objective real takes its stand on the sense of the basic reality of Matter. But it is now evident

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* that Matter is by no means fundamentally real; it is structure of Energy...

This is an additional argument to counter the argument that matter alone is real. First he argued that there is a subjective reality also and that the reality of matter is only one level, one order of reality. Then he says that subjective reality includes the reality of the occult, that it is also real. Now he makes another point – we think Matter is a reality, but matter is not really real in the way we think it to be because matter is a form of energy.

That is what science tells us, and it is what Sri Aurobindo wrote long back in the early twentieth century. He says,

...it is becoming even a little doubtful whether the acts and creations of this Energy itself are explicable except as the motions of power of a secret Mind or Consciousness of which its processes and steps of structure are the formulas. It is therefore no longer possible to take Matter as the sole reality.

Even the scientist's conviction that matter is a reality is false because matter per se does not exist; it is a formation or formula of energy. The matter is energy condensed.

Shall we not say that Matter is not the ultimate reality, but energy is the reality? The scientist himself has pushed the border of science closer to spirituality by discovering that Matter is energy. And to take it one more step, he says that it even appears that this energy is the energy of consciousness. This in fact is what science is leading to with its quantum mechanics, though it is not quite accepted yet.

Sri Aurobindo says,

The material interpretation of existence was the result of an exclusive concentration, a preoccupation

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with one movement of Existence, and such an exclusive concentration has its utility and is therefore permissible; in recent times it has justified itself by the many immense and the innumerable minute discoveries of physical Science. But a solution of the whole problem of existence cannot be based on an exclusive one-sided knowledge; we must know not only what Matter is and what are its processes, but what mind and life are and what are their processes...

In the spiritual domain, we have the formula of Sat, Chit, Tapas Ananda. If we speak of Sat, it includes Chit, and if we speak of Chit, it includes Tapas, and out of Tapas, comes Ananda. This fourfold formula is indivisible. That means material existence is energy, Sat is Tapas. The moment we say that Matter is Tapas or Energy, it is but a step away from saying that Matter also is Chit or Consciousness, because Chit and Tapas are indivisible and inseparable. Science has told us that Matter is Tapas or energy, and spirituality says that Matter is also Chit, consciousness, because Chit and Tapas always go together. Chit-Tapas means the force of Consciousness. Force has no independent existence from consciousness, it is always the force 'of' Consciousness.

If I push this chair, I apply energy, but this energy is going from my consciousness, from my mental will, from my being, to my body. This force does not exist independently, it is always attached to the consciousness. And the next step is that consciousness is the consciousness of being. Consciousness also cannot be completely independent, it is dependent on existence, it is consciousness of Sat. I can say it is my consciousness, the consciousness belongs to me, the being. Consciousness

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* always belongs to someone or something. What we are saying is that Matter contains Sat and Chit and Tapas.

Spirituality has already declared the inner truth, but science is yet to discover it.

We can imagine what this means for the potentiality of Matter. With our understanding of Matter as energy, we can produce and utilize the energy of out of matter.

But if we could harness consciousness in matter, then a new evolution itself would begin. Today the world is overflowing with energy due to technological advancements. But, when we realise that Matter is consciousness, our whole way of dealing with it will change. The matter will also evolve to a new level, where it will not be technology that rules Matter, but the consciousness that takes control of it. Matter itself will bring forth consciousness just as it has now brought out Tapas. In future the supramental consciousness will emerge from Matter. When he says that the supermind will emerge, it is not simply a personal experience or wishful thinking, it is the logical process of nature's evolution. Today matter has revealed tremendous forms of energy, tomorrow the same matter will reveal a new consciousness. All is embedded in Matter. From Matter came out life, from Life was born Mind, and from Mind will emerge Supermind, the new consciousness. Matter will remove another curtain and reveal the consciousness of Supermind. Imagine what the future yogi-scientist will do! I am saying yogi-scientist because the scientist deals with energy, and the yogi deals with consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo the yogi-scientist is dealing with a new consciousness and its power. The supramental is a new consciousness with new power and it will have a

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transformative effect on Matter. This is the new field that opens up once we understand this formula.

Coming back to the text, we see that matter is not what it seems to be; it is something more. But just as we have found this out about the matter, Sri Aurobindo says we have to find out the deeper truths of life and mind.

Now the whole world is concentrating on the matter, which is good in a way because we are pressing on the matter to reveal itself. But we also have to go on to the psychological life plane. Now, the matter is dominating life, but when there is a concentration on the life plane and we bring out its greater possibilities the world will be completely changed. There will be new discoveries on the life level, and psychology will become predominant.

Today we have medicines and technology but tomorrow it will be psychology, which also means yoga because, as Sri Aurobindo says, yoga is practical psychology. More and more people will take to yoga, not only hatha yoga, but the other forms of yoga. Remarkable changes will come into society.

Similarly, the secrets of the mind have to be discovered.

What we have now are only a few flash-points, some glimpses of the mind, but its full possibilities have not yet been explored. You may say that the modern mind is tremendously developed, but it is developed mainly in its connection with life and matter. When the mind changes its focus and concentrates on the levels beyond itself that will bring its higher achievements. Through yoga, the mind will focus more on the upward levels and discover the higher planes of consciousness. That would bring the next evolutionary step.

Sri Aurobindo here describes the march of human

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* consciousness – how it will change from our focus on the matter to a focus on life. It's not going to happen too soon. Science and technology have been developing rapidly since the past couple of centuries, and it is only now that psychology is becoming popular all over the world. Thanks to Freud and some other early psychologists that it has developed to a level where in the western world we have Ken Wilber who is turning to the levels beyond the mind. What Sri Aurobindo had written hundred years back is now coming into the modern western mind. Psychology is slowly turning toward Sri Aurobindo's thoughts knowingly or unknowingly. The important thing is that the human mind is now turning itself toward a higher consciousness.

Having said that, we now come to the conclusion of this argument. Sri Aurobindo says, An integral knowledge then must be a knowledge of the truth of all sides of existence both separately and in the relation of each to all and the relation of all to the truth of the Spirit... All that is necessary is to carry the inquiry to its end and test the highest and ultimate levels of experience.

Sri Aurobindo concludes that these different levels of enquiry of matter, life, and mind each have their validity but let us not stop short in this enquiry; each goes deeper and when we go deeper we will find other higher levels.

Now we come to the next point:

But since it is from the Ignorance that we proceed to the Knowledge, we have had first to discover the secret nature and full extent of the Ignorance.

This is interesting because first of all, it is important to

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know what we are. We have seen that matter is energy, but when we come to the level of life we are in full ignorance. What do we mean by ignorance? It is not non-knowledge, it is partial knowledge.

Here Sri Aurobindo gives us seven different levels of ignorance. In an earlier chapter, he has discussed this at a greater length, so here he just discusses it in one single paragraph. I will read out just the brief descriptions of these seven types of ignorance. The first he calls the original ignorance. He says,

We are ignorant of the Absolute which is the source of all being and becoming; we take partial facts of being, temporal relations of the becoming for the whole truth of existence, —that is the first, the original ignorance.

The original ignorance is ignorance of the supreme Reality. We have no idea of what the supreme Reality is.

Perhaps in the Christian terminology it would be called the original sin; the sin is that we are separated from the Divine, from our own parents.

The second ignorance is called cosmic ignorance. He says,

We are ignorant of the spaceless, timeless, immobile and immutable Self, we take the constant mobility and mutation of the cosmic becoming in Time and Space for the whole truth of existence The original ignorance is ignorance of the transcendent Self, and the second one is the ignorance of the cosmic or universal Self.

The third ignorance is called egoistic ignorance. He says,

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...we are ignorant of our universal self, the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, our infinite unity with all being and becoming; we take our limited egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality for our true self and regard everything other than that as not-self...

We think our own egoistic being to be our real self, and even that our mind, vital and body is our real self.

The rest we don't know and don't care about. We are so ignorant that we think our true self is our own mind which we don't know much about, our own feelings which we cannot control, and our own body whose operations we hardly understand.

Then we have a fourth ignorance, the temporal ignorance:

We are ignorant of our eternal becoming in Time; we take this little life in a small span of Time, in a petty field of Space, for our beginning, our middle and our end...

People tend to think that they exist only for this one brief life, they do not believe that they exist eternally, that they have had hundreds of thousands of lives. This is called temporal ignorance.

And then we have what Sri Aurobindo calls psychological ignorance:

Even within this brief temporal becoming we are ignorant of our large and complex being, of that in us which is superconscient, subconscient, intraconscient, circumconscient to our surface becoming...

We do not know our entire being, only its surface; we

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do not know the higher and lower inner and surrounding parts of our complete being.

And then we have another ignorance called the constitutional ignorance:

We are ignorant of the true constitution of our becoming; we take the mind or life or body or any two of these or all three for our true principle or the whole account of what we are, losing sight of that which constitutes them and determines by its occult presence...

We have already mentioned psychological ignorance, which means we don't know our inner and wider and higher being; but the constitutional ignorance is that we don't even know our outer personality because it is

actually an instrument and outer expression of the soul; it is not complete in itself.

And then the last one, the seventh, is the practical ignorance:

As a result of all these ignorances, we miss the true knowledge, government and enjoyment of our life in the world; we are ignorant in our thought, will, sensations, actions, return wrong or imperfect responses...

You can imagine that being subject to the six previous ignorances, our life would be full of errors, misjudgments, problems, suffering and sorrow; that is practical ignorance. This last one is bound to be there because we have so many layers of ignorance, and therefore we suffer. We have wrong and imperfect striving and responses, failures, pains, pleasures, sins, stumblings, etc. What are we to do about all this?

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Our conception of the Ignorance will necessarily determine our conception of the Knowledge and determine, therefore, since our life is the Ignorance at once denying and seeking after the Knowledge, the goal of human effort and the aim of the cosmic endeavour.

Actually, here Sri Aurobindo is already introducing the next chapter. Once we know our limits, and what we are ignorant of, we can consciously try to break down these barriers of ignorance and that will bring the knowledge we seek. Understanding the extensiveness of our ignorance is not debilitating, it is a condition to overcome and attain knowledge:

Integral knowledge will then mean the cancelling the sevenfold Ignorance by the discovery of what it misses and ignores, a sevenfold self-revelation within our consciousness...

How do you break away from this sevenfold ignorance?

By finding sevenfold knowledge. For this we have to go through the whole list again in reverse. The original ignorance, the ignorance of the supreme

Reality must be converted into knowing our supreme Self. Similarly, our cosmic ignorance must be reversed by realising the cosmic Being. Each of the ignorances must be overturned in the same manner. The solutions are found in the problems themselves.

However, he clarifies that the solution is not simple: But this is not an intellectual knowledge, which can be learned and completed in our present mould of consciousness... The integral knowledge, then, can only come by an evolution of our being and our nature...

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It is important to remember that integral knowledge cannot be learned and completed in our present mould of consciousness, it must be an experience, a becoming, a change of consciousness, a change of being.

This brings in the evolutionary character of the Becoming and the fact that our mental ignorance is only a stage in our evolution. The integral knowledge, then, can only come by an evolution of our being and our nature, and that would seem to signify a slow process in Time such as has accompanied the other evolutionary transformations... The integral knowledge, since it must result from a change of consciousness, can be gained by a process in which our will and endeavour have a part, in which they can discover and apply their own steps and method: its growth in us can proceed by a conscious self-transformation.

It is here that yoga comes in. This sevenfold ignorance can be eradicated by the sevenfold knowledge, but it will take a long evolutionary process, it cannot be done so quickly. One person here and there can go beyond this sevenfold ignorance, but those are instances of great yogis. For humanity to go beyond this sevenfold ignorance it will take a natural evolutionary process. It is the gnostic being, the supramental being who alone, will naturally be beyond this sevenfold ignorance, but until then great sadhaks, great yogis can individually achieve it. On the collective level of humanity it will involve a process of evolution.

It is necessary then to see what is likely to be the principle of this new process of evolution and what are the movements of the integral knowledge

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* must necessarily emerge in it,—or, in other words, what is the nature of the consciousness that must be the base of the life divine and how that life may be expected to be formed or to form itself, to materialise or, as one might say, to “realise.”

Now, to conclude, the realisation of the integral knowledge, the integral Reality requires an integral transformation. An individual realisation is possible through yoga; but for the collective of human beings to do this will require the evolution of humanity leading to the establishment of a race of supramental beings. That will require time and a process. The establishment of such a collectivity is the realisation of the life divine.

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# Lecture Notes

## I. Introduction

a) Ignorance, being only a limitation of knowledge and not a negation of knowledge shuts us to our true self and to the whole nature of things. A breaking down of the limitation and a recovery of the essential reality is the inner turn towards knowledge.

b) In the integral self-knowledge there is also the world knowledge. This will lead us to the integral knowledge which is there veiled in our deeper self.

c) The integral spiritual consciousness links the highest to the lowest through all the mediating terms. Because of this comprehensive vision, it does not abolish any status of existence and, on the contrary, reveals to its true significance.

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## II. Integral Reality

a) An integral knowledge presupposes an integral Reality.

b) The integral Reality is the Absolute Brahman who being the same time the reality of the individual and that of the cosmos, exceeds both of them.

c) The Absolute Brahman is unattainable to the human mind and speech but can correspond to truth of supreme experience in the spiritual consciousness.

## III. The unity and reality of all the manifestations ...

a) The absolutist view of reality is only one side of Vedantic thought. We find another corollary experience concept which affirms the cosmic self as well as the individual self.

b) The Isha Upanishad insists on the reality and unity of the apparently opposite manifestations of the Brahman. It affirms the knowledge that excludes neither the self nor its creations. It concludes that to live in cosmic Ignorance is blindness, but to confine oneself in exclusive absolutism of knowledge is also blindness. It is this complete knowledge that can build the foundations of *The Life Divine*.

c) Integral Truth is attained neither by a supreme affirmation nor by a supreme negation: it is through both that we can arrive at the Absolute.

#### IV. Two opposing views

a) One experience describes the extreme view that the Absolute as a reality is void of all relations and determinations. This view leads to the falsity

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of the world of relativities and results in escaping from these inferior creations.

b) The second view describes the Absolute as beyond any relations, it is neither bound to manifest a cosmos of relations nor is it bound not to manifest.

c) Our mental consciousness tends towards cessation when it goes beyond its limits. It loses all hold on its former contents. We impute to Brahman a corresponding inability. This is the main error of the human mind. The mind's ways of self-escape need not be applied to the Absolute which has no need for self-escape.

#### V. Dualism

a) By bringing into the two terms—the One and the Many, the Infinite and the finite Spirit and Matter, a conflict of the higher and the lower, of knowledge and ignorance, the human mind brings in an ultimate irreconcilability.

b) This leads to a fixed opposition and the human mind seeks only the Eternal and rejects the lower as false values, ignorance and a self-bewilderment of the soul in Nature.

c) But in integral philosophy, such opposition of dualism is not accepted. The dualities are taken as complements of each other; two faces of the one Reality. And the integral knowledge of Brahman is consciousness in possession of both together.

d) Brahman is one not only beyond manifestation but in the multitude of the manifestation or the infinite self-variation of the cosmos.

e) Brahman is capable of outpouring its energies in multiplicity without losing its oneness. Similarly, multiplicity finds its justification and meaning

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in Brahman. Brahman, while possessing his delight of limitless being, finds also the joy in the infinite—self definition in the universe.

f) Matter is the form and body of the Spirit.

g) Even the apparent Inconscience holds in itself the superconscient and reveals it in Time through the slow and deliberate delight of Nature.

## VI. Subjective view of Reality

a) Subjective Reality: They believe that all that exists is a subjective creation of Mind and that the idea of an objective reality self-existent is an illusion. The essence of the objective existence depends on the perception of the seer.

b) Denial of all Existence: This view emphasises that even the consciousness that constructs the objects is itself a flux of perceptions which gives us a false impression of continuity where there is none. This leads to the view that there is neither the self-conscious existence nor the objects that constitute the movement of existence.

c) The above view is valid only if we posit that our surface-mind is the whole consciousness and the only reality. But there is a greater and deeper consciousness, the Truth-Consciousness, to which both the subjective and objective are authentic to its existence and therefore real.

d) If the constructing Mind or Consciousness is the sole reality, then all objects are purely subjective—

structural, that is, they exist by and dissolve into the Consciousness. That means that the Consciousness itself must have an Existence or a Substance out of which it makes its objective structures; otherwise it is an unreality.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* e) There is no objective reality independent of Consciousness but at the same time the reality of things is something that is within them and is independent of the interpretation given by Mind.

They are in essence creations of a Consciousness whose substance is the substance of Being and is therefore real.

i. The human Mind and language perceive all things as symbols. The infinity of existence or non-existence, the Inconscient or the Superconscient, etc., are seen as symbols.

But, in reality, each form is there because it is an expression of some power of that which inhabits it.

ii. Our mind tries to capture this inner significance but as its capacity is only of a percipient and interpreter, it cannot fathom the inner meaning.

## VII. Objective Reality

a) This view believes in the idea that physical existence is the only existence and that all else—

like Consciousness and Mind and Soul or Spirit—

are only an outcome of the physical energy in its cosmic action.

b) This view is too short-sighted and cannot be accepted. On the contrary, the objective world is only an outward form of becoming of the Spirit. 1

he subjective and objective are two sides of Reality necessary and of equal value.

c) Subjectivity and objectivity are not independent realities, they depend upon each other. We can know the objective universe only by the subjective consciousness of which the physical senses themselves are instruments.

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If we deny the existence of subjective or supraphysical objects of consciousness, then the objective reality has also every chance of being unreal. They have to be verified by other means than the physical.

VIII. The physical world as one order of Reality a) Our normal human mind accepts that to be real which is directly obvious to the senses. It refuses to accept all other things that do not conform to its parameters of reality.

b) At most, the individual mind acknowledges something of its own phenomena, but it cannot know the consciousness of others, or the supraphysical realities.

c) This ego-centric attitude has now become the standard of knowledge. This claim of the individual to be the judge of everything is an egoistic illusion.

d) Research into the supraphysical must evolve appropriate means for enquiry, observation and verification. The inner spiritual experiences and the inner discoveries cannot be judged by the common mentality which has no experience of these realms. Therefore, because of its incapacity to get valid proof on its own level, it dismisses the supraphysical as invalid or non-existent.

e) It is important for the human spirit not to be grounded in the physical mind, for, in that way alone can there come liberation from Ignorance.

IX. The Supraphysical as another order of Reality a) The supraphysical is as real as the physical; to know it is part of complete knowledge. This

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* knowledge is associated with mysticism and occultism and has been banned as a superstition.

b) But occultism is only an unveiling of the hidden laws of being and Nature, of all that is not obvious on the surface. In this way, even science itself is in its own way occultism.

c) The supraphysical knowledge is necessary to complete physical knowledge.

X. Exclusive focus on one aspect of Reality a) Exclusive focus on Matter as the basic reality has been the basis of objective realism. But, is Mater itself real? Is it not just a structure of Energy? And is Energy not a power of Consciousness?

b) Material interpretation of existence was useful at a point of evolution, and it brought out minute discoveries of physical science. But, it must take into account the processes of Mind and Life.

c) At the same time, a focus on Mind and Life could reveal the subliminal nature of Man but that too is insufficient without the subliminal processes.

d) An exclusive concentration on Spirit is also not an integral and valid solution of the truth of cosmic and individual existence.

e) An integral knowledge must then be a knowledge of the truth of all sides of existence.

Our present state is one of Ignorance and a many-sided seeking for the Reality “That being known all will be known ...”

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### XI. Levels of Ignorance

The Original Ignorance:

Ignorance of the Supreme Reality.

The Cosmic Ignorance:

Ignorance of the Cosmic Self.

The Egoistic Ignorance:

Mistakes our surface nature to be our true self and regards all else as not self.

The Temporal Ignorance:

Ignorance of our eternal becoming in Time.

The Psychological Ignorance: Ignorance for our complex being.

The Constitutional Ignorance: Ignorance of what is really behind our mind-life-body complex.

The Practical Ignorance:

Ignorance of thoughts, emotion,

etc., and wander in a image of

errors and desires.

### XII. Integral Knowledge

a) Integral knowledge is the cancelling of the sevenfold ignorance by the discovery of the sevenfold self-revelation within our consciousness.

b) This integral knowledge can come only by an evolution of our being and our nature. Its growth in us can proceed by a conscious self-transformation.

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## **Chapter – XVI**

### **The Integral Knowledge and the Aim of Life; Four Theories of Existence**

This chapter, “The Integral Knowledge and the Aim of Life; Four Theories of Existence”, is almost a continuation of the ideas of the previous chapter. The chapters’ titles bear the term “The Integral Knowledge”.

Sri Aurobindo will now relate this integral knowledge to life: how does it influence and affects our life? That is why he has put “the Aim of Life” in the title. He re-explains some of the ideas presented in the earlier chapter in a new context. The second part of this chapter which discusses the four theories of existence is a more practical part of the chapter in that it examines how philosophy per se influences our pattern of thinking and feeling and even our behaviour. We may not be very conscious of the philosophy that guides our life, but all of us, consciously or unconsciously, follow some philosophical pattern, and there is some philosophical basis behind our beliefs. So these are the two different parts of this chapter; the first part is focused on the integral knowledge and the aim of life, and the second part discusses four fundamental theories of existence that may guide our behaviour.

Let’s start with the opening paragraph. Sri Aurobindo says,

But before we examine the principles and process of the evolutionary ascent of Consciousness, it is necessary to restate what our theory of integral knowledge affirms as fundamental truths of the Reality and its manifestation and what it admits as

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effectual sides and dynamic aspects but is unable to accept as sufficient for a total explanation of existence and the universe.

Sri Aurobindo restates the theory of integral knowledge and relates it to life. What are those fundamental principles, the fundamental truths of the Reality affirmed by the integral knowledge? He will review this in the first three paragraphs, and he will do that with a new purpose, not to look at these fundamental truths from the metaphysical point of view, but from the angle of their relation to life.

In the following line, Sri Aurobindo says, For truth of knowledge must base truth of life and determine the aim of life; the evolutionary process itself is the development of a Truth of existence concealed here in an original Inconscience and brought out from it by an emerging Consciousness which rises from gradation to gradation of its self-unfolding until it can manifest in itself the integral reality of things and a total self-knowledge. On the nature of that Truth from which it starts and which it has to manifest must depend the course of the evolutionary development,—the steps of its process and their significance.

He restates some of the fundamental truths of Reality with the idea that they should be the basis of our aim in life. Most human beings follow some primary aims of life – they fall into four main categories – and these four categories have different philosophies. There is a link between our knowledge and how we lead our lives. Now he is going to recapitulate, more or less, the fundamental truths which he has already argued and defended.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* First, he says,

...we affirm an Absolute as the origin and support and secret Reality of all things.

The first truth that we affirm is that there is an Absolute which is the origin and support and secret Reality of all things. In Indian philosophical language, we say Brahman is the basis, the absolute truth and the only

Reality in this creation. He continues, The Absolute Reality is indefinable and ineffable by thought and mental language...

We have talked about this many times earlier that we cannot define Absolute Reality in a mental language.

Please mark that is not saying that we cannot explain it, but that we cannot express it “by mental thought and language”. The Brahman or the Absolute is beyond the range of the human mind. By saying that it is indefinable by mental language and thought he is allowing that a supramental language and supramental thought could define it. There is a distinction between the mental and supramental. He continues,

...it is self-existent and self-evident to itself, as all absolutes are self-evident, but our mental affirmatives and negatives, whether taken separatively or together, cannot limit or define it. But at the same time there is a spiritual consciousness, a spiritual knowledge, a knowledge by identity which can seize the Reality in its fundamental aspects and its manifested powers and figures.

The first point is that we affirm the Absolute as the origin of this creation, but this Absolute cannot be

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defined by mental language; it can only be known in a spiritual consciousness by knowledge by identity.

We should clarify the relation between spiritual consciousness and knowledge by identity. By the elevation of our consciousness which we can attain by the practice of the integral Yoga we can go from the lower levels of the mind to higher levels which we call the Higher mind, the Illumined mind, the Intuitive mind and the Overmind. These are the levels or planes of consciousness beyond the human mind. But the spiritual consciousness he refers to here is the topmost one: the Supermind. When we reach the Supermind, we can get this knowledge by identity. Just by going to the Higher mind, the Illumined, or the Intuitive mind, we cannot gain knowledge by identity. By this process, we may get a closer identity than in

the human mind because it increases as we rise, but the absolute knowledge by identity is achieved only in the Supermind. Once we get this knowledge by identity, we can know Brahman, the Sachchidananda or the Absolute. At the level of the human mind, we do not know by identity; we have no true knowledge of the Brahman or the Absolute.

Whatever we speak of the Brahman or the Absolute is due to some knowledge that has trickled down to the mental consciousness. It is because of the Rishis who have caught this knowledge and brought it down and have put it in some philosophical or mental language that we call metaphysics that we get a glimpse of the higher truths. Still, we have ourselves not gone to that level.

Sri Aurobindo could write about Brahman in *The Life Divine* and elsewhere because he rose to the supramental consciousness, saw and experienced and had knowledge

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* by identity. He translated this into the mental language for us. It is such a Herculean task – capturing “That” in cognitive language is very difficult. That is why, perhaps, sometimes we feel that Sri Aurobindo is repeating an idea, but each time he at the same problem from a different angle and tries to reveal another aspect of this higher knowledge to the mind.

Next, he makes a second interesting point. He says, This manifested reality is self-existent in these fundamental aspects; for all the basic realities are a bringing out of something that is eternal and inherently true in the Absolute; but all that is not fundamental, all that is temporary is phenomenal, is form and power dependent on the reality it expresses and is real by that and by its own truth of significance, the truth of what it carries in it, because it is that and not something fortuitous, not baseless, illusory, a vain constructed figure. Even what deforms and disguises, as falsehood deforms and disguises truth, evil deforms and disguises good, has a temporal reality as true consequences of the inconscience; but these contrary figures, though real in their own field, are not essential but only contributory to the manifestation and serve it as a temporal form or power of its movement.

He says that all this creation or the world is a manifestation of the Absolute Reality, “a bringing out of something that is eternal and inherently true in the Absolute”, but this manifested reality is of two types, one that is fundamental and one that is temporal, the latter consisting of temporary phenomena. We can say that there are two types of truth: fundamental

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truth and phenomenal truth. We will discuss these truths later but here we get a brief definition. We may say that fundamental truth is all that “is eternal and inherently true”, and phenomenal truth is “form and power dependent on the reality”. Obviously, this creation, this manifestation is dependent upon Reality.

In this dependent truth, Sri Aurobindo brings in a very interesting point – that even what deforms and disguises truth, like falsehood and evil – is part and parcel of the phenomenal truth.

Somebody in the class raised a question couple of days back, how is it that we say that all this is Divine, still, we speak of things as undivine. That is a question that has often confused people. Sri Aurobindo has a chapter in *The Life Divine* called “The Divine and the Undivine”

where he has explained this question in detail. Here I will read out just a paragraph to help clarify this very legitimate question.

The distinction between the divine and the undivine life is in fact identical with the root distinction between a life of Knowledge lived in self-awareness and in the power of the Light and a life of Ignorance,

– at any rate it so presents itself in a world that is slowly and with difficulty evolving out of an original Inconscience. All life that has still this Inconscience for its basis is stamped with the mark of a radical imperfection; for even if it is satisfied with its own type, it is a satisfaction with something incomplete and inharmonious, a patchwork of discords: on the contrary, even a purely mental or vital life might be perfect within its limits if it were based on a restricted but harmonious self-power and self-knowledge. It is

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* this bondage to a perpetual stamp of imperfection and disharmony that is the mark of the undivine; a divine life, on the contrary, even if progressing from the little to the more, would be at each stage harmonious in its principle and detail: it would be a secure ground upon which freedom and perfection could naturally flower or grow towards their highest stature, refine and expand into their most subtle opulence. All imperfections, all perfections have to be taken into view in our consideration of the difference between an undivine and a divine existence: but ordinarily, when we make the distinction, we do it as human beings struggling under the pressure of life and the difficulties of our conduct amidst its immediate problems and perplexities; most of all we are thinking of the distinction we are obliged to make between good and evil or of that along with its kindred problem of the duality, the blend in us of happiness and suffering. When we seek intellectually for a divine presence in things, a divine origin of the world, a divine government of its workings, the presence of evil, the insistence on suffering, the large, the enormous part offered to pain, grief and affliction in the economy of Nature are the cruel phenomena which baffle our reason and overcome the instinctive faith of mankind in such an origin and government or in an all-seeing, all-determining and omnipresent Divine Immanence. (CWSA 21: 404-405) I will try to give a gist of the idea in the above paragraph. First of all, when trying to understand the coexistence of the divine and the undivine, we look at it from a moral point of view in terms of good and evil, and even more than that, what bothers us more than the

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evil is the sorrow and suffering that we experience. As Sri Aurobindo says, these are “cruel phenomena which baffle our reason”. On one side, we say there is the Divine which is the origin of the world and is governing it, and then, on the other side, we must ask, how come we have all this suffering and evil? Seeing this contradiction, our mind is baffled. But let us go back to the definition of the undivine itself. “It is a bondage to a perpetual stamp of imperfection and disharmony”. What is undivine is essentially disharmony and imperfection.

Sri Aurobindo points out that the human mind is always bothered about suffering and evil because they impact us directly on the body. Still, they are not the only imperfection and disharmony in the world. What about the lack of Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Power, and Unity?

Do we complain about these? These are also needed as much for spiritual living and a perfected world as the absence of suffering and evil. There are other divine qualities which are absent. Sri Aurobindo puts the problem into a proper perspective.

There is another chapter, “The Delight of Existence”, where Sri Aurobindo tells us that we make so much out of this question of pain and sorrow and suffering. He says, if we analyse our life, we will see that most of the time, we experience joy; if not joy, at least we are not suffering. Only those who suffer from some severe illness would be suffering always, not everyone. Then only do we make such a big deal about pain and suffering?

For example, there is a plain whiteboard. The moment I put a mark there our attention gets focused on the mark. The mark alone becomes important for us.

That is how, Sri Aurobindo would say, our life is full

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of happiness, but when there is one sorrow here and one pain there we focus on it. We also have a habit of taking upon ourselves the pains and sufferings of others because, emotionally we are tied to them. The contrast between this general happiness and the little black marks is so much that the black spots of suffering become all-important in our consciousness.

So there are two things. One is that this suffering and evil are only one of the imperfections of this world; there is also a lack of Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Power and Unity. The second thing is that we focus on and exaggerate the suffering and evil and ignore the background of happiness and delight we normally experience. Taken from its genesis Sri Aurobindo

concludes that all these imperfections constitute the undivine, whereas the definition of Divine is perfection.

One of the things that brings in disharmony is our ego. We should not blame the Divine for this evil and suffering! If the sunlight spreads everywhere but if I close all my windows and doors, whose fault is that it is not coming into my room and there is darkness around? The Divine says, “I am pouring my grace and my beauty and my love, but it is you human beings – of your ego and the limitations of your mind – who have shut the doors”.

The moment anything becomes limited – limitation of mind, of feelings, of the body’s capacities –

automatically brings in the opposite of knowledge, the opposite of good, and the opposite of beauty. It is an elementary truth. It is almost a mathematical formula. Knowledge, Truth, Beauty, Goodness and Delight come in proportion to expanding our consciousness. As consciousness diminishes and

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becomes limited, all the opposite things come into our life. Knowledge is an expansion of consciousness, and ignorance is a limitation of consciousness.

Goodness is the greatness of consciousness; ugliness and evil come with load due to ego.

When the mind becomes small, it gets perverted, bringing in evil. The cause of evil is not due to some being like Satan, who is creating the evil. That is what religions tell us, but it is nothing of the sort! It is purely an impersonal formula; as it becomes limited, this consciousness gets twisted, which is called perversion and is the cause of evil. Similarly, when the vital and the body become limited, we get sorrow and suffering on the level of the essential emotions and suffering on the story of the physical body. There is a single consciousness, and as it descends, it loses its light, it loses its power and knowledge, and when it comes to the level of mind, the mind blocks it so much that there is a twist and a perversion comes in. If we want

happiness, beauty, goodness and knowledge, we must reverse the process and increase our consciousness. If we go beyond the mind, we can have it.

In *Savitri*, when Sri Aurobindo says, “Pain is the hammer of the Gods to break / A dead resistance in the mortal’s heart” (CWSA 34: 443), it suggests that God may use all kinds of methods, including pain and sorrow to hasten the process of evolution. The potter, when making the pot, has to beat the mud hard so that it can be brought into the shape of a normal pot. These are methods that are also used by nature and God for the evolutionary purpose.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo says,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The Absolute manifests itself in two terms, a Being and a Becoming. The Being is the fundamental reality; the Becoming is an effectual reality...

These phrases carry a profound meaning! He calls the Being the “fundamental reality” and the Becoming

“an effectual reality”. “Effectual reality” means manifested reality. Being is the unmanifest reality, so it is fundamental.

But out of the Being comes the Becoming. Becoming is also necessary, and in this Becoming, there is always the Being. We cannot take the Becoming, the manifestation, as the only truth. He further says that, Being is not separate from the Becoming but present in it, constituted of it, inherent in its every infinitesimal atom and in its boundless expansion and extension.

Unlike Buddhism, which says that there is no God or Divine or Soul or Atman, Sri Aurobindo says that the Being constitutes the world; it is the very stuff of the world.

Becoming can only know itself wholly when it knows itself as Being; the soul in the Becoming arrives at self-knowledge and immortality when it

knows the Supreme and Absolute and possesses the nature of the Infinite and Eternal.

The purpose of our life, the purpose of our soul's journey in its innumerable births, is to realise the Being.

To do that is the supreme aim of our existence; for that is the truth of our being and must therefore be the inherent aim, the necessary outcome of our becoming...

These lines are very important; they tell us that the

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soul's urge is to realise the Being; its innate urge is to know itself as the Being, the Supreme, the Brahman. That is why time and again, it comes into manifestation. But the soul doesn't want to know the Supreme only beyond manifestation; it wants to know the Brahman in the world as well. That is the truth of existence, the truth of manifestation. If it just wanted to know the Brahman beyond the world, it would never take birth in the world itself. It wants to know the Brahman in the world and the Brahman as the world. That is the whole meaning of this manifestation. It comes into the world to find him in this shape, in this experience, in this matter, in this life, in this being. But it takes many births to know it.

Sri Aurobindo says that this essential urge of the soul becomes

...in matter a secret energy, in life an urge and tendency, a desire and a seeking, in mind a will, aim, endeavour, purpose; to manifest what is from the first occult within it is the whole hidden trend of evolutionary Nature.

We have aspirations in our hearts, a will in our mind, a desire in our life or vital nature to experience the Brahman. That is why we can never get rid of desire, but we can transform it; we can go above it. It is part of the nature of the vital to desire because essentially it is the urge of the soul to transcend itself. Sri Aurobindo says that even in Matter, there is secret energy that is the same urge of the soul to know the Divine that is translated into energy into a forward movement. We know that there is tremendous energy in

Matter. Why? Because it wants to find more shapes, and more forms to discover its true Being. And it is the same thing when it comes to the level

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of life – the animals desire, the plants want, the human beings desire; it is an expression of the divine urge to discover and know the Self. The same urge is behind the mind's will to understand and achieve.

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No religion can stop human beings from having desires; if it did, we would become a lump of clay. We have to pass through this phase of desire and when we go beyond it we have aspirations. Aspiration belongs to the psychic being; it is an inner spiritual longing for a higher consciousness. It has the same source as desire, but it is a divine desire. We are emphasising this point simply to tell ourselves that in this evolution the becoming wants to return to the Being. The Being himself is there in the Becoming; it is not that the Becoming is something different from the Being. It is the Being himself who has gone into the Becoming and he is pulling this whole Becoming towards himself. That is the beauty of this universe, that the Divine is here and is returning to his whole Being bringing the entire universe with its forms and formations along with it. That is the journey of evolution. Having said that, Sri Aurobindo concludes that we should not therefore over-emphasise and say that the subjective is more important than the objective, that Being is more important than the Becoming. How can we separate Being and Becoming and say one is more important than the other? As he puts in the last line of the paragraph:

This realisation is the culmination of the Becoming; it is the fulfillment of the Being in its dynamic reality.

This too then must be part of the total truth of things, for it alone gives a full spiritual significance to the

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universe and justifies the soul in manifestation; an explanation of things that deprives cosmic and individual existence of all significance cannot be the whole explanation or the solution it proposes the sole true issue.

Sri Aurobindo makes two points – first, that there is one Absolute that is the Reality of both the Being and the Becoming, and second,

The next affirmation which we put forward is that the fundamental reality of the Absolute is to our spiritual perception a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of Being which is a supercosmic Reality, self-existent, but also the secret truth underlying the whole manifestation; for the fundamental truth of Being must necessarily be the fundamental truth of Becoming. All is a manifestation of That; for it dwells even in all that seem to be its opposites...

He says the fundamental reality of the Absolute is Sachchidananda, a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight. The Absolute appears to us like this in our spiritual perception . It could be understood in itself by knowledge by identity. Still, generally in our spiritual experience, it appears as Sachchidananda, a Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight, which is a supracosmic Reality and at the same time “all manifestation is a manifestation of That”.

Coming to the next paragraph, he says, The Being is one, but this oneness is infinite and contains in itself an infinite plurality or multiplicity of itself: the One is the All; it is not only an essential Existence, but an All-Existence. The infinite

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* multiplicity of the One and the eternal unity of the Many are the two realities or aspects of one reality on which the manifestation is founded.

Sri Aurobindo has also made this point in one of the previous chapters that the Many are a manifestation of the One, but the One does not lose himself by becoming the Many. That is what he re-emphasises here: But the multiplicity permits of a phenomenal division of consciousness, an effectual

Ignorance in which the Many, the individuals, cease to become aware of the eternal self-existent Oneness and are oblivious of the oneness of the cosmic Self in which and by which they live, move and have their being.

But, by force of the secret Unity, the soul in becoming is urged by its own unseen reality and by the occult pressure of evolutionary Nature to come out of this state of Ignorance and recover eventually the knowledge of the one Divine Being and its oneness with it and at the same time to recover its spiritual unity with all individual beings and the whole universe. It has to become aware not only of itself in the universe but of the universe in itself and of the Being of cosmos as its greater self; the individual has to universalise himself and in the same movement to become aware of his supracosmic transcendence.

This triple aspect of the reality must be included in the total truth of the soul and of the cosmic manifestation, and this necessity must determine the ultimate trend of the process of evolutionary Nature.

This is more or less reflected in this last point that we discussed, but there is one new element that has been added here. We discussed that the soul has an urge to

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return to the Being and this gets translated differently into Matter, Life, and Mind. Here he adds that this soul not only returns to the original Transcendent Being but it must universalise itself also. That is a different point that is being emphasised. Sri Ramana Maharishi, returned to the Brahman by askesis, by tapasya, and had a direct realisation or direct return to the Brahman. But there is another aspect, which Sri Aurobindo is emphasising here is, that one must become universal also. That means one must see the universe and the Being as one's greater self. We have three levels on which the Divine manifests

– the transcendent, the universal and the individual.

Sri Aurobindo introduces us with these concepts because he will relate all of these to our philosophy of life. The souls can go directly to the

transcendent Brahman, but at the same time, there is the possibility that the soul also realises the universal being. That means one realises all others as part of oneself. In the direct realisation of Brahman one may not realise that others are part of oneself. The realisation is that Atman and the transcendent Brahman are the same. But here we realise Brahman as the world, as the universe. In the integral realisation we need to have both the transcendental and the universal realisation.

Many yogis of the past have propounded just the universal aspect – that is to see God in all human beings – that by serving humanity we serve God. It is an incomplete realisation according to Sri Aurobindo.

We cannot emphasise on this world more than on the transcendent, for both are equally important. He says, All views of existence that stop short of the Transcendence and ignore it must be incomplete

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* accounts of the truth of being. The pantheistic view of the identity of the Divine and the Universe is a truth, for all this that is is the Brahman: but it stops short of the whole truth when it misses and omits the supracosmic Reality. On the other side, every view that affirms the cosmos only and dismisses the individual as a by-product of the cosmic Energy, errs by laying too much emphasis on one apparent factual aspect of the world-action... for the natural individual, the nature-being, is indeed a product of the universal Energy, but is at the same time a nature-personality of the soul, an expressive formation of the inner being and person, and this soul is not a perishable cell or a dissoluble portion of the cosmic Spirit, but has its original immortal reality in the Transcendence... the soul is an eternal portion of the Supreme and not a fraction of Nature.

The pantheistic belief is that in nature everything has a godhead or is a godhead. Let us take the example the sun, Suryadeva. We call fire, Agnideva. He says, it is a truth that the Divine is the universe, but we must not forget that all these godheads are the One Supreme, the Absolute. The Vedic rishis were aware of this but some modern scholars have not

understood them. Some believe that in India we have all these pantheistic gods.

The West also had pantheism, but they suppressed it because of the dominance of Christianity. In India we have this pantheistic belief even today, but we have not forgotten that all these are forms of the single Brahman.

We have all these godheads still very much alive but at the back of our mind is the principle that all these are Brahman. If this one is forgotten then it becomes a

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confusion and it is better to have only one God like Christianity has.

The transcendent has become the universal and the universal has become the individual. The common understanding is that the individual is part of the universal, and the universal is a part of the transcendent.

In this view, the transcendental assumes the highest importance, and there is hardly any place for the individual. But this is a gross error. The philosophy that has been adopted by the materialistic philosophy is that the individual human being dies and the human race continues: I should do my best, gain wealth, build factories, invent things, and when I die only my name would be there on the placard, but the human race would benefit from my work. The individual person is not important, but mankind as a race is important. But Sri Aurobindo does not agree with this.

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, there is no hierarchy.

For him, the transcendent becomes universal and the transcendent also becomes the individual. Of course, there is an internal relation between the universal and the individual, but the individual soul, as he puts it, "is an eternal portion of the Supreme" and not "a fraction of nature". It has its own individual existence and reality in the transcendent. These are such revolutionary ideas!

Sri Aurobindo gives equal importance to the individual and the universe. Here we are not talking democratic individual rights to have freedom and rights. We are not talking about external rights, but about the fundamental existence of the individual, that the soul is an eternal portion of the transcendent itself, it has an original immortal reality in the transcendence. This placement

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* is of great importance in order to understand the true nature of the individual.

In our philosophy, we have the concept of the Jivatman.

In the process of the involution, it comes down to a soul or the psychic being. The Jivatman is beyond evolution, and the soul is in the evolution. The origin of the soul or the psychic being is the Jivatman. And who is this Jivatman? It is an individual aspect of Sachchidananda or Brahman. Each one of us exists not only in the universe; we are not only a part and component of this world existing as Mr X or Ms Y, but we are a part of the transcendent and original immortal Reality. That is why we say we are the children of immortality; we exist immortally in the transcendent. Swami Vivekananda very often used to quote this phrase *amritasya putraha* from the Upanishads, “children of immortality”. Even when the world is destroyed or if there is a Pralaya, this individual is not destroyed, we are eternal. We are originally from the Divine and we have to return to that Divine; that is the *raison d'être* of all the rebirths of the soul in the world.

But equally any view that sees the universe as existent only in the individual consciousness must very evidently be a fragmentary truth: it is justified by a perception of the universality of the spiritual individual and his power of embracing the whole universe in his consciousness; but neither the cosmos nor the individual consciousness is the fundamental truth of existence; for both depend upon and exist by the transcendental Diving Being.

We have spoken about the transcendent and the individual, but he says we should not forget about the

universal; the universal also has its own independent existence. There is also a tendency to say, what is the need of becoming universal? I can go straight to the Brahman, that's the end of my journey, and that's my aim.

But Sri Aurobindo says, our aim may be to return to the Brahman, but we have to go through the universal and not directly to the transcendent. This is the difference between Sri Aurobindo's yoga and other yogas; the path does not bypass the universal. That means we must realise that the Divine is there in the universe, in everything – in all life, in human beings, and in matter itself. Sri Aurobindo had this realisation in the Alipore Jail; he saw the Divine in the guards of the jail, in the bars of the jail, in the tree outside, and in the judge presiding over his trial. This is what we mean by “via the universal”.

Sri Aurobindo has told us the equal importance of all the three aspects of the Divine; we have to realise all the three. The order of the realisation may differ, one may realise the individual or any other two levels first but eventually we have to realise all. However, generally the first realisation is of the psychic being, unless we realise our psychic being we will not be able to proceed further.

The next point Sri Aurobindo makes is that, This Divine Being, Sachchidananda, is at once impersonal and personal; it is an Existence and the original and foundation of all truths, forces, powers, and existences, but it is also the one transcendent Conscious Being and the All-Person of whom all conscious beings are the selves and personalities; for He is their highest Self and the universal indwelling Presence. It is a necessity for the soul in the universe,—and therefore the inner trend of the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* evolutionary Energy and its ultimate intention,—to know and to grow into this truth of itself, to become one with the Divine Being... On this side the dualistic and theistic views of existence which affirm the eternal real existence of God and the Soul and the eternal

real existence and cosmic action of the Divine Energy, express also a truth of the integral existence...

The Divine Being, Sachchidananda is at once impersonal and personal. What in the language of Sankhya philosophy is called the witness purusha, that is the impersonal side of Sachchidananda is not involved in the activities of Prakriti. But there is also a psychic being which is involved. He says that “it is a necessity for the soul in the universe to know and grow into this truth of itself”. Integral philosophy or yoga is vast and complex.

When we say “integral realisation”, we normally think of the mind, vital and physical; but there is also this integration of the individual, universal and transcendent Divine, and that of the personal and the impersonal Divine, and also the integration of our outer being with our inner and subliminal being.

When we start yoga and want to widen and heighten our consciousness, the starting points can be many. Some people start intellectually by reading Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and strive to understand their philosophy.

Some people start with bhakti, loving the Divine and engaging in devotional activities. Others begin by working for the Divine. One of the most pragmatic ways given by the Mother is to try to consciously surrender our thoughts, feelings and actions to the Divine. We have seen in Sri Aurobindo’s writings that surrender connects us with the Divine; and when we are connected,

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automatically there is an expansion of our consciousness.

We cannot deliberately stretch our consciousness only by wishing it. It is by connecting our small ego with the vast Divine consciousness that we can widen. How do we connect? Well, think of how we connect with your spouse or a loved one. We make a telephone call, or write a letter or think of the person. We connect mentally by thought, emotionally by feeling, sympathy or love; and practically, by doing things for the person, through work.

In a traditional family, the husband works and cares for his family, and this helps him identify with the family. It is the same with the Divine. It is a dynamic connection through action.

When I was a child, I used to see in my village, where we have very small farms, that there were channels between paddy plots. There would be a main channel and then there would be sub-channels. The farmers would connect these little channels to the main channel and immediately the water from the mainstream would come in and flood the whole plot. That is also the method of yoga. We have to connect ourselves with the main channel of consciousness which is the Divine. And to keep this connection, what does the farmer do? He would constantly dig the earth, clear the passage, and clear the weeds and the stones so that it would stay connected with the mainstream. In yoga this constant digging is to work constantly. I have seen that constant work is the best way to connect. Emotionally we may sometimes forget, mentally we have so many diversions, but if we come into the field of work and offer that work, I have seen that it is one of the most effective ways to stay in connection. If while working we remember the Divine you will love the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Divine, and if we love the Divine we will have knowledge of the Divine. It is a wonderful method! That is why in the Ashram we all want to work for the Mother.

If we work in a multinational company we identify with it and say “I work ‘for’ this company”. Similarly, if we are working for the Mother, then we will identify ourselves with the Mother. When we talk about the expansion of the soul into the universal and the transcendent, we can start humbly, practically, on a day-to-day basis in this manner by connecting with the Divine through work.

Sri Aurobindo has discussed that it is the Being that becomes the manifestation. Now he will describe the process of this manifestation. It is through the process of involution and evolution. The next two paragraphs explain this in brief.

We are skipping these paragraphs with the assumption that we already have an idea of the concept of evolution and involution in Sri Aurobindo's context. However, to recapitulate: In this manifestation there are seven principles: One is Sat or Existence, two is Chit or Consciousness, and three is Ananda or Bliss. Then Sri Aurobindo, says.

A fourth principle of supramental Truth-Consciousness is associated with them; manifesting unity in infinite multiplicity, it is the characteristic power of self-determination of the Infinite.

This quadruple power of the supreme existence, consciousness and delight constitutes an upper hemisphere of manifestation...

In the lower hemisphere, we have Mind, Life and Matter. Existence translates itself in the lower hemisphere

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as Matter. Chit, Consciousness translates itself as life, and the Supermind sends its delegate the Mind. Bliss comes as the psychic being. Now we have eight principles; we started with seven principles, which is the Vedantic way of looking at it, but Sri Aurobindo brings in the psychic element in the involution.

In the next paragraph, he describes the process of evolution which is just the opposite. He says that the involution culminates in the Inconscient, and from there gradually evolves Matter, then Life and then Mind, which is what we see so far expressed in the evolution on earth. Supermind, and then the higher levels of Sat, Chit and Ananda must inevitably appear in the course of the evolution. They are already here involved and hidden, but they must gradually disengage themselves and show themselves in their native working.

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We have seen in brief the theory of involution and evolution. In the process of evolution, matter, life and mind have so far evolved out of the Inconscient. But, Sri Aurobindo says,

Supermind and the triune aspects of Sachchidananda are the secret principles that are not yet put in front and have still to be realised in the forms of the manifestation, and we know them only by hints and a partial and fragmentary action still not disengaged from the lower movement and therefore not easily recognisable. But their evolution too is part of the destiny of the soul in the Becoming,—there must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* it, all that has descended indeed but is still concealed in earth-life and Matter.

We are clear now that in this involution the entire superconscient including the Supermind, has plunged itself into the Matter. The levels below Supermind –

mind, life and the subtle physical –have also plunged into it. Logically, each step has to reveal itself because what is involved and hidden must come out in the process of evolution. We have seen that has happened already with the evolution of matter, life and mind. Obviously, evolution can't stop here because there are more levels that are involved in Matter. Sri Aurobindo tells us that all this –

...too is part of the destiny of the soul in the Becoming,—there must be a realisation and dynamisation in earth-life and in Matter not only of Mind but of all that is above it...

All that is above Mind includes the Higher mind, the Illumined mind, the Intuitive mind, the Overmind, the Supermind and Sachchidananda – these are telescoped in matter. It is purely a matter of time for all that has descended and is concealed will reveal itself. That is the simple logic of involution and evolution.

Now Sri Aurobindo is going to discuss the three levels that have already emerged in the evolution. He says, Our theory of the integral knowledge admits Mind as a creative principle, a power of the Being, and assigns it its

place in the manifestation; it similarly accepts Life and Matter as powers of the Spirit and in them also is a creative Energy. But the view of things that makes Mind the sole or the supreme creative principle and the philosophies that assign to Life

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or Matter the same sole reality or predominance, are expressions of a half-truth and not the integral knowledge.

Then he says,

It is true that when Matter first emerges it becomes the dominant principle it seems to be and is within its own field the basis of all things, the constituent of all things, the end of all things; but Matter itself is found to be a result of something that is not Matter, of Energy, and the Energy cannot be something self-existent and acting in the Void, but can turn out and, when deeply scrutinised, seems likely to turn out to be the action of a secret Consciousness and Being; when the spiritual knowledge and experience emerge, this becomes a certitude,—it is seen that the creative Energy in Matter is a movement of the power of the Spirit. Matter itself cannot be the original and ultimate reality.

I think we discussed this more or less in our previous chapter. We have seen how Matter is definitely an action of a secret consciousness and being. We also said that science has come to equate matter with energy. Spiritual experience says that all these are interlinked in the matter and that matter is ultimately an expression of the Being. That is what he means when he says that matter and energy are not self-existent, they do not exist by themselves, but are an expression of absolute Existence.

Ultimately, everything is an expression of the Sat, of the absolute Being. He says,

Matter itself cannot be the original and ultimate reality. At the same time the view that divorces Matter and Spirit and puts them as opposites is unacceptable;

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Matter is a form of Spirit, a habitation of Spirit, and here in Matter itself there can be a realisation of Spirit.

This passage speaks volumes about Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy. Neither spirit nor matter divorced from each other is the ultimate Reality. Normally, in the West Matter is conceived as the ultimate Reality, and in India Spirit is considered to be the ultimate Reality. He says that they cannot be separated, and the link between them is that Matter is the habitation of the Spirit, what the Isha Upanishad calls *Isha vasyam*, "for habitation by the Lord" (CWSA 17: 429). Because of this direct connection, matter can be transformed back into Spirit. It can go back to Spirit but going back should not be understood as vanishing into Spirit, it means that Matter will be transformed and will return to the Spirit in a transformed manner; it will not extinguish itself and the world will not be dissolved. It is only that the grossness of matter, the *tamas* will be transformed into luminosity and will express the Spirit completely.

'Express the Spirit' means it will be transparent. At present we have the Spirit within us, the soul within us, but the body does not reflect the soul at all, for it is so dense. The light of the soul does not penetrate the physical. But when matter gets transformed, the light of the soul will be seen even in the physical, just as a table lamp with a lovely white shade becomes luminous when lit by the bulb behind it. Ultimately, this body will be like the lamp shade, transparent, translucent, where the luminosity of our psychic being shines through the body.

That is the meaning of the transformed body and how matter shall return to spirit. It is not an extinction but a transformation of matter.

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The same will happen to life:

It is true again that Life when it emerges becomes dominant, turns Matter into an instrument for its manifestation, and begins to look as if it were itself the secret original principle which breaks out into creation and veils

itself in the forms of Matter; there is a truth in this appearance and this truth must be admitted as a part of the integral knowledge.

When life into matter, earth became resplendent with green trees, plants, herbs, grass. Then came the insects, animals, and the whole creeping world. Matter suddenly burst into life and it appeared that life is the original principle that was hidden in Matter and came out naturally. But Sri Aurobindo says, Life, though not the original Reality, is yet a form, a power of it which is missioned here as a creative urge in Matter. Life, therefore, has to be accepted as the means of our activity and the dynamic mould into which we have here to pour the Divine Existence; but it can so be accepted only because it is a form of a Divine Energy which is itself greater than the Life-force. The Life-principle is not the whole foundation and origin of things; its creative working cannot be perfected and sovereignly fulfilled or even find its true movement until it knows itself as an energy of the Divine Being and elevates and subtilises its action into a free channel for the outpourings of the superior Nature.

Just like he traced the origin of matter to Sat, similarly he says that the origin of life is the principle of force and consciousness, Chit-Tapas; it is an expression of Chit-Tapas, the original force. Here we must make a

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* little distinction. We say matter is energy, but here I am saying that life is force; there is a little difference. Material energy is more or less a dumb energy, it has no direction, no aim, it is just in motion. But here the life force has got some consciousness guiding it, there is a direction in this force. The life principle is a manifestation of the consciousness-force or Chit-Tapas. That is why when we see the animals and plants we see a rhythm of life, we see a pattern. There is birth, growth and death, and these patterns come in because of the consciousness behind.

When life comes out it dominates matter and uses it. When the animal or the plant is born, matter is transformed. The body of the animal or the tree is already transformed – Matter. That is an example which shows that matter can be transformed, it is transformed to the extent that it becomes mobile, sensitive and responsive.

The stone does not respond, or at least that's what we think; some scientists say it may respond to an extent.

We may have seen videos of some experiments on how the molecules of water respond to the vibrations of the consciousness of the person using or touching it. It even responds to the general consciousness of the place. There have been experiments showing that water crystals have a different formation and colouration when they are in a violent atmosphere as opposed to a peaceful meditative place, or when touched by someone in anger or in peace.

So, the matter may also respond, but still not to the extent that we see in life forms. Experiments also show that trees and plants also respond to the consciousness with which they are treated.

Sri Aurobindo says that the life principle, although

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dominant over matter, is not the whole foundation and origin of things; it also needs to be transformed. Life is not the final expression of this evolution. It has brought in plant and animal life and ultimately has given birth to the human form. But once life gives birth to a human form, a new consciousness of the mind principle manifests.

Mind in its turn, when it emerges, becomes dominant; it uses Life and Matter as means of its expression, a field for its own growth and sovereignty, and it begins to work as if it were the true reality and the creator even as it is the witness of existence.

But Mind also is a limited and derivative power; it is an outcome of Overmind or it is here a luminous shadow thrown by the divine Supermind...

The third principle is that of the mind and it uses both matter and life as its instruments. Life uses only matter as its instrument, the mind has the advantage of having two instruments – matter and life. Unfortunately, instead of using matter and life as instruments, it has gone too far and uses

matter and life as its slaves; it coerces them. The matter has also changed with the coming of the mental consciousness. The very fact that we are standing on two feet, whereas the animal walks on four, is a response of the body to the mental consciousness. The mental consciousness is centered in the head, the head becomes elevated to better survey and control its surroundings, and it stands as a kind of symbol that the head, the mind consciousness is uppermost in the human being. This form is better suited for the mental being. Our body is much more sensitive than animals and plants. They are sensitive to physical things, to heat and cold, to

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* vibrations, to sights, but our bodies are sensitive to our minds and emotions also. If I am depressed or sad, then my body is immediately affected. The mind influences matter and life. But unfortunately, because the mind is not guided by a higher consciousness than itself, because it is grounded in ignorance and selfishness, it has started exploiting matter and life for its own purposes and is thereby destroying the earth. This is the problem with mental consciousness. The mind does not understand the unitarian consciousness of the earth and tries to dominate it for its own ambitions.

But thankfully there is a higher consciousness which looks at the whole earth as important, not just men, but the animals and plants and the earth-matter itself. That is why the Green Movement has validity and importance in the evolution toward a unitarian consciousness. The people who started this must have had an intuition. It is not only sympathy for the animals and plants and the earth's resources being destroyed, and it is not based just on an economical point of view; there is definitely a higher consciousness that has initiated and is guiding this movement. The earth is one, and human beings, animals, plants and matter all belong to one consciousness, so one level of consciousness cannot dominate and live at the cost of the others. There is a kind of a unitarian balancing consciousness that is coming. This is the supramental consciousness which is slowly penetrating the human consciousness and bringing in this oneness. All these expressions of unitarianism or oneness are nothing but expressions of the supramental consciousness.

What is this mind? He says it is an outcome of Overmind or a luminous shadow thrown by the divine

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Supermind. Normally, we say that mind is a derivative of the Supermind, but it is derivative as a very distant relative. It is Supermind which sends the mind as its delegate, but in between is the Overmind. The immediate or the next influence on the mind is that of Overmind, so he says it is an outcome of Overmind but does not say it is an outcome of Supermind. Why? Because if it were an outcome of Supermind directly, the mind would not be what it is, a divisive separative consciousness.

It is because it is an outcome of Overmind that the mind naturally falls into division and is a separative consciousness. This division and separation begin in the Overmind. What began in Overmind culminates in my mind. That is why he says that mind is an outcome of Overmind and a kind of a distant shadow of Supermind, because Overmind itself comes from Supermind.

Then Sri Aurobindo says,

All the powers of the lower hemisphere with their structures of the Ignorance can find their true selves only by a transformation in the light that descends to us from the higher hemisphere of an eternal self-knowledge.

There is one more level that Sri Aurobindo takes into account: so far we have only discussed Matter, Life and Mind. And now he describes the Inconscient.

The Inconscient, in consequence of this origination and predominance, is taken now by a certain line of enquiry as the real origin and creator. It has indeed to be accepted that an inconscient force, an inconscient substance are the starting point of the evolution, but it is a conscious Spirit and not an inconscient Being that is emerging in the evolution.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* In the involution of the superconscient the last point is not Matter, it is the Inconscient. In the Inconscient the consciousness completely forgets and loses itself. Losing itself means that it does not remember its own nature.

It is like in sleep we don't remember our nature, or who we are, but we are still alive, we are just not aware of our consciousness. That is what happens on the inconscient level, the superconscient forgets its own reality, its own power. It is in a kind of deep sleep or trance; it is not a trance of the higher kind, but a somnambulist trance on a lower level.

From the Inconscient begins the return journey of evolution, and that is why it is so very important.

The matter is the first expression of evolution, but the Inconscient is its origin. Matter itself has its origin in the Inconscient. Because the Inconscient is the beginning of evolution, all that comes out of it is stuck with its mud. That is the reason that our body too is full of inconscience, full of ignorance, all that drags us down

– desires and passions and even death. What has come into our bodies is a residue of the Inconscient itself and all that comes out of it carries something of that inconscience. It is there in the physical, the life and the mind, although as we go higher we shed off a bit of its mud. At each stage of the evolution, we become lighter.

When we go beyond the mind, this inconscient pull and influence become lesser and lesser and when we go to the superconscient or the Supermind the inconscient completely loses its presence there.

The point Sri Aurobindo makes here is that although evolution begins from the Inconscient, there is a secret superconscient within it. When we say there is evolution,

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who is evolving? There cannot be an evolution of blankness, emptiness, or void. If we say it is Nature, then it begins with the manifestation of Matter.

In the Inconscient there is no nature as we know it. There must be somebody or something else which is evolving and that is Brahman himself. The whole evolution is nothing but the evolution of Brahman. If we get that principal point, then the whole concept becomes clear. “Brahman evolving” means it is unveiling, revealing itself. Evolution is another word for the unveiling or self-revelation of Brahman. It is as if Brahman at each level of the evolution is taking off one layer of his thick, hiding material. At the level of the matter he removed something of the Inconscient and emerges as form, – mountain, ocean fields etc. Then at this stage of life, Brahman becomes mobile, can respond, can move, can swim and run and fly. And then when it comes to mind, Brahman sheds off another layer and can think, remember, imagine, plan, can carry out his will. And when he goes still higher he sheds all that is hiding. When he had come down into the Inconscient he had put upon himself one layer after another of material to hide, and when he evolves he just throws off those cloaks of darkness. That is the simple meaning of evolution.

The one who is hidden in the Inconscient is Brahman himself. Sri Aurobindo describes this vividly in Book I, Canto I of *Savitri*. It is there that the dormant Brahman, the Brahman who is in an absolute trance, wakes up and starts moving and with that first little movement begins the evolution. And that first movement began with a descent of a ray of love from the superconscient.

It is indeed wonderful. A ray of love comes from the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* superconscient and hits the Inconscient and awakens Brahman to start evolving. At the human level, we also experience this. When love touches us there is a throbbing and awakening; there is a new activity, a new birth. What was dormant within us started sprouting. It is like the desert flower that with the first drop of rain blossoms. For the whole year, it is closed and we would never even think that it is alive. The way nature works are incredible! The flower is poised in such a way that when the raindrops hit, the force of the raindrops on the petals opens them up one drop after another until the whole flower blooms. What seemed dead becomes a wonderful, colourful flower. That is what

happens in the Inconscient with the first ray of divine Love. It is not the divine Beauty or the divine Truth – they come later – it is the divine Love that awakens the Inconscient. The same thing happens to human beings. Until love comes we are a dormant possibility. On whatever level, love is essential for growth and blossoming.

Sri Aurobindo says,

At this point we must take a step farther and begin to regard the metaphysical truth we have so stated as a determinant not only of our thought and inner movements but of our life-direction, a guide to a dynamic solution of our self-experience and world-experience. Our metaphysical knowledge, our view of the fundamental truth of the universe and the meaning of existence, should naturally be the determinant of our whole conception of life and attitude to it; the aim of life, as we conceive it, must be structured on that basis. Metaphysical philosophy is an attempt to fix the fundamental realities and

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principles of being as distinct from its processes and the phenomena which result from those processes.

This is the linking paragraph before we enter the second part of this chapter. Sri Aurobindo gives us the involutory and evolutionary principles to show where we are in this evolutionary pattern. We have evolved to the mental level and on the mental level, we are considering different theories of existence and Reality and this metaphysical knowledge is an attempt to fix the fundamental realities and principles of being. Unlike the animal consciousness which never had the scope to know the meaning of Brahman or the Truth, the mental consciousness over millennia of progress has come to the point where we have developed different perceptions of absolute Reality. Why is this important? Because our particular perception of Reality has an important influence on our life. Now Sri Aurobindo is going to categorise and analyse the different views of Reality that in the past have influenced humanity's thinking and life, feeling, emotion and spiritual effort. And then he will consider what should now be the perception and attitude which would influence us in the future. This is the outline of his

argument. He then adds, It is true that the intellect must seek after truth for its own sake without any illegitimate interference of a preconceived idea of life-utility. But still the truth, once discovered, must be realisable in our inner being and our outer activities; if it is not, it may have an intellectual but not an integral importance; a truth for the intellect, for our life it would be no more than the solution of a thought-puzzle or an abstract unreality or a dead letter. Truth of being must govern truth

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of life; it cannot be that the two have no relation or inter-dependence. The highest significance of life to us, the fundamental truth of existence, must be also the accepted meaning of our own living, our aim, our ideal.

He says, “the truth once discovered, must be realisable”

in our inner being. Mostly philosophies are not translated into life. They are drawing-room philosophies which say reality is this and the world is like that based on a very limited experience. Their prediction of the future is based directly on the recent past and the present. So it is a kind of mental exercise, almost a computerised knowledge. But that is not what Indian philosophy does.

It gives not a mental philosophy, but it looks at the future from a different level of consciousness than the mind.

Sri Aurobindo says that there have been many philosophies, but they were like ‘thought puzzles’. We have a little truth here, a little truth there and we make a kind of mental puzzle. There are in the western world also some philosophies that have influenced life very much. For example, Plato influenced western thinking immensely and before him, Socrates did the same.

But they were not of the mental level, they received their intuitions from a higher level than the mental consciousness. That is why their philosophies carry more substance which could guide the life of the western world for centuries. It is the higher consciousness that guides; mental thought doesn’t

guide, it only excites. It produces some discussions, some analysis, some books and then it dies. But those secrets which are founded on intuition have a greater influence on life.

Sri Aurobindo will now analyse three major lines of

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thoughts or philosophies which have really influenced large sections of humanity over the past millennia as well as his philosophy which is a kind of synthesis of them.

He will also discuss their “corresponding mental attitudes and ideals”. He names them: 1. the supra cosmic; 2. the cosmic and terrestrial; 3. the supraterrrestrial or other-worldly; and 4. the integral or synthetic or composite.

We can understand that supra cosmic means ‘beyond the cosmos’; it says that the Reality is beyond this world, beyond the universe. The cosmic and terrestrial view is focused on the physical universe and the earth. The third philosophy believes in the supraterrrestrial or other-worldly, ranges of consciousness that exist between the mind and the supra cosmic. It is concerned with the heavens or occult worlds. The fourth one is the integral or synthetic view which combines them all. To put them into even simpler terms which Sri Aurobindo uses towards the end, we can say that the first three emphasise respectively the Supreme, earth, and heaven. Humanity’s thinking and life have been guided essentially by these three philosophies.

The supra-cosmic view says that only the supreme Reality exists, Brahman alone is the Truth; neither the other worlds nor this world is true. Those who follow this view have been the illusionists who have predominantly influenced Indian life but the West only in an indirect manner. The cosmic and terrestrial view is grounded upon the earth as the Reality and earth-life, this is the *summum bonum* of existence. This includes primarily the materialistic and scientific views. Religions speak of the supraterrrestrial and other-worldliness, – that God is there up in heaven, you have to go there. It is those

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* heavens, where we go after death which are important. So we have basically the illusionists, the religionists and the materialists. The main philosophical branches fall into these three. The fourth one is the integral or synthetic or composite, that is *a la* Sri Aurobindo who would synthesise all these three views.

Sri Aurobindo says that earth, heaven and the Supreme are all equally important parts of an integral Reality, an integral knowledge, integral realisation and integral yoga.

Now, we will read Sri Aurobindo's view: In this last category would fall our view of our existence here as a Becoming with the Divine Being for its origin and its object, a progressive manifestation, a spiritual evolution with the supracosmic for its source and support, the other-worldly for a condition and connecting link and the cosmic and terrestrial for its field, and with human mind and life for its nodus and turning-point of release towards a higher and a highest perfection.

Our regard then must be on the three first to see where they depart from the integralising view of life and how far the truths they stand on fit into its structure.

This is a wonderful definition of the integral philosophy which integrates the other three major philosophies of life. He says, the earth is our base, the other worlds are the links, the steps in the evolutionary ladder, and the supracosmic, the Divine, is the aim. The integral philosophy would like to transform this earth into heaven, therefore we cannot leave earth, we cannot leave the ladder, and our aim is Brahman, so we need all three.

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Sri Aurobindo then starts with a description of the supracosmic view of things:

In the supracosmic view of things the supreme Reality is alone entirely real. A certain illusoriness, a sense of the vanity of cosmic existence and

individual being is a characteristic turn of this seeing of things, but it is not essential, not an indispensable adjunct to its main thought-principle.

Something interesting that Sri Aurobindo says here is that the supra cosmic philosophies believe the supreme Reality alone to be true and the world to be an illusion.

But this belief does not have a logical necessity. He says this is not an indispensable adjunct to this theory.

The Advaitins said that if the Brahman is the Truth, then the world is untrue and it must be an illusion. But Sri Aurobindo says that this is not necessarily the case.

He writes,

In the extreme forms of its world-vision human existence has no real meaning; it is a mistake of the soul or a delirium of the will to live, an error or ignorance which somehow overcasts the absolute Reality. The only true truth is the supracosmic; or, in any case, the Absolute, the Parabrahman is the origin and goal of all existence, all else is an interlude without any abiding significance.

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Sri Aurobindo writes –

...it would follow that the one thing to be done, the one wise and needful way of our being is to get away from all living, whether terrestrial or celestial, as soon as our inner evolution or some hidden law of the spirit makes that possible.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The corresponding mental attitude of the supra cosmic conception of the truth of existence is to get away from all living as soon as possible, both terrestrial and celestial life. It is not enough to get rid of life on earth to enjoy paradise, even celestial life should be

renounced because the aim is to go back to Parabrahman, the Supreme Brahman. We should not stop anywhere in between in the intermediate worlds. Interestingly, he adds a condition: “as soon as our inner evolution or some hidden law of the spirit makes that possible”. It is not an easy matter to leave the manifestation. This view of existence typically accepts the philosophy of rebirth, that we are caught in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth. At the same time, it also accepts that there must be some kind of hidden law of the spirit that makes such an escape possible. We may have to get rid of our past karma and for that, we may have to do yoga and Tapasya. We may have to spend many lives to dissolve the past karma before our spirit is capable of this kind of withdrawal from manifestation. One reason for this difficulty in leaving the manifestation is explained by Sri Aurobindo, True, the illusion is real to itself, the vanity pretends to be full of purpose; its laws and facts,—they are only facts and not truths, empirical and not real realities,—

are binding on us so long as we rest in the error. But from any standpoint of real knowledge, in any view of the true truth of things, all this self-delusion would seem to be little better than the laws of a cosmic madhouse; so long as we are mad and have to remain in the madhouse, we are perforce subject to its rules and we must make, according to our temperament, the best or the worst of them, but always our proper

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aim is to get cured of our insanity and depart into light and truth and freedom.

The mental attitude associated with this view is that this world is like a madhouse in which we are all insane but think that this is real. We have to correct this insanity, which means that first, we have to realise that this is a madhouse and that the reality is the Brahman. As long as we stay in this insanity we suffer the consequences of this world. Through yoga, especially through jnana yoga, we can realise that there is a higher truth and that it is an illusion and gets released. There are two parallel movements. On one side we have to realise this is a madhouse to be rejected, and on the other side, we have to realise the truth of Brahman. There is a little extension of this view in Buddhism and Sri Aurobindo takes that up here:

Whatever mitigations may be made in the severity of this logic, whatever concessions validating life and personality for the time being, yet from this viewpoint the true law of living must be whatever rule can help us soonest to get back to self-knowledge and lead by the most direct road to Nirvana; the true ideal must be an extinction of the individual and the universal, a self-annulment in the Absolute. This idea of self-extinction which is boldly and clearly proclaimed by the Buddhists, is in Vedantic thought a self-finding: but the self-finding of the individual by his growth into his true being in the Absolute would only be possible if both are interrelated realities...

Once we have decided to get back to that original Parabrahman, what can help us best is jnana yoga, not bhakti or karma yoga. Because out of these three yogas,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* karma yoga pulls us down to earth, to works and action, and action adds to more karma which keeps us tied to the chain of rebirth. We get more and more entangled with the world and in relations. With bhakti yoga we again get entangled on the emotional level. It does take us to the Divine but we get attached to the Divine. However, before being attached to the Divine our emotional being gradually ripens and we get into relations in the world itself. We become heart-centred and this builds relations with other human beings and to pull out of that is difficult. In jnana yoga, by the very nature of meditation, we withdraw from this world and try to get into trance. Therefore, in this view jnana yoga is the best way out because we don't have to act and we don't develop relations, we just meditate. That is what is meant by finding the quickest way back.

The Buddhists would say we must not get back to Brahman but into Nirvana, the true ideal is the extinction of the individual. There is a slight difference between the philosophies of Advaita and Buddhism.

The Advaita says the soul goes back to Brahman, the Buddhists say there is no soul so there is nothing that gets back; through the eight-fold path we extinguish ourselves. They also believe in the theory of karma, that from

our past birth we accrue karma which needs to be gotten rid of by the practice of the eight-fold path.

We must erase the past karma and not add new except perhaps the basic minimum. That is why the Buddhist live outside of society because it involves a jumble of relations, responsibilities and dependencies. They live in a Sangha, a community, where they don't have much interrelation and interaction with society, and therefore

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add as little new karma as possible. They believe that after several births and rebirths, our karmic debit balance comes to zero and we are appointed for Nirvana. We have nothing to lose, nothing to gain, nothing to submit, nothing to declare. This Buddhist ideal of self-extinction is translated in Vedantic thought to self-finding. As he says above,

...but the self-finding of the individual by his growth into his true being in the Absolute would only be possible if both are interrelated realities...

Sri Aurobindo suggests that the Buddhist explanation does make sense because we can only get from our present state to Nirvana if both are interrelated realities; therefore the Vedantic explanation that our soul is finding its own superior self is a better explanation.

Just because the Buddhists don't believe there is no soul doesn't mean there is none. Externally, whatever our beliefs may be, the reality doesn't change. This is a comment by Sri Aurobindo that Buddhism would not accept, but this is his view of the Buddhist explanation.

He continues by saying,

...it could not apply to the final world-abolishing self-affirmation of the Absolute in an unreal or temporary individual by the annulment of the false personal being and by the destruction of all individual and cosmic existence for that individual consciousness...

This is the same idea – we cannot annul the reality of the soul because the realisation of Nirvana cannot be attained by an unreal being. We can close our eyes and say this world does not exist, but that does not mean that

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the world vanishes or never existed. This is a comment on Buddhist philosophy.

But this idea of the total vanity of life is not altogether an inevitable consequence of the supracosmic theory of existence. In the Vedanta of the Upanishads, the Becoming of Brahman is accepted as a reality; there is room therefore for a truth of the Becoming; there is in that truth a right law of life, a permissible satisfaction of the hedonistic element in our being, its delight of temporal existence, and effective utilisation of its practical energy, of the executive force of consciousness in it; but, the truth and law of its temporal becoming once fulfilled, the soul has to turn back to its final self-realisation, for its natural highest fulfillment is a release, a liberation into its original being, its eternal self, its timeless reality. There is a circle of becoming starting from eternal Being and ending in it; or, from the point of view of the Supreme as a personal or superpersonal Reality, there is a temporary play, a game of becoming and living in the universe.

We have already dealt with the basic Vedantic attitude based on the view that the world is a Becoming of the Being of Brahman. Hindu society allowed the four dharmas, the dharma of the Brahmacharya ashram, the student life; the dharma of the Grihastha ashram, the householder life; the dharma of the Vanaprastha ashram which involved gradual retirement, community service, and religious life; and finally the Sannyasin stage which is the renunciation of the world completely. Therefore, it allowed for a full-fledged life, unlike the Buddhist and some other illusionist approaches. It accepted the world

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as real but a temporary play of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo continues:

Here, evidently, there is no other significance of life than the will of the Being to become, the will of consciousness and the urge of its force towards becoming, its delight of becoming; for the individual, when that is withdrawn from him or fulfilled in him and no longer active, the becoming ceases: but otherwise the universe persists or always comes back into manifestation, because the will to become is eternal and must be so since it is the inherent will of an eternal Existence.

He argues that this Becoming is eternal, and that it is the will of the eternal Existence. Those individuals who pass through this gamut of life go into sannyasahood, realise the Brahman and become one with him.

This realisation doesn't mean that the world or the manifestation stops. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Many is an inherent aspect of Brahman.

The word 'inherent' means that Brahman does not take upon itself the world by fancy, like just saying "now I will create something"; it is more like the womb of a lady which has an inherent possibility and tendency to give birth. The Brahman has an innate potential to become the Many. The individual may come and go but the world manifestation continues. He says, It may be said that one defect in this view of things is the absence any fundamental reality of the individual, of any abiding value and significance of his natural or his spiritual activity; but it can be replied that this demand for a permanent personal significance, for a personal eternity, is an error of our ignorant

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* surface consciousness; the individual is a temporary becoming of the Being, and that is a quite sufficient value and significance. It may be added that in a pure or an absolute existence there can be no values and significances: in the universe values exist and are indispensable, but only as relative and temporary buildings; there can be no absolute values, no eternal and self-existent significances in a Time-structure.

This sounds conclusive enough and it seems that nothing more can be said about the matter. And yet the question remains over; for the stress on our individual being, the demand on it, the value put on individual perfection and salvation is too great to be dismissed as a device for a minor operation, the coiling and uncoiling of an insignificant spiral amid the vast circlings of the Eternal's becoming in the universe...

Here for the first time, we see criticism of Vedanta.

Vedanta says there are three realities – the Supreme, the cosmos and the individual, – but the individual does not seem to be getting the importance that it deserves.

The criticism is that in Vedanta one thinks only of the Brahman and the world, but what about the individual?

Does he not have an eternal reality? In the modern world, the individual is given the most importance.

Individual freedom and expression are as if the slogan of the day. But in Indian society especially, the individual is not given much importance, it is the society which acquires greater significance. That is one of the major differences between the West and the East. In the West, the individual is given importance, in the East, the society, the collectivity is given more importance.

We work for the welfare of the society, the individual

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sacrifices himself for the sake of the collectivity. That is a basic difference. Here the criticism is that in Hindu philosophy, in Vedantic philosophy, the individual's importance is belittled. Sri Aurobindo says, however, this criticism can be countered:

...it can be replied that this demand for a permanent personal significance, for a personal eternity, is an error of our ignorant surface consciousness...

He says the demand for an eternal personal significance typically means that our ego should be eternalised, and that our name and personal accomplishments should be recognised. We are not here to eternise our ego.

Emphasising the importance of the outer person is the wrong idea. In eastern and Hindu philosophy we do not give importance to the outer individual personality. We see that in the Ajanta-Ellora paintings and the sculptures the names of the sculptors and artists are not written anywhere on their artworks. In modern times if a little painting is put in an exhibition the name appears with it. The ideal has changed; in ancient times the individual was seen only as a channel of the oversoul or the cosmic force; we were only an instrument. If we were used as an instrument by a higher force we were privileged, graced, and grateful to the Lord to be used to make something beautiful. After all, it is the Divine who has created it and we have been only like a brush in his hand to put the colours. That is the attitude of a spiritual person.

Sri Aurobindo says that the true individual is not the surface ego personality but the deeper spiritual personality.

Still, he adds that

...the stress on our individual being, the demand

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* on it, the value put on individual perfection and salvation is too great to be dismissed as a device for a minor operation...

The individual soul has important value in Vedanta because after all, it is through the individual soul that Brahman expresses himself. Without the individual soul, Brahman cannot manifest. If we speak only of the importance of the individual ego, there is not much value given. That is how Sri Aurobindo answers this criticism against Vedanta, that it gives the utmost importance to the individual soul, but not to the ego. The soul is the direct expression of the Purushottama, the Brahman or Parabrahman himself. When we can truly say, 'Soham',

‘I am That’, then we will know the true value of the individual.

This essential attitude of self-sacrifice of the ego is evident in Indian culture and it has helped to make the Indian personality flexible and congenial to spiritual life.

The essence of spiritual life is a sacrifice at the feet of the Divine, surrender to the Divine. This Indian ethos has taught the Indian mind to efface itself.

Sri Aurobindo continues,

The cosmic-terrestrial view which we may take next as the exact opposite of the supracosmic, considers cosmic existence as real; it goes farther and accepts it as the only reality, and its view is confined, ordinarily, to life in the material universe. God, if any God exists, is an eternal Becoming; or if God does not exist, then Nature,—whatever view as we may take of Nature, whether we regard it as a play of Force with Matter or a Great cosmic Life or even admit a universal

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impersonal Mind in Life and Matter,—is a perennial becoming.

The cosmic-terrestrial regards the material world alone as real; Brahman is viewed as unreal. This theory believes in Becoming. It means all that we see is part of Nature.

Some people having this view may still have the concept of God, but for them, God would mean Nature, Energy, and the Becoming, not some God in the supracosmic level who is all-beauty, all-delight and all-conscious.

Therefore, for this cosmic terrestrial view Reality is the Becoming, whereas for the supracosmic view it is the Being; they are opposite views. The third view, which we will see later, is logically somewhere in between the Being and the Becoming.

Continuing with the cosmic-terrestrial theory, but giving it a broader scope, Sri Aurobindo says, Earth is the field or it is one of the temporary fields,

man is the highest possible form or only one of the temporary forms of the Becoming. Man individually may be altogether mortal; mankind also may survive only for a certain short period of the earth's existence; earth itself may bear life only for a rather longer period of its duration in the solar system; that system may itself one day come to an end or at least cease to be an active or productive factor in the Becoming; the universe we live in may itself dissolve or contract again into the seed-state of its Energy: but the principle of becoming is eternal,—or at least as eternal as anything can be in the obscure ambiguity of existence.

The Becoming is the most important thing. Becoming means the Being is manifesting. Everyone is manifesting

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* something. We as individuals live for a certain number of years and then die. Humanity continues and the individual leaves something behind for posterity.

Scientist says that humanity will not continue beyond a certain time; in the course of evolution, humanity could be destroyed. Today we see the glaciers melting and the water levels rising. The whole earth may be withdrawn back once again into the water. The scientists also say that earth itself has only a certain limited number of years to survive – it may be millions of years, but there will be an end to earth. But even then these philosophers could say, even if earth ends the universe will be there.

But even the universe itself, scientists say, expands and retracts, and the whole creation, the entire universe with all its stars and planets will go back to that zero point of the Big Bang. Everything may get destroyed, but even then, it could be argued that the principle of Becoming is eternal. The universe would be born again. This view will not acquiesce to the idea that there is a Supreme, God, Brahman, or Absolute, or if it does, that Supreme is the Becoming, the manifestation.

Continuing this same idea, Sri Aurobindo says, In the ordinary view of a sole terrestrial life or a restricted transient passage in the material universe, —for possibly there may be thinking living beings on other planets,—an

acceptance of man's mortality and a passive endurance of it or an active dealing with a limited personal or collective life and life-aims are the only choice possible. The one high and reasonable course for the individual human being,—unless indeed he is satisfied with pursuing his personal purposes or somehow living his life

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until it passes out of him,—is to study the laws of the Becoming and take the best advantage of them to realise, rationally or intuitionally, inwardly or in the dynamism of life, its potentialities in himself or for himself or in or for the race of which he is a member; his business is to make the most of such actualities as exists and to seize on or to advance towards the highest possibilities that can be developed here or are in the making.

In this view we should make the best of what we have, because we have a limited number of years. Materialists don't believe in rebirth, but only in one life. Therefore, we must get everything possible in this one life whether it is material happiness or some kind of permanence.

Everything must be compacted into one life. People with a materialistic view are in great haste to achieve all that is possible in one life. In such a case life becomes full of tension, not only that, people do anything to get things fast. This is the basic trend of modern life because it believes only in the Becoming, only in this world, that this alone is real.

Science is trying to find out the potentialities of human beings and psychologists try to discover the hidden potentialities of our consciousness. Some psychologists these days admit that there are levels of consciousness beyond the mind. However, the question is can we achieve these levels of consciousness in a single life or make them effective for our life? To accept is one thing, but to make them effective in this life is another.

Sri Aurobindo says that the aim in this perspective is to achieve whatever we can and make the most of what is achieved and advance towards our highest possibilities.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Only mankind as a whole can do this with entire effect, by the mass of individual and collective action, in the process of time, in the evolution of the race-experience: but the individual man can help towards it in his own limits, can do all these things for himself to a certain extent in the brief space of life allotted to him; but, especially, his thought and action can be a contribution towards the present intellectual, moral and vital welfare and the future progress of the race.

I think this is self-evident, this is what we are all doing, at the level of thought, action and feeling we try to contribute something to this human race for the present and the future by what we are doing. If the scientist finds a new technology, he contributes towards the next generation. The whole idea is to do our best for two objectives – one, for ourselves, to enjoy this world as much possible, and at the same time, leave something behind for the betterment of the human race. These are the ideals of the materialistic world and humanity has been trying to fulfill them.

He is capable of a certain nobility of being; an acceptance of his inevitable and early individual annihilation does not preclude him from making a high use of the will and thought which have been developed in him or from directing them to great ends which shall or may be worked out by humanity.

Although the materialist believes in a single life, he still may have a certain nobility. He may think of helping others. Philanthropists do help the needy by giving them money or shelter or in any other manner.

Sri Aurobindo says there can be a certain nobility because,

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Even the temporary character of the collective being of humanity does not so very much matter...

Although scientists may say that eventually mankind is going to be abolished, these ideas do not really affect the common person. He does his best, with his egocentric consciousness. In the beginning of life there is no humanitarian approach we want to get wealth.

Afterwards, one may share. Even if the scientists say that humanity is going to be abolished, it doesn't matter because that's going to take a long time. With this mind people try to do their best in the given time and help the human race.

Then Sri Aurobindo says,

...for so long as the universal Becoming takes the form of human body and mind, the thought, the will it has developed in its human creature will work itself out and to follow that intelligently is the natural law and best rule of human life. Humanity and its welfare and progress during its persistence on earth provide the largest field and the natural limits for the terrestrial aim of our being; the superior persistence of the race and the greatness and importance of the collective life should determine the nature and scope of our ideals.

We can understand the psychology of this materialist who tries to help others. Basically, this person has no other range of consciousness to conquer. He has achieved a lot in his materialistic life, but the range of his expansion is horizontal, not vertical. When the human being tries to go vertically, within or without, he has a lot of work in front of him. He will not try to expand horizontally by wealth or fame because the moment we

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* are a little settled in life more or less comfortably, then there comes a time in the inner evolution in which one tries to conquer the higher levels of consciousness or the inner depths of the soul. The focus of the consciousness and the effort is redirected to the higher or inner ranges, but if these are not seen or believed in, then we can only expand horizontally, in wealth, power and name.

It is because everybody tries to do the same thing, we clash and get crushed. It leads to violence and wars.

Everybody on this limited earth wants the same piece of land, but if instead, we go vertically, infinity is there and we don't have clashes. If everyone strives for the Overmind, we don't clash because that is infinite. That is

what spirituality adds, it brings another direction and dimension to our efforts. The direction is vertical and inner.

The direction of life, as in our Hindu dharma, moves from the Vanaprastha stage to the Sannyasa stage. At a certain point we say I have offered to society, what is missing is the attempt to go beyond. This is how Indian philosophy is so wonderful, it gives us a basis for individual growth, for social growth, and then allows us to be alone with God or discover the inner Self. If we do not grow in the manner charted out Indian spiritual tradition then we stagnate in our life after a certain age. Our health grows frail, our children leave us for their jobs and the society no more needs our services. All these problems come because we limit ourselves to a horizontal expansion.

Here in India there is greater stability because as we get old we have another dimension of being to explore. People turn religious, go to temples or come to an ashram. I am not claiming that many do this, but this provision is given

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in the culture. Because many are now locked up in this materialistic consciousness, perhaps few are doing this, but at least the ancients have given us this provision.

Lastly, Sri Aurobindo says,

But if the progress or welfare of humanity be excluded as not our business or as a delusion, the individual is there; to achieve his greatest possible perfection or make the most of his life in whatever way his nature demands will then be life's significance.

For the materialist, if the progress of society is not ideal, there is just the development of the individual life. Of course, in Indian society, there is the possibility of spiritual development. But the pursuit of materialism limits an individual to the achievement of his name and fame and ego aggrandizements. For others in the West, the social ideal is also quite strong, people become concerned with the welfare of the animals and the

environment. They have a whole police force to save animals in distress. In India, only now we have started hearing of such things. The West has focused on individual and social expansion, but in India we don't have that same kind of consciousness. This is part of the cosmic, terrestrial view in which the world is the only reality and our job is to make the best of this one life we have on this earth.

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Out of the four theories of existence, we have covered the first two; we now start with the third one.

The supraterrrestrial view admits the reality of the material cosmos and it accepts the temporary

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* duration of earth and human life as the first fact we have to start from; but it adds to it a perception of other worlds or planes of existence which have an eternal or at least a more permanent duration; it perceives behind the mortality of the bodily life of man the immortality of the soul within him. A belief in the immortality, the eternal persistence or the individual human spirit apart from the body is the keyword of this conception of life. That of itself necessitates its other belief in higher planes of existence than the material or terrestrial, since for a disembodied spirit there can be no abiding place in a world whose every operation depends upon some play of force, whether spiritual, mental, vital or material, in and with the forms of Matter. There arises from this view of things the idea that the true home of man is beyond and that the earth-life is in some way or other only an episode of his immortality or a deviation from a celestial and spiritual into a material existence.

In a brief paragraph, Sri Aurobindo give us a complete view of the theory of the supraterrrestrial philosophy. This philosophy accepts that there exist things beyond this earth. The first theory was the supracosmic – it accepts that which is beyond the cosmos itself, what we call the transcendent. But this view, like the second theory, admits the material cosmos and it accepts

the temporary duration of earth and human life, but with the proviso that there also exist other worlds or planes of existence.

Here the main stress is on those worlds beyond the earth.

Again, the first view accepted the supreme transcendent, the second accepted that the earth alone was true, and now the third view is combining earth with the middle

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ranges; it does not discuss the transcendent, it only accepts the middle ranges, the ranges of the vital worlds, the mental worlds and paradise etc. This view accepts the earth but says that more important are the planes in between. As he says above, "A belief in the immortality, the eternal persistence of the individual human spirit apart from the body is the key word of this conception of life"

This third theory stresses the immortality of the soul, that the soul exists on the higher planes of existence and comes to earth. He says that this earthly life is a kind of episode in its immortality. That means the soul comes to earth for a short while experiences whatever it has to, and then returns to its plane of origin. Why does it return? Because it cannot stay on this earth. He says that for a disembodied spirit there can be no abiding place in a material world where there are so many forces interacting. The earth is a kind of playfield, or perhaps a battlefield, of many forces. The soul participates in this battle for a while and then goes back to its own world.

In the next paragraph we get a little more explanation for the soul coming into this world. He says, There is first the idea of certain religions, long persistent but now greatly shaken or discredited, that man is a being primarily created as a material living body upon earth into which a newly born divine soul is breathed or else with which it is associated by the fiat of an almighty Creator. A solitary episode, this life is his one opportunity from which he departs to a world of eternal bliss or to a world of eternal misery either according as the general or preponderant balance of his acts is good or evil or according as

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* he accepts or rejects, knows or ignores a particular creed, mode of worship, divine mediator, or else according to the arbitrary predestining caprice of his Creator.

This is an important remark on a certain religious view. This supraterritorial view has been much used and misused by religions because it suited them very well.

Religions posited the intermediary levels like paradise and allured man to go there. How to go there? How do you go there? First, they say, you have only one birth.

Some researchers have written books recently – in the last fifteen or twenty years – that Christianity, does not now accept rebirth, although, originally it had the concept of rebirth. It was somewhere midway taken out of the theology of Christianity because it did not suit the purposes of the priests and the fathers. Why? Because in the Church's philosophy, according to Sri Aurobindo, the fate of the individual soul depends on its acceptance of the Christian belief:

...preponderant balance of his acts is good or evil or according as he accepts or rejects, knows or ignores a particular creed, mode of worship, divine mediator...

That means the priests could have a full control over people, in effect saying that “if you don't follow what I say then you will have no place in Heaven”. On the other hand, if the concept of rebirth was accepted and one knew that he has many lives, then this control of the priests gets weakened. So purposely, they had to bring in this idea that we have only this one life and if we follow the church rigorously and faithfully then only we will go to paradise, otherwise we will go to hell and stay there forever.

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Sri Aurobindo says that there are other forms of the main argument that are less absurd and dubious: But that is the supraterritorial theory of life in its

least rational form of questionable creed or dogma.

Taking the idea of the creation of a soul by the physical birth as our starting-point, we may still suppose that by a natural law, common to all, the rest of its existence has to be pursued beyond in a supraterrrestrial plane, when the soul has shaken off from it its original matrix of matter like a butterfly escaped from the chrysalis and disporting itself in the air on its light and coloured wings.

Independent of one's belief in any creed or religious practice, one could still argue that we have only one life on earth and then our soul goes back to its permanent residence somewhere else in the supraphysical worlds.

Coming to earth is only a kind of an episode like a butterfly dwelling in its chrysalis and when it opens, when our time in the world is over, our soul is freed like a butterfly to ascend to its home.

Or we may suppose preferably a preterrestrial existence of the soul, a fall or descent into matter or a reascension into celestial being. If we admit the soul's pre-existence, there is no reason to exclude this last possibility as an occasional spiritual occurrence,—a being belonging to another plane of existence may, conceivably, assume for some purpose the human body and nature: but this is not likely to be the universal principle of earth-existence or a sufficient rationale for the creation of the material universe.

This is yet another version of the theory of the supraphysical in which the soul normally lives in a

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* heavenly realm and existed there prior to its life on earth, and for some reason comes to live on earth temporarily, and then it returns to that celestial realm. Sri Aurobindo suggests that such an incidental, occasional descent of some souls from their own supraterrrestrial realm into the physical world could not be a sufficient justification for the creation of the material universe. There would have to be some more important and consistent purpose for souls to enter into birth in this world. He says that this is unlikely to be the basis for the creation of this universe.

In contrast, Vedanta tells us that all souls who come here come with a purpose and for a particular kind of experience in physical life, and they come not only once but they keep coming life after life. This is a more reasonable justification for the creation of the material universe. Sri Aurobindo then describes another variation on the theory:

It is also sometimes supposed that the solitary life on earth is a stage only and the development of the being nearer to its original glory occurs in a succession of worlds which are so many other stages of its growth, stadia of its journey...

Then he writes about an Indian version of the supratererestrial theory:

There is too an Indian view which regards the world as a garden of the divine Lila, a play of the diving Being with the conditions of cosmic existence in this world of an inferior Nature; the soul of man takes part in the Lila through a protracted series of births, but it is destined to reascend at last into the proper plane of the Divine being and there enjoy an eternal proximity and communion: this gives a certain

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rationale to the creative process and the spiritual adventure which is either absent or not clearly indicated in the other accounts of this kind of soul-movement or soul-cycle.

One Vedantic view says that the soul comes to this earth many times, and the reason for its coming is that this world is a garden of the divine Lila. Some Vedantins say that this earth is an inferior creation; some say it is a place of development and some others say it is the scene of a spiritual exile. This earth is created by the Divine, but the soul may be undergoing here a dark period of sorrow and suffering, or perhaps it gains experiences for its development. Nevertheless, the soul comes here because it is a part of the divine Lila, a divine play and we are actors like in any of the Shakespearean plays. Our souls are participating as different actors in this Lila, but with the proviso that we are participating in “protracted series of births”. An important difference between Vedanta and other religions is that Vedanta believes in a series of births. We come again and again to this Lila taking

upon ourselves different roles. We assume different roles in different lives and our soul gets enriched. Each one of us can blossom in this world, blossom not in the sense of a materialistic, egoistic personality, but in the sense of a spiritual blossoming.

Sri Aurobindo says that this gives a certain rationale to the creative process. We all participate in this Lila with the promise that ultimately all of us would “reascend at last into the proper plane of divine being”. There is an evolutionary process and ultimately we will enjoy an

“eternal proximity and communion with the Divine”. We work here and participate in this garden, but eventually,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* we will go back to the Divine or be in close communion with Him.

Sri Aurobindo concludes his comments on this supraphysical theory by saying:

Always there are three essential characteristics in all these varying statements of the common principle: first, the belief in the individual immortality of the human spirit; secondly, as a necessary consequence, the idea of its sojourn on earth as a temporary passage or a departure from its highest eternal nature and of heaven beyond as its proper habitation; thirdly, an emphasis on the development of the ethical and spiritual being as the means of ascension and therefore the one proper business of life in this world of matter.

In the various religious views of the supraterrrestrial, the common points are that the soul is immortal, it comes from its supraphysical home upon the earth for a short time, and there is some kind of development of the ethical and spiritual being here on earth. The emphasis is more on the ethics in Christianity and other religions; the emphasis on the spiritual being is there in the Vedanta and the Hindu religion.

Now we come to the second part. He has explained three of the four theories – his own integral theory will be explained later – and now he is going to discuss the mental attitudes towards life that can be adopted based on these theories.

These are the three fundamental ways of seeing, each with its mental attitude towards life, that can be adopted with regard to our existence; the rest

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are usually midway stations or else variations or composites which attempt to adopt themselves more freely to the complexity of the problem. For, practically, it is impossible for man taken as a race, whatever a few individuals may succeed in doing, to guide his life permanently or wholly by the leading motive of any of these three attitudes, uniquely, to the exclusion of the others' claim upon his nature. A confused amalgam of two or more of them, a conflict or division of his life-motives between them or some attempt at synthesis is his way of dealing with the various impulses of his complex being and the intuitions of his mind to which they appeal for their sanction.

He is here dealing with mental attitudes in general.

Sri Aurobindo asks the question, can humanity confine itself to any one view? He says that commonly human beings will combine at least two if not all the three.

Normally, people believe in the terrestrial view together with the supraterrrestrial, or believe in the terrestrial and the supracosmic views. He says,

Almost all men normally devote the major part of their energy to the life on earth, to the terrestrial needs, interests, desires, ideals of the individual and the race. It could not be otherwise; for the care of the body, the sufficient development and satisfaction of the vital and the mental being of man, the pursuit of high individual and large collective ideals which start from the idea of an attainable human perfection or nearer approach to perfection

through his normal development, are imposed upon us by the very character of our terrestrial being...

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* The reason that we cannot be exclusive to any one of these theories, however good and high they may seem to be, is because humanity is fundamentally terrestrial.

When we grow, it is the body that grows first. We grow from the little baby to childhood, then into adults, and finally become old. As we grow we have to take care of our body. However spiritual we may be, when we get a bad stomach-ache, we run to the doctor. The body pulls us back to this earth. We may believe in heavens or in the Supreme Sachchidananda, but because of the way we are made we have to take care of our physical body. When we get hungry, we do not just say, I am a sannyasin and I don't care for food. Even a sannyasin has to take enough care to eat or find a source to replenish his body.

When I lived in Bangkok, I used to see the Buddhist monks coming out in the morning to beg for food. Each monk had a particular street around that particular temple. In that area, the people around the temple would take care of the monks. They would know that today is Tuesday so this monk will come out onto this street.

By the time he came out at 8 in the morning they had kept their offerings ready for the monk in a basket, and the monk just had to go round and collect his food for the day. They gave all kinds of things, which in India perhaps, would be a bit shocking. They might give mutton, pork, chicken, fish, everything was offered to these people. In India we think that sannyasins must be pure vegetarians, but there these things were the normal food for them. It was offered and they went back to the temples and before midday they had to take their meals.

What I want to emphasise is that even monks who have renounced the world and are concentrating on the

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Absolute or the mid-worlds have to take care of their bodies.

That means practically we have accepted the earth.

We may not like it as it is a place of suffering, but at least temporarily we have to accept. As long as we are living here and our body is there, we have to take the reality of earth into consideration. We can't escape concentrating on the earth and the earthly life, because that is the very character of our terrestrial being. Sri Aurobindo continues,

Any view of our being which neglects, unduly belittles or intolerantly condemns them, is therefore by that very fact, whatever its other truths or merit or utility, or whatever its suitability to individuals of a certain temperament or in a certain stage of spiritual evolution, unfit to be the general and complete rule of human living.

Let us note that here Sri Aurobindo is talking about the general rule. One can always argue and say, I know of one man who didn't eat for the last five years. For every rule there are exceptions. But Sri Aurobindo is not interested in these exceptions, he is speaking of a general rule of human living. On the whole, we have to accept this earth because of our body.

Nature takes good care that the race shall not neglect these aims which are a necessary part of her evolution; for they fall within the method and stages of the divine plan in us, and a vigilance for her first steps and for the maintenance of their mental and material ground is a preoccupation which she cannot allow to go into the background, since these things belong to the foundation and body of her structure.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* You see how beautifully Sri Aurobindo explains it! We have to accept this body's maintenance and care because it is there as part of the general plan of nature. Nature has this grand plan of evolution. Some philosophies say that this earth is a *mithya* but they don't say we should all commit mass suicide. Nature has so created humankind that whatever our mental philosophy, its plan is that we must be physically here, and our physical basis must be sound. After we have established a

sound basis for the physical, nature brings in other levels of consciousness into this body.

Nature wants to develop this physical consciousness and body to a great extent so that when it is time to bring about the overmental or the supramental force and consciousness, the human body is capable of receiving it. That is precisely the philosophy of physical education in the Ashram. The body must be strong so that it can receive the higher forces and not buckle down when a higher force descends. This is not an ascetic life in which one eats less and starves the body. If the body is not strong and a higher force comes, some people may mad, some people become ill or some others' body breaks down. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo emphasised that we should eat well, sleep well, exercise well and have a good balance. We don't want to go to extremes.

We should not become only a champion athlete and neglect other important things. The Mother said that we should have a sound body; not for the sake of showing off its powers or getting gold medals. This is the integral philosophy of life, which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are now spreading into the consciousness of humanity.

It will catch on but it may take time. Buddhism and

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Christianity took hundreds of years to spread their philosophy of life. This integral view also will take hold of the mind of the humankind and it will spread, and once it spreads, the results would be astonishing. What we are doing today is precisely to spread this theory of the integral view. And it is only a very few who are translating that philosophy into yoga, into life. When we go to lectures here or seminars there or workshops there, we don't expect that overnight we all become sadhaks. The whole idea is to let as many people as possible know this new view of life, and later they may develop the attitude that "all life is yoga". Sri Aurobindo says that Nature has got a grand plan and in that plan, it is necessary to have a healthy physical life. Therefore, whatever our beliefs, nature will not allow mankind to neglect its attention from physical life.

Sri Aurobindo then says,

But also she has implanted in us a sense that there is something in our composition which goes beyond this first terrestrial nature of humanity. For this reason the race cannot accept or follow for a very long time any view of being which ignores this higher and subtler sense and labours to confine us entirely to a purely terrestrial way of living. The intuition of a beyond, the idea and feeling of a soul and spirit in us which is other than the mind, life and body or is greater, not limited by their formula, returns upon us and ends by resuming possession.

This is the next step. Once nature procures this confirmation from humanity that it will commit to living in this world, it also gives the intuition of a beyond. In spite of the religious pull to heaven, people have not left

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the world. At the most, they have gone to monasteries, they have become nuns or monks or sannyasins, but they have not rejected the physical life. They may eat simple food, but they do not starve themselves. Nature brings in the intuition that there is something deeper than the mind, life and body – that is the soul. It has given us an urge to seek That. Sri Aurobindo says, The ordinary man satisfies this sense easily enough by devoting to it his exceptional moments or the latter part of his life when age shall have blunted the zest of his earthly nature...

Human beings come to realise the deeper aspect of the soul. Some people may realise this when they are young.

This is the advantage of having a spiritual culture as a background or else a spiritual parentage or education.

Otherwise, Nature tends to bring this intuition of the beyond when the human being becomes older. The natural thing is that people after their retirement go on a pilgrimage. Nowadays, I hear, that more people are going on spiritual tours than on pilgrimages. But our ancient custom was to go on a pilgrimage after retirement, that was the period when one goes towards the Divine and that coincided with pilgrimages. Now materialism is

stronger and we are losing the concept of pilgrimages so we go on tours. Sri Aurobindo tells us that this ideal or urge to find the soul or a turning towards the Divine does come back to us when we age.

When we get older, our ambitions and vital urges get blunted, and we begin to wonder whether there is something more to life. We go to temples, religious places, pujas, and offer some money to this temple or that church because now we want to follow the stream

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of religiosity. All our life we were too busy with company meetings but now we are free and want to do this.

Sri Aurobindo says that nature takes care that eventually this higher urge comes to us.

He says there are exceptional individuals, but this is the normal tendency in general humanity:

...the exceptional man turn to the supraterrrestrial as the one aim and law of living and diminishes or mortifies as much as possible his earthly parts in the hope of developing his celestial nature.

Of course, there are some people who at an early age say their aim is the supraterrrestrial, their aim is the Divine, and they don't want to participate in this life.

They may then become sannyasins or take whatever short-cut they find to reach this higher realm. In fact –

There have been epochs in which the supraterrrestrial view has gained a very powerful hold and there has been a vacillation between an imperfect human living which cannot take its large natural expansion and a sick ascetic longing for the celestial life which also does not acquire in more than a few its best pure and happy movement.

Sri Aurobindo says there have been not only exceptional individuals, there have been exceptional epochs in which the supraterrrestrial view was powerful.

In India during the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries many people were under the influence of Advaita and became sannyasins. They believed the world was an illusion, and though they took sufficient care to live in the physical world, their whole effort was to find the Divine as fast as possible. Their shortcut to the Divine sometimes included torture of the body because they

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* believed the body was imprisoning the soul. Some would starve the body so that the desires for wealth, comfort and sex would dry up and their soul could be freed. The ideal of illusionism spread very fast and many people took to these shortcuts.

This is a sign of the creation of some false war in the being by the setting up of a standard or a device that ignores the law of evolutionary capacity...

Sri Aurobindo comments here that this is something that cannot be accepted but unfortunately humanity had to go through this entire process. Some may ask how can it be that people came so much under the sway of illusionism. But we could also ask how is it that in modern times people are so much under the sway of materialism. It just catches on. When I was living in Bangkok, I used to watch on TV vulgar dances and songs, and I would thank God that it was not there in India!

But when I came back to India within two years it was the same. Some powerful thought or vital consciousness just catches on, and whether one is in Bangkok, New Delhi, California, London or Berlin it doesn't matter.

There are epochs when humanity gets under the sway of a particular level of consciousness. It is quite possible that in a few centuries the whole of humanity will be caught in a spiritual swing of consciousness. It would then not be this materialistic madhouse but instead, there would be a widespread spirituality that will not be an ascetic supraterrrestrial or supracosmic

spirituality. But it would be an integral spirituality in which science, the physical earth, heaven and the Supreme are all brought together in the individual being. That is what we will be driving

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towards in the fourth theory to be discussed, the integral view.

Sri Aurobindo explains that these exclusive tendencies cannot last and that ultimately an integration of the different aspects of our being is necessary: That equation can only be found if we recognise the purport of our whole complex human nature in its right place in the cosmic movement; what is needed is to give its full legitimate value to each part of our composite being and many-sided aspiration and find out the key of their unity as well as their difference.

Sri Aurobindo is driving at the idea that nature's plan is to develop the physical and then the other parts of his being and take humanity to spirituality. The development of each part of the human being is necessary. We cannot suppress the physical and develop only the spiritual or suppress the spiritual and only develop the physical, vital or mental. There has to be a fulfilment of each part of our being because each aspect of our complex nature is seeking its own completion. During all these centuries, we have focused on just one or two aspects but now, Sri Aurobindo says, we have to take up the whole being of the individual.

In fact, this secret was caught by ancient Indians that there must be a fullness of human life and not a focus on any one of them. It is because of this that we had in ancient Indian culture four legitimate motives of human living, which Sri Aurobindo describes as:

...man's vital interests and needs, his desires, his ethical and religious aspiration, his ultimate spiritual aim and density,—in other words, the claims of his

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* vital, physical and emotional being, the claims of his ethical and religious being governed by a knowledge of the law God and Nature and man, and the claims of his spiritual longing for the Beyond...

Indian culture has this idea of the *artha*, *kama*, *dharma* and *moksha* dharmas. *Artha* was the fulfillment of the needs of the vital; that means money and wealth. Next was *kama*, which gave satisfaction of the desires, and which actually goes with the *grihastha* ashram, where there was fulfilment of desires on every level – physical, vital, mental – where one has the marriage, children, earning money and the fulfilment of ambitions; that is the period of life for the fulfilment of the desires. Then there was the third dharma of ethical and religious aspiration, which Sri Aurobindo describes as a “religious being governed by a knowledge of the law God” , associated with the period of the *vanaprastha* ashram. The last one is the spiritual longing for the beyond, the *sannyasa*. He says that in India we had this idea of the totality of life and the fulfillment of each part – the physical needs, the vital needs, the ethical needs and the spiritual needs. These are the four parts of the human being – and in India we have given a period of life for each stage of development. Of course, one might not go strictly according to the period designated for each, but at least the four stages of life would be fulfilled. He says further,

It provided for a period of education and preparation based on this idea of life, a period of normal living to satisfy human desires and interests under the moderating rule of the ethical and religious part in us, a period of withdrawal and spiritual preparation, and a last period of renunciation of life

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and release into the spirit. Evidently, if applied as a universal rule, this prescribed norm, this delineation of the curve of our journey, would miss the fact that it is impossible for all to trace out the whole circle of development in a single short lifetime; but it was modified by the theory of a complete evolution pursued through a long succession of rebirths...

Here is where comes in India's idea of rebirth. It is interesting to see how in the West, Christianity took away this idea of rebirth because it did not suit the religious control of human life. But here it was different. We put forward for society the ideal that each individual must pass through these four levels. But it was easier said than done.

How many people go beyond the *grihastha* ashram of family life, the householder's life? We get married, have children, get wealth and property, but we don't leave it behind. We get attached to it. So most of the people get stuck in the second level, very few go to the third level, and fewer still to the fourth. So they said, it's all right, if you cannot fulfil these four stages in a single life, you can do it again in the next life; you will have to come back to fulfil these four stages.

There was necessitated the idea of rebirth. We were given a kind of excuse but always were told to keep our life along the lines of the dharma, of the higher ideal. We may not be able to achieve it, but at least we have the orientation that we will have moksha, if not in this life, then in another life, but the endeavour should be there. This is the philosophy of fulfilling our complex nature.

Sri Aurobindo then adds one more thing – this ideal never succeeded in India; it was a failure!

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Many people maybe in their 60s, but still feel they

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* have much work to do at their office. Nowadays, till the age of 60 people are expected to contribute, and after 60 they want to relax and enjoy with their grandchildren.

Of course, there are exceptions, but we are not speaking about them. Normally, achieving all four ashrams in a single life has become difficult. This was one cause for the failure of this ideal at the social level. But there

is a deeper reason why this ideal of the four stages of life failed in the country. That is because we have emphasised the idea of escaping from life. Moksha meant liberation from life, from the sorrow of this earth. It was not fulfilment of the soul, but an escape of the soul.

This, Sri Aurobindo would say, made its failure inevitable. If as a student in the *brahmacharya* ashram, we are told that our ideal is to escape from this world, to achieve moksha, because earth is a transient place from which ultimately we must liberate ourselves. As a young student, how would I feel? I would say, “all right, if that is the ideal, then I will go quickly towards that”. Today, the ideal is wealth and success, and youngsters want to find a shortcut. They work hard at the cost of the health of their own mind, at the cost of their relations, and some people end up committing suicide. They say if I can’t have the success of going to America, what is the use of this life, and end their lives. That’s the level of nonsense to which we have reached. What happened with the ideal of moksha was that the shortcut was to become a sannyasin and skip over the *grihastha* ashram and *vanaprastha* ashram. They said why should I bother going through these stages? So just after being in school or college, they didn’t get married or contribute to society or its welfare.

As Sri Aurobindo explains,

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...the impatience of the human intellect and will must end by driving at a shortcut and getting rid as much as possible of any more tedious and dilatory processes; if it cannot do that or if it is incapable of following the shortcut, it is left with the ego and its satisfactions but with nothing greater to be achieved here.

This was the reason that Indian society, although it had great philosophical and social ideals, failed to really become a spiritual society. People either took the shortcut of becoming sannyasins which meant a failure of social growth, or else they got stuck in the ego and the desires of family life. In both these ways Indian society failed. And these errors were compounded by the system of castes, and as a result, we have never developed a truly spiritual society. We call western countries materialistic, with just a few

spiritual souls, but we had a kind of society that wanted to be spiritual but did not have the zeal to go beyond the family, the earthly, life, what Sri Aurobindo calls “the ego and satisfaction of desires”.

We remained a mundane society.

In something I read recently, somebody pointed out that the best things in Indian society have always been other-worldly, and that it has neglected the earth. On the contrary, although we have had an ideal of the other-worldly, Sri Aurobindo says that we never reached that other-worldly ideal, we were stuck like any other society in the world. We have to make a distinction between the ideal, in which we were great and integral, and the reality of the society, in which we were like any other society.

This article also argued that Indian society is basically this-worldly rather than other-worldly. In the West,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* there is an image that Indians are impractical and other-worldly. But this gentleman argues in his article that this is not at all the case; historically it never was true and today if we go around, with all our IT masters across the globe, nobody can say India is other-worldly; it is based concretely in this world.

Therefore, this attempt at integral development of society ended in failure. We must understand the reason, otherwise, we might think the same failure will come to Sri Aurobindo’s ideal for a spiritual society. The attempt failed, he says, because

The old synthesis in fact contained in itself the seed of this exaggeration and could not but lapse into it: for if we regard the escape from life as our desirable end, if we omit to hold up any high offer of life-fulfillment, if life has not a divine significance in it, the impatience of the human intellect and will must end by driving at a short cut...

This is the lacuna – an escape from life was seen as the desirable end. Now Sri Aurobindo brings more or less the same concept of integral living,

fulfilment of the mind, the vital, the physical as well as the spiritual, but importantly, he gives a divine significance to life. Our ancient Indian dharma had the integral ideal of the four ashrams, but the ultimate ideal was escaping from life; here Sri Aurobindo brings a divine significance to life.

That is a crucial difference between his and the ancient Indian ideal.

Sri Aurobindo's explains,

A spiritual evolution, an unfolding here of the Being within from birth to birth, of which man becomes the

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central instrument and human life at its highest offers the critical turning-point, is the link needed for the reconciliation of life and spirit; for it allows us to take into account the total nature of man and to recognise the legitimate place of his triple attraction, to earth, to heaven and to the supreme Reality. But a complete solution of its oppositions can be arrived at only on this basis that the lower consciousness of mind, life and body cannot arrive at its full meaning until it is taken up, restated, transformed by the light and power and joy of the higher spiritual consciousness...

The terrestrial ideal which has been so powerful in the modern mind, restored man and his life on earth and the collective hope of the race to a prominent position and created an insistent demand for a solution; this is the good it has accomplished.

Having discussed the other theories, we now begin with Sri Aurobindo's own theory of existence. What is the divine significance brought in by Sri Aurobindo?

The stamp of his philosophy is that he does not give an escapist ideal, does not give an ethical or religious ideal.

He says all these kinds of ideals will fail and have failed to fulfill humanity's total being. We see now how important is one's ideal; our theory or view of existence has a tremendous impact on our life. Just because we

said that moksha is our ultimate goal, all these problems of Indian society have come about, and even all these problems of the castes are interlinked with the ideal of the moksha.

In fact, it was said that neither women nor shudras would get moksha. Mark how perverted the whole thing became. The society, the institutions, the beliefs, all depend on our vision of life. For Sri Aurobindo escapism is not the ideal; life has a divine significance. That divine

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* significance is “A spiritual evolution, an unfolding here of the Being within from birth to birth...” Sri Aurobindo tells us that this Supreme Transcendent Being whom we call Brahman, Sachchidananda, Purushottama, Parabrahman is the Being who has come to earth as our soul and with each birth this soul is fulfilling itself, is getting an experience of this world.

He continues by saying, regarding this evolution of the Being here on earth, “of which man becomes the central instrument and human life at its highest offers the critical turning-point...”

So it is this Brahman who is fulfilling himself as the human soul and in this fulfillment, there is need of all three levels, the earth, heaven and the Supreme Reality. Therefore, at one go Sri Aurobindo links up his philosophy with the three other ideals. He says that the Supreme Reality, the Brahman comes down upon earth as the immanent reality, as the soul. Earth is the place where the Supreme has this experience of his own manifestation. In the course of evolution, earth has the possibility to evolve into something much greater than what it is now. It is due to this great possibility that the soul comes to earth and by its coming hastens the coming of these possibilities. Each soul’s purpose upon earth is to help take earth towards its destiny of manifesting the Brahman. So the Supreme comes to earth, but what about the heavens, why are they needed? The soul comes down upon earth from its own world, has its experience, and then goes back to its own level. Therefore, the heavens are required, by heavens we mean the intermediary levels of consciousness, they are the ladder

between earth and the Supreme. It is very simple! If we want to climb back to

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the Supreme through evolution we need a ladder, and the intermediary planes of consciousness are that ladder. In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, the three theories beautifully harmonise – the Supreme Reality, the heavens, and the earth.

There is one more important necessity of this ladder.

It is required because the higher consciousness of these different rungs of the ladder come down upon earth to influence it and transform mind, life and body. The rungs of the ladder are the different planes of consciousness which descend upon earth, one after the other of which mind and life have already descended. The next rung to descend is the Supermind. It will descend upon earth and transform it. Without this transformation, earth life cannot be fulfilled.

So there are three main points to the theory: the first is that existence includes the earth, the heaven and the Supreme; the second is that the soul comes upon this earth for a transformation; and the third is that the help of the higher intervening levels of consciousness are necessary for this transformation to succeed. Essentially these are the broad ideas in the synthesis of the three views of existence.

In contrast, what happens? If we focus only on the supracosmic? He says,

An opposite exaggeration demanding only some colourless purity of spiritual existence nullifies the creative action of the spirit and excludes from us all that the Divine manifests in its being: it leaves room only for an evolution without sense or fulfillment,—

for a cutting off of all that has been evolved in the sole

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* culmination; it turns the process of our being into the meaningless curve of a plunge into Ignorance and return out of it or erects a wheel of cosmic Becoming with only an escape issue.

He tells us in a kind of parenthetical note that if you do not take this integral view and concentrate only on the supracosmic you take away the colour, the zeal, the joy of manifestation. In the escapist view, we miss out on the enjoyment of this manifestation. If we seek the supracosmic Divine by a shortcut and go into the mountains or the forests and have an ascetic life, we throw away the delight of existence. Whereas Sri Aurobindo says that the Divine has created this world for the joy of existence. Some may say it is not a joy at all; on the contrary, it is great suffering. It is true that at present there is much suffering, but if we escape from it will the earth become better? Not at all! Instead of staying back and trying to better it, we escape. He says that at least some of us have got to be hero warriors and make efforts to change the earth's consciousness. This is the ideal, to stay back and fight for this earth so that the whole of humanity can move forward. Escape is a kind of selfish act. If you have only an emphasis on the supracosmic, then –

The intermediary, the supraterrrestrial aspiration cuts short the fulfilment of the being above by not proceeding to its highest realisation of oneness and diminishes it below by not allowing a proper amplitude of sense to its presence in the material universe and its acceptance of life in an earthly body.

Sri Aurobindo says that if you emphasise on these heavens, the intermediary regions, you take away the

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possibility of the human soul realising the Supreme Divine. These ideals of heaven and paradise are wrong ideals. They are static places that do not evolve to the Supreme and that means they make us stagnate. The earth is really the best place in spite of what it is because it has the possibility to evolve to the Supreme Divine. In Integral Yoga, we don't want to become gods because the gods themselves are static. Sri Aurobindo observes that this middle region is a kind of trap and then he says, In this integration the

supracosmic Reality stands as the supreme Truth of being; to realise it is the highest reach of our consciousness. But it is this highest Reality which is also the cosmic being, the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic will and life: it has put these things forth, not outside itself but in its own being, not as an opposite principle but as its own self-unfolding and self-expression. Cosmic being is not a meaningless freak or fantasy or a chance error; there is a divine significance and truth in it: the manifold self-expression of the spirit is its high sense, the Divine itself is the key of its enigma. A perfect self-expression of the spirit is the object of our terrestrial existence.

He has explained that the traditional Indian integral view has failed because the divine significance of the manifestation was not there. If we put the divine significance only in the supracosmic, we lose the world.

And if we accept only the heavens, they are static and don't lead to the fulfilment of the world. After exposing the flaws of these approaches, he comes to his own solution. He says that in this integral view the first thing to understand is that there is a supreme Reality that is the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* truth of our being, but in addition, and this is typically *a la* Sri Aurobindo, that supreme Reality has become in the process of creating the cosmic being. All the suns and planets and the earth and human beings and crawling creatures are Himself. This cosmic being is not a “meaningless freak or fantasy or chance error”; it has a meaning, an aim, a significance. It is not just whirling around in a kind of slumber like the scientists would have us believe. Sri Aurobindo is impressing on us that all this creation has a divine meaning. And what is that divine meaning? In one sentence he says it: “A perfect self-expression of the spirit is the object of our terrestrial existence.” The divine significance of this creation is that it must become a perfect self-expression of the Divine. That is the meaning of our life, of the earth, of the manifestation. With this single sentence there is a whole shift in philosophy and in attitude. A perfect self-expression of the spirit is what we call the Life Divine. If this is the meaning of our life, what should be our mental attitude? To take up Integral Yoga, because it is through this that we learn how to express the Divine in the mind, in the emotions, in the body, in the psychic being. The Divine wants to manifest

himself on every level of our being, and every level of our being wants to become Divine. That is what is important and that is the whole secret of Sri Aurobindo's yoga.

The mind's parent is the Supermind and it wants to know its parent. Life wants to know its origin, the divine Shakti. The body wants to know from where it has come, and that is the Sat. There is an innate aspiration for this fulfillment. For millennia, mankind has said it wants to know God. The psychic being, the soul, has

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from the beginning wanted to know the Brahman or the Paramatman; that was its aspiration. But Sri Aurobindo says that is not sufficient; the mind, life and body also want perfection. This is the shift that takes place in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and yoga. In his yoga – all these aims have to be realised. Sri Aurobindo says, A realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an indispensable condition for the fullness of the self-expressing spirit: for the universe is the field of its totality of self-expression, while it is through the individual that its evolutionary self-unfolding here comes to its acme. But this supposes not only a real being of the individual, but the revelation of our secret eternal oneness with the Supreme and with all cosmic existence. In this self-integration, the soul of the individual must awake to universality and to transcendence.

The supraterrrestrial existence is also a truth of being; for the material is not the only plane of our existence; other planes of consciousness there are to which we can attain and which have already their hidden links with us: not to reach up to whatever greater regions of the soul are open to us, not to have the experience of them, not to know and manifest their law in ourselves is to fall short of the height and fullness of our being.

But worlds of higher consciousness are not the only possible scene and habitation of the perfected soul; nor can we find in any unchanging typical world the final or total sense of the Spirit's self-expression in the cosmos: the material world, this earth, this human life are a part of the Spirit's self-expression and have their divine possibility; that possibility is evolutionary and

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* it contains the possibilities of all the other worlds in it, unrealised but realisable.

This is what I have hinted at earlier: Sri Aurobindo says that the supreme Reality is the highest, but the Supreme has created the cosmos, and the cosmic being also has a divine purpose. This includes the mid regions, the various planes of life and mind existence, and they are also important. If we denounce them or ignore them we will be taking away a major aspect of the divine creation.

However, these middle regions are typical, which means they are non-progressive, and non-evolutionary. They are perfect in their type, whatever it is, but they do not evolve. We must realise the potential of the earth because its “possibility is evolutionary and it contains the possibilities of all the other worlds in it, unrealised but realisable.” That is a beautiful, important sentence. All the worlds that we call the Supermind, the Overmind, the Intuition, the Illumined mind, and the Higher mind, are hidden upon the earth. They are “unrealised but realisable”. Until now we have only realised the mind, but tomorrow all the higher levels of the spiritual consciousness will be manifest upon the earth. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have made the Supermind itself available to earth. There will be an evolution upon the earth even beyond Supermind, the evolution is eternal.

Earth-life is not the lapse into the mire of something undivine, vain and miserable, offered by some Power to itself as a spectacle or to the embodied soul as a thing to be suffered and then cast away from it; it is the scene of the evolutionary unfolding of the being which moves towards the revelation of a supreme

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spiritual light and power and joy and oneness, but includes in it also the manifold diversity of the self-achieving spirit.

This is the conclusion, that the earth's possibilities are immense and we must focus on the earth's evolutionary unfolding that will reveal the supreme spiritual light and power and joy. This light and power and joy is nothing but the Chit, Shakti and Ananda. He is suggesting that one day the earth alone, not any of the intermediary levels, will manifest the Divine in its supreme revelation, in its supreme fullness.

He says,

Our terrestrial being has also the same truth; it is a becoming of the One Reality which has to embody in itself these greater powers. Its present appearance is a veiled and partial figure and to limit ourselves to that first figure, to the present formula of an imperfect humanity, is to exclude our divine potentialities; we have to bring a wider meaning into our human life and manifest in it the much more that we secretly are. Our mortality is only justified in the light of our immortality; our earth can know and be all itself only by opening to the heavens; the individual can see himself aright and use his world divinely only when he has entered into greater planes of being and seen the light of the Supreme and lived in the being and power of the Divine and Eternal.

It expresses the same idea that we must wait for the evolution of the earth's possibilities. At present we are mortal and have all these problems, there is all this ignorance and darkness, but this is not our eternal destiny. There is an immortality awaiting, there is a

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* supreme delight and a supreme consciousness awaiting us. With simple logic Sri Aurobindo explains that these are awaiting us because it is that Chit-Shakti who has become life, it is that Sat who has become the body, it is that Ananda who has become the psychic being, it is that Supermind who has become the mind. We are a kind of summary of that higher consciousness. In each individual, we have all these four. Each individual is a representative of the Supreme Sachchidananda himself.

Today we are Sachchidananda at this stage of evolution, but each individual will go through this evolutionary process and reach the Supreme Sachchidananda. By

‘reach’ we do not mean ‘going beyond’, but bringing the beyond to the earth. And then Sri Aurobindo says, An integration of this kind would not be possible if a spiritual evolution were not the sense of our birth and terrestrial existence; the evolution of mind, life and spirit in Matter is the sign that this integration, the completed manifestation of a secret self contained in it is its significance. A complete involution of all that the Spirit is and its evolutionary self-unfolding are double terms of our material existence. There is a possibility of self-expression by an always unveiled luminous development of the being, a possibility also of various expression in perfect types fixed and complete in their own nature; that is the principle of becoming in the higher worlds...

Whatever is involved will evolve; that is the promise of this evolution. And we have just said that what is involved here is in essence the supreme Sachchidananda himself, so that same Sachchidananda will evolve here

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on earth. In the end, he beautifully rounds it up in a summary. He begins by saying,

An involution of spirit in the Inconscience is the beginning;... an evolution in the Ignorance with its play of the possibilities of a partial developing knowledge is the middle,...

We are in the middle of this evolution, an evolution in this ignorance. He explains that the difficulties of our present stage point to its transitional middle status:

...and the cause of the anomalies of our present nature,—our imperfection, is the sign of a transitional state, a growth not yet completed, an effort that is finding its way;

And then he describes the final stage of the evolution:

...a consummation in a deployment of the spirit's self-knowledge and the self-power of its divine being and consciousness is the culmination: these are the three stages of this cycle of the spirit's progressive self-expression in life.

We see that evolution is taking place and that we are in ignorance, and many people would say that this is all we can expect. But Sri Aurobindo says that this cannot be the end because the Supreme Sachchidananda has, through involution, gone into the inconscient and so far has manifested only life and mind. He says that one day the Supermind itself has to come out.

He says, "It is perfected and divinised life for which the earth-nature is seeking and this seeking is the sign of the Divine Will in Nature". We have seen an incredible seeking of humanity; as Sri Aurobindo says in the first paragraph of *The Life Divine*, since millennia mankind

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* has sought "God, Light, Freedom, Immortality". How could it be that mankind even in those primordial times was seeking God if it was not the Divine itself within mankind who is evolving? He says, Other seekings also there are and this too find their means of self-fulfillment; a withdrawal into the supreme peace or ecstasy, a withdrawal into the bliss of the Divine Presence are open to the soul in earth-existence: for the Infinite in its manifestation has many possibilities and is not confined by its formulations. But neither of these withdrawals can be the fundamental intention in the Becoming itself here; for then an evolutionary progression would not have been undertaken, — such a progression here can only have for its aim a self-fulfillment here: a progressive manifestation of this kind can only have for its soul of significance the revelation of Being in a perfect Becoming.

Some seekers have said, "I will go to the beyond, I will rest in the superconscient". Some bhaktas have said, "I will merge myself with the Divine, I will live in that bliss". Some others have said, "I want to be in the mid-heavens, in the peace and joy of the heavens".

Sri Aurobindo says it is possible, but those seekings cannot be the fundamental intention of the manifestation, they cannot be the reason why the Supreme has entered into this Becoming. He says, why would the Supreme come down if only to return back without achieving anything in the manifestation?

There would be no meaning! If to escape from life is the ideal, why was life created at all? If it was to escape the manifestation, then why manifest at all? He says these

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cannot be the ultimate ideals. The ideal that he proposes is that the Being wants to have a perfect Becoming, the Becoming must be as perfect as the Being. This is the divine significance that Sri Aurobindo gives to this manifestation.

We have now seen all four views and how Sri Aurobindo's fourth view of the integral life integrates them. It is about this fourth vision that he has in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *Essays on the Gita*, and to some extent in *The Future Poetry*, *Secret of the Veda* and other works – everywhere he gave this new vision of life based on a synthesis of these different levels of consciousness and existence.

This integral vision calls for a new practice. Our work now – is to spread this thought and inspire its practice.

We are not great sadhaks or great yogis. There were some great sadhaks and yogis in the beginning who were with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and who realised this truth in their being, but perhaps we are now in a second stage in which this thought is being spread. It is like there were the Vedic Rishis, and after them came the schools of philosophy. This is the level that we are in at present.

I hope we do not get into conflicts between different schools of thought like it happened between Advaita and Nyaya and Vaisheshika and Buddhism. In this spreading of the thought there will be some who take up the yoga and

become yogis. It is a beautiful movement of spirituality that started earlier in India and is now being repeated with Sri Aurobindo's vision.

We are now in a phase where people come for lectures and want to know about Sri Aurobindo and read his books. Once the mind is convinced then it will begin

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* to enter into their life pattern. Let us not feel sorry that we are not great yogis. Our work now is to disseminate his thought while keeping this integral ideal of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness in front of us.

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## Lecture Notes

I. Fundamental Truths of the Reality a) The Absolute is the origin and support and secret Reality of all things. Though it is indefinable by mental language, the fundamental aspects and the manifested powers and figures of this Reality can be seized by a spiritual consciousness and a knowledge by identity.

b) All the basic realities are eternal and inherently true in the Absolute and all that is not fundamental is form and power dependent on the Reality. These contrary figures, such as the evil and the falsehood, are only contributory to the manifestation. The Being is thus the fundamental reality while Becoming is an effectual reality.

c) The two terms of the Absolute, the Being and the Becoming, are two terms of existence. Becoming aims at knowing itself wholly by knowing itself as Being. This urge translates itself as the seeking in the life plane and as the will in the mind.

d) Thus any overemphasis on either the Being or the Becoming is incomplete truth and its solution it proposes to life cannot be wholly true.

II. Sachchidananda as the Fundamental Reality a) The Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight

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of Being is the secret truth underlying the whole manifestation for "All is a manifestation of That."

b) The infinite multiplicity of the One and the eternal unity of the Many are the two aspects of one Reality and manifestation.

c) The Being in manifestation presents itself as the (i) supracosmic Existence or Transcendent, (ii) cosmic Spirit or Being and (iii) individual Self in the Many.

d) The individual, overcome by the effectual Ignorance becomes oblivious of the oneness of the cosmic Self. But, by force of the secret Unity, the soul recovers itself in the universe and subsequently other aspects of the Reality through the process of rebirth.

III. Emphasis on One of the Triple Aspects of Reality a) To ignore the Transcendent and identifying it with the Universe alone is an incomplete account of the truth.

b) To dismiss the individual and to affirm the cosmos alone is an error. Though the individual is a by-product of the universal Energy, the individual soul is not a perishable cell or a dissoluble portion of the cosmic Spirit. It is an eternal portion of the Divine.

c) To confirm that the universe is existent only in the individual consciousness is also a mistake.

IV. Impersonal and Personal Aspects a) Sachchidananda is at once impersonal and personal.

b) It is the soul's highest endeavour to know and to flow into these two aspects of the Sachchidananda.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* V. The Process of the Manifestation a) Involution: Spirit is the summit and Matter is the nethermost stage. In between are the seven principles. The first three—Existence, Consciousness, Delight—are the fundamental principles. The fourth principle Supermind, manifests unity in infinite multiplicity. These four principles form the upper hemisphere of manifestation.

b) The three powers and planes of being—Mind, Life and Matter, form the lower, hemisphere of the manifestation which exist in a limited knowledge concentrating exclusively in a limited world-order.

c) Evolution: Out of the Inconscience emerges the Matter or the material universe. Then follows Life and mind levels. But, by the very force of what

is contained in the Inconscience, Supermind is set to appear. This in its turn will bring forth inevitably the Divine Existence, Consciousness and Delight of existence.

d) Matter in the beginning of evolution becomes the dominant principle. But in reality Matter is only Energy which in its turn is the action of a secret Consciousness and Being. Matter is a form of spirit, a habitation of Spirit, and here in Matter itself there can be a realisation of Spirit.

e) Life, when it emerges becomes dominant and turns Matter into an instrument for its manifestation. In its origin, Life is yet a form, a power of the original Reality. However, Life-principle is not the foundation of things and it can perfect itself by elevating itself into a free channel for the superior Nature.

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f) Mind, when it emerges, it uses Life and Matter as means of its expression. In its origin it is an outcome of Overmind or it is a luminous shadow thrown by the divine Supermind.

g) These three powers of being are built upon the Inconscient, which is taken by some as the real origin and creator. But it should be understood that it is the conscious Spirit that is rising from the emerging evolution.

#### VI. Metaphysical Knowledge and our attitude to Life ...

a) Our metaphysical knowledge should become the determinant of our whole conception of life and our attitude to it. Truth of being must govern truth of life.

b) In accordance with four different metaphysical conceptions of truth of existence, there are four main theories with corresponding mental ideas.

c) These four theories are:

- Supracosmic
- Cosmic and terrestrial

- Supra terrestrial
- Integral or synthetic

## VII. The Supracosmic View

a) In this view the supreme Reality is alone entirely real. This attitude may give way to certain illusionness, a sense of vanity of cosmic existence.

b) The attitude that ensues out this conception is one of escapism: the one wise and needful way of our being is to get away from all living, whether terrestrial or celestial. We must get out of this cosmic madhouse and depart into light and freedom.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* c) This attitude of cosmic illusion as seen by the Advaitins and the Buddhists in their own manner, need not be altogether inevitable. In the Vedanta, both Being and Becoming have a truth of existence and are real. From the point of view of the Supreme, all this becoming is a temporary play, a Lela.

d) The only probable defect of this Vedantic view is that there is an overstress on the cosmic becoming and there is an absence of any fundamental reality of the individual whose efforts on salvation and individual perfection are too great to be dismissed as a device in Lila.

VIII. The Cosmic-Terrestrial View a) This view considers cosmic existence alone as real and that life as experienced in the material universe. Man here upon earth is the highest possible form of the Becoming and God is nothing more than the Becoming itself and the principle of Becoming is in itself eternal.

b) With such a philosophy, the only attitude to life is to take the best advantage that life offers and to advance towards the highest possibilities that can be developed. The individual man can at best help mankind as a whole in this march forward by his thought and action. To achieve the

greatest possible perfection in whatever way his nature demands is life's significance.

## IX. The Supraterrestrial View

a) This view admits the reality of the material cosmos and it accepts the temporary duration of earth and human life. It also accepts other worlds or

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planes of existence which have a more permanent duration. It also concedes the immortality of the soul in man.

b) The attitude that ensues from this conception of Reality is that the creation of a soul by the physical birth is a starting point of its journey and that the rest of its existence has to be pursued beyond in a supraterrestrial plane. Or else, it can be understood that the soul has a pre-terrestrial existence, and that after a short descent into matter, it re-ascends into a celestial being. And again, there is the view that all this world is a garden of the Divine Lila and the human soul participates in this Lila by taking a series of births in it. Ultimately, of course, the soul will reach the proper plane of the Divine Being.

c) The common points in all these three different conceptions of Reality are:

i. The belief in individual immortality of the human spirit

ii. The temporary nature of the soul's sojourn upon earth

iii. The development of the ethical and spiritual being as the means of ascension to the highest eternal planes.

## X. The Higher Aspiration

a) Man in general, except for the exceptions, cannot succeed in guiding his life permanently by any of these three concepts exclusively. By being a creature of this earth, almost all men devote the major part of their energies on their physical, vital and mental developments.

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* b) In spite of these tendencies, the idea of the soul and Spirit in us returns upon us and ends by resuming possession. And the exceptional man turns to the supraterrrestrial as the one aim and law of living.

c) As our mental life deepens, we see that there is the Supracosmic. And the exceptional man abandons all to follow this higher truth leaving behind the sorrowful experiences of the earth.

d) Periods and countries there have been, in which this sense and pursuit of the higher existence became very powerful. But, this kind of a retreat is not meant for all; hence the major portion of humanity adhered to the normal life.

XI. The Synthesis in Indian Culture a) As the human nature is complex, each of his parts has to be given a legitimate value by a synthetic approach.

b) Indian culture accepted four motives of life: i. man's vital interests and needs ii. his desires

iii. his ethical and religious aspiration iv. his ultimate spiritual aim and destiny c) This synthesis did much to bring about a balance in human life, but eventually it collapsed—it gave way to renunciation. This failure was imbedded in the system because it did not give a divine significance to life but gave instead Moksha liberation, as man's desirable end.

XII. The Integral View

a) Man's eternal attraction to earth, to heaven and to the supreme Reality exemplified in the above

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three views of Reality could find their legitimate fulfilment if we understand that a spiritual evolution, of which man becomes the central instrument, is the link between the reconciliation of life and spirit.

b) The lower consciousness of mind, life and body must be heightened and perfected into the higher, while the higher too must descend and bring about a spiritual and supramental transformation.

c) “A realised unity of the transcendent, the universal and the individual is an indispensable condition for the fullness of the self-expressing spirit: for the universe is the field of its totality of self-expression, while it is through the individual that its evolutionary self-unfolding here comes to its acme.”

d) The lure of the supra terrestrial existence is not sufficient for the soul. The material world and earth are a part of the spirit's expression and have their divine possibility. A divine plan is working itself out through its contradictions and the human soul has to go through all these as part of its growth.

e) For such an integration, there is the need to understand that a spiritual evolution is the sense of our birth and terrestrial existence! There is a possibility of the soul's? Self-expression in other typical and non-evolutionary higher worlds, but it is here upon earth is the adventure of self-recovery.

f) i. An involution of spirit in the Inconscience is the beginning;

ii. an evolution in the Ignorance is the middle;

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* iii. a consummation of the spirit's self-knowledge and self-power is the culmination.

“It is a perfected and divinised life for which the earth-nature is seeking and this seeking is a sign of the Divine Will in Nature.”

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**Chapter – XVII**

## **The Progress to Knowledge –**

### **God, Man and Nature**

This chapter, “The Progress to Knowledge – God, Man and Nature”, is one because most philosophers, both eastern and western, have to deal with the topic of ‘God, Man and Nature.’ These three are the main aspects of reality with which we live. Some philosophies have laid more importance on God, some on Man and Nature.

Some have said that God alone exists, Man and Nature do not exist at all and some say otherwise. There are varied interpretations of all three aspects. Now we will see what Sri Aurobindo has to say about God, Man and Nature and how he synthesises the three. We know that for Sri Aurobindo all three are important, and knowing any one of them exclusively would be only partial knowledge for him. We will now go through about ten main arguments presented in this chapter.

In the first paragraph Sri Aurobindo takes us back to his concept of involution and evolution. As usual, Sri Aurobindo begins by recapitulating of what he covered in the previous chapter. He explains that first there was involution and only then there was evolution. In the involutory process, the supreme divine Existence, Sachchidananda, transformed itself into its very opposite, the Inconscient. From that Inconscient began evolution, which means there started a process returning to Sachchidananda. In that return, Sri Aurobindo says writes –

Out of the Inconscient, Existence appears in a first

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* evolutionary form as substance of Matter created by an inconscient Energy. Consciousness, involved and non-apparent in Matter, first emerges in the disguise of vital vibrations, animate but subconscious; then, in imperfect formulations of a conscient life, it strives towards self-finding through successive forms of that material substance, forms more and more adapted to its own completer expression.

He says that consciousness is first involved and emerges from matter, first as a kind of vital vibration.

This vibration is animate that is, it is moving, and dynamic. What was dormant in matter starts vibrating, and that gives rise to “imperfect formulations of conscient life”. There is first the plant life, then the animal life and then higher forms trying to find a completer expression. One phrase I would like you to focus on is that the consciousness strives towards self-finding in

“forms more and more adapted to its own completer expression”. We could say that the necessity of new forms comes in because of the need for the consciousness to express itself more and more completely. This is the reason why there is a large variety of flora and fauna and why human beings have evolved. The reason is that each one of these forms gives the consciousness a greater possibility of self-expression. If human beings were to express consciousness completely there wouldn't have been any need for a supramental form, but as our body and our mental-vital instrumentation are so limited, they cannot express in fullness the inner consciousness.

That is why Sri Aurobindo speaks of the need for the transformation of the body. The evolution of forms continues because at present the forms are not capable of

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delivering the consciousness fully. Then Sri Aurobindo writes,

Consciousness labours to manifest as best it can through the inadequacy of sensation its own inherent delight of being; but it can only formulate a partial pain and pleasure. In man the energising consciousness appears as mind more clearly aware of itself and things. This is still a partial and limited not an integral power of itself, but a first conceptive potentiality and promise of integral emergence is visible. The integral emergence is the goal of evolving nature.

The line to be noted here is “the integral emergence is the goal of evolving nature”. Consciousness wants to emerge fully and in its integrality. There

are many different ways we can look at evolution; one of them is to find out its purpose, and its end. And a human being is a kind of promise of that goal, he has the potential but until now he has not yet delivered that integral emergence.

Therefore, we will have to be surpassed because then the new body will be able to emerge integrally.

In the next paragraph Sri Aurobindo writes: Man is there to affirm himself in the universe, that is his first business, but also to evolve and finally to exceed himself: he has to enlarge his partial being into a complete being, his partial consciousness into an integral consciousness; he has to achieve mastery of his environment but also world-union and world-harmony; he has to realise his individuality but also to enlarge it into cosmic self and a universal and spiritual delight of existence.

Man has evolved with the promise that he will be the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* medium for the complete emergence of consciousness.

But what must be done before we can achieve this? He says that humankind has first to “affirm himself in the universe” the process of growth, the process of evolution.

One idea that is extremely crucial in Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy is. We should not expect evolution overnight!

Before humankind can deliver the divine consciousness it must pass through the process of evolution. Humanity must first “affirm himself in the universe, that is his first business”. What does – “affirming himself” mean? It means humanity has to find an equation with the nature around him. Over these millions of years, a man tried to affirm himself. He has come out as a new species in nature which was violent with him. There were violent animals making his life insecure. He built for himself houses and then a beautiful culture, he separated himself from the animals, and found his own

niche in nature. But he not only has affirmed his existence in nature but he has started becoming master of nature and in the process has been destroying it. This is where things have gone wrong. Otherwise, humankind, like any other species, had the right to establish itself first. Once established, Sri Aurobindo says that humans have to exceed themselves. That is the whole direction of humanity today. I emphasise the word today, because only now, not even a century earlier, has humanity become ready to exceed itself. Until now humans were still in the process of establishing themselves in politics, economy, and material life – but somehow now their consciousness has come to a peak, that is, the peak of mental consciousness.

Now human beings have got to exceed themselves.

This is where Sri Aurobindo says, lies the crisis of

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consciousness. Over the millennia humankind first developed his physical surroundings then the vital and then more recently man developed the mind. There have been phases of his growth. Humankind did not become suddenly a mental being. Today we face the crisis of consciousness because humankind is now trying to exceed beyond the mental horizon; this lid of the mind has become too heavy and it has to be broken. It is not simply a problem of economics or politics or anything; these are only representative problems; they are only symbols of man's difficulty in going beyond, into the new consciousness. This crisis of consciousness is leading to a new Supramental consciousness. This is a period of transition, which is why we are now opening up to the idea of the Superman. Of course, the majority of humanity is still centred on the physical and vital levels of their consciousness, but some have reached the limits and are pushing on the limits of the mind to go beyond into the new consciousness. That is why Sri Aurobindo says that we are in a crisis of consciousness. We have come to the point in time when humankind can exceed itself. Human Beings have to enlarge their partial being into a complete being, into an integral consciousness: a human being has to achieve mastery of his environment but also world union and world harmony.

Until recently humankind was pretty cushioned with religion, theology, ethics, and morality. Most people would not challenge them. But now that the consciousness wants to break through, all the values that we have held so sacred have been questioned and most of them have been pulled down. That is because we are crossing our mental limits. These constructions of the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mind have no value for the new consciousness. Only very few of them can be taken into the future. We do not want to throw away religion or values thinking they are old and therefore precious. Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita are also old and we don't want to throw them away because they are revelatory words. They never grow old.

But those that are constructed and worshipped by the mind, have no more value. This is the crisis we are trying to move into a new and higher level of consciousness.

Today the problems of the world are complex in the sense that they have to be dealt with integrally. We cannot solve the environmental crisis without thinking about the world union or the problems of the local community. In Auroville the International Zone is like a seedling for the world union. It is working to develop harmony between different cultures and nationalities and local people, while also addressing the problems facing humanity like the environmental and economic crisis. It is not sufficient to have centres for bhakti or seminars and lectures on spiritual philosophy. We have to simultaneously concentrate on world harmony and the environment.

That alone could be a living centre of consciousness that could lead us into the future. Otherwise, starting something that belongs to the old mental structure will be redundant. Humanity has to realise its individuality but also enlarge it and merge into its cosmic self and into a universal and spiritual delight of existence.

Sri Aurobindo says,

But this can only be accomplished by his growing into a larger being and a larger consciousness: self-enlargement, self-fulfilment, self-evolution from what he partially and temporarily is in his actual and

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apparent nature to what he completely is in his secret self and spirit and therefore can become even in his manifest existence, is the object of his creation. This hope is the justification of his life upon earth amidst the phenomena of the cosmos. The outer apparent man, an ephemeral being subject to the constraints of his material embodiment and imprisoned in a limited mentality, has to become the inner real Man, master of himself and his environment and universal in his being. In a more vivid and less metaphysical language, the natural man has to evolve himself into the divine Man; the sons of Death have to know themselves as the children of Immortality. It is on this account that the human birth can be described as the turning-point in the evolution, the critical stage in earth-nature.

This is absolutely urgent step humanity must take to go forward. We cannot continue to proceed as we did in the past, we can continue doing whatever we have been doing well. That may help in making a better mental civilisation, and some are busy with that, but that is not the solution. The solution is mastery of the environment while also creating world-harmony. But how will we do that? It is not simply by joining the World Union organization or Ashram, or Auroville that we can be a part of this world movement. These are external bodies of experimentation. We may not be in any one of these organisations or centres and yet participate in this self-exceeding. How? By self-enlargement, self-fulfilment, self-evolution, and that the secret is somewhere else it is in finding our inner being.

It is very interesting. We must understand the link,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* otherwise, we may think it is just a philosophical idea.

We have the ego-self which is now controlling our mind, vital and physical. We have arrived, in the evolution, at the height of the mental consciousness based on our ego. Sri Aurobindo says now we have to go beyond the mental region. Mind itself cannot go beyond, it has reached its ultimate. To go beyond that we have to use another instrument which is within us – the psychic being – it is this that will take us beyond. The ego could take us to the highest level of mental consciousness, but that is its limit. The psychic being which is within us is the instrument which alone can take us beyond the mind into the spiritual consciousness in which we can achieve the solutions to our difficulties, such as world union and mastery of our environment. The psychic being has this universal consciousness which the ego lacks. If we are to achieve world harmony or world union and mastery over the environment which is basically universal, then we have no other way but to realise our deeper instrument called the psychic being. Staying on the level of the mind we cannot hope to reach the levels beyond. That is a simple fact. That is why Sri Aurobindo emphasises the importance of realising the psychic being.

People in politics and in the United Nations speak about world union but unless and until we use the instrument of the psychic being which by its nature is universal, we cannot achieve it. We can speak about world union, no doubt, the mind is sharp enough, imaginative enough, but it cannot give the living experience of world union. Sri Aurobindo says that

“the natural man has to evolve into the divine Man”.

The divine man has a realised psychic being. This is the

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turning point in evolution, the critical stage in earth-nature. The psychic being can expand us to the universal consciousness which can bring in the Supermind. If humanity fails, nature will say, “Sorry, I will have to supersede you and bring about a new species without your consent and without your help. Thanks for all the help you have given me till now but I must go on”.

In the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo says, For the same reason, to shape our practical life, our actions as far as may be in consonance with our intellectual notions of truth and right or with a successful pragmatic knowledge, – an ethical or a vital fulfilment,—is not and cannot be the ultimate aim of our life; our aim must be to grow into our true being, our being of Spirit, the being of the supreme and universal Existence, Consciousness, Delight, Sachchidananda.

It is a simple argument that follows what we have been saying. Then in the next paragraph, Sri Aurobindo makes one more point. He says that although this spiritual consciousness is the origin and truth of our being,

...our surface formulation of these things is not that, it is a mistranslation into the terms of the Ignorance.

Our I is not that spiritual being which can look on the Divine Existence and say, “That am I”; our mentality is not that spiritual consciousness; our will is not that force of consciousness; our pain and pleasure, even our highest joys and ecstasies are not that delight of being. On the surface we are still an ego figuring self, an ignorance turning into knowledge, a will labouring towards true force, a desire seeking for the delight of existence.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo says that we have this possibility of going beyond, but now we are nothing more than the ego. All our plans, our pains, our ecstasies are based on the ego and its littleness. Although Sri Aurobindo says we have the potential, the majority of us act from ego-sense only.

To become ourselves by exceeding ourselves...

is the difficult and dangerous necessity, the cross surmounted by an invisible crown which is imposed on us, the riddle of the true nature of his being proposed to man by the dark Sphinx of the Inconscience below and from within and above by the luminous veiled Sphinx of the infinite Consciousness and eternal Wisdom confronting him as an inscrutable divine Maya. To exceed ego and be our true self, to be aware of our real

being, to possess it, to possess a real delight of being, is therefore the ultimate meaning of our life here; it is the concealed sense of our individual and terrestrial existence.

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo emphasize the importance of realising the psychic being for the future of the world. Everywhere we come to a dead end, this is the only door that can take us beyond. We are being completely hammered by their insistence in saying:

‘O mankind, there is no other way than to realise your psychic being now’.

We may continue to improve our technology, but in one of his writings Sri Aurobindo says that if we do not develop the inner consciousness, then the burden of technology would be so colossal that we may be crushed by it. It is not that we are against technology, but it is becoming a colossus and our inner being is a

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pigmy. By advancing so much outwardly in technological development we lose the emphasis on inner development.

I am yet to see a technology which helps us to go within; every technology pulls us out. Whereas technology makes us extroverts spirituality takes us within. There is a kind of race, but obviously, humanity has taken to technology and outer development is speeding ahead in leaps and bounds. Now Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have intervened with the tremendous power of Supermind to develop the inner truth. Otherwise, human beings would have been lost. Sri Aurobindo tells us that exceeding our ego and finding our true selves is the ultimate meaning of our life. The realisation of the psychic being is not meant just for sadhaks. People should not think that finding the psychic being is just for Aurobindonians and is not meant for a scientist or archaeologists or environmentalists. Whatever may be one's faith within, whatever may be the outer work, it doesn't matter. We have come to the end of those roads and now finding our psychic being is the only thing that will save us.

The first argument is that consciousness has involved itself in Matter and then evolution began first through vibrations in the plants, then became more dominant in the animal, then became very important in human beings where it has stabilised itself and come to the level where it is trying to exceed its mental consciousness.

That is why this is a stage of transition. Our mind is in a tremendous tension because it is trying its best to push the borders into a higher consciousness. Because of the descent of the Supermind in 1956 there is an immense pressure on the mind to go beyond. Until then the mind

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* did not feel the pressure to exceed itself. That is the mental tension that all of us are feeling in our life. It is not what the medicos say, that it is the tension of our job or earning money – they could be the triggers, but basically, all of us have the same tension because it is the mind that is trying to exceed itself. That is the direction in which evolution is moving. We are still thinking that by technology mankind will exceed itself, but Sri Aurobindo says it is not technology but the inner divine being that will lead to self-exceeding.

Now we have the second argument.

Intellectual knowledge and practical action are devices of Nature by which we are able to express so much of our being, consciousness, energy, power of enjoyment as we have been able to actualise in our apparent nature and by which we attempt to know more, express and actualise more, grow always more into the much that we have yet to actualise. But our intellect and mental knowledge and will of action are not our only means, not all the instruments of our consciousness and energy: our nature, the name which we give to the Force of being in us in its actual and potential play and power, is complex in its ordering of consciousness, complex in its instrumentation of force.

The whole object of our evolution is to become increasingly conscious and be able to express that consciousness dynamically in action on the world

and ourselves and grow towards our highest possibilities. This is expressed in the next passage, which is extraordinary.

All man's age-long effort, his action, society, art, ethics, science, religion, all the manifold activities by

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which he expresses and increases his mental, vital, physical, spiritual existence, are episodes in the vast drama of this endeavour of Nature and have behind their limited apparent aims no other true sense or foundation. For the individual to arrive at the divine universality and supreme infinity, live in it, possess it, to be, know, feel and express that alone in all his being, consciousness, energy, delight of being is what the ancient seers of the Veda meant by the Knowledge; that was the Immortality which they set before man as his divine culmination.

These marvelous sentences tell us about the goal of human life. It is interesting to see that the word

'vidya', which is the origin of the word 'Veda', is not just intellectual or scientific knowledge. As Sri Aurobindo puts it here, it means "to arrive at the divine universality and supreme infinity, live in it, possess it, to be, know, feel and express that alone". This is the definition of

'vidya' as it was given to us centuries ago. The Vedic seers always considered that to have vidya was to be universal and also to be one with the supreme infinite.

But please take careful note, it is not just to be one with Him, but also to know, feel and express that alone in all his being. I do not know if anyone else has interpreted the Vedas as comprehensively as Sri Aurobindo has done.

Previously, we thought Vedas taught us only to be one with God or Brahman. It was considered the culmination of the Veda. But here Sri Aurobindo says that is not all it means; it means to be one with the Supreme and then to express it and to live in it continuously. Such is the fantastic

comprehensive vision of life and manifestation of the Vedas. To realise the Divine is just the first step, the second step is to manifest it, to express it in all our

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* being, consciousness, energy, and delight of being. That means we have to express the Divine in our body, our vital nature, our emotions and our mind. This is the total realisation that Vedas set before mankind.

We see many articles which say that the aim of the Vedas was immortality, and by immortality, they meant the realisation of the Divine. But that's not so. Vedas and Upanishads had a comprehensive vision of life.

After millenniums Sri Aurobindo's vision has the same comprehensiveness as that of the ancient texts.

Yesterday, someone was asking me whether there were other philosophers who talked about the new race. I said, yes, many have talked about it. Hitler himself talked about superman. Many poets and philosophers have talked about it, but generally, they envisioned a superior man with a better intellect – a superlative human being with the best mind, the best heart, the deepest emotions, and the best physical body – as the future of man. No one until Sri Aurobindo envisaged the superman as a new species. The best of apes even the most powerful, the most intelligent, and the most agile is not human being.

Similarly, the best of human beings is not superman.

There is much misunderstanding about Superman.

Many people start thinking of themselves to be the instruments of the Supermind and declare that they are Superman in the making. But it is like the chimpanzee saying that it is becoming a man, transforming itself into a new species. Please remember that for Vedanta the word 'immortality' is the divine culmination, a new species beyond humanity. It is only Sri Aurobindo who has given us the details of the supramental being. No one

else in between Vedanta and Sri Aurobindo realised and spoke about it with such clarity and authenticity.

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Humanity's "...search for knowledge is preoccupied with three principal categories... God, and Nature.

The first is that of which alone humankind is directly aware in his normal ignorant being, he sees himself..”

It's interesting that humankind is only directly aware of himself. Nobody needs to tell me if I exist or not. When I say 'I exist, that is the only firm, direct knowledge I have. For anything else, I may have doubts. If you ask me whether this glass exists, I don't know for sure, it may or may not; it could be an illusion, a trick of my senses. But if you ask whether I exist, I can say "I am one hundred percent sure I exist". That is knowledge I have by identity, and we know that it is only knowledge by an identity that is sure knowledge; all other knowledge we have is incomplete and could be false.

At the supramental level, everything becomes knowledge by identity. The difference between man and superman is that we have knowledge by identity only with our own surface consciousness, but the Supermind has with the whole universe. We have only indirect knowledge of nature, that is, knowledge gained through the five senses, through outer instrumentation. Even if we don't have these five senses we would still know that we exist. For knowledge of myself, we don't depend on the senses, but for knowledge about Nature, we do.

For Nature, we need not only the senses, but also other instruments such as the telescope, the microscope, and various other machines. That is where science comes in to help us know Nature. Nature is the objective side of

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the Divine and our knowledge about it is limited. Science may say that after another hundred and fifty years we would have complete knowledge of Nature, but we can never really have it through science because it would mean we know the entire divine manifestation. It can never be because that knowledge is indirect. Science explores the Divine as an object and spirituality approach the Divine as the subject. Both are infinite journeys.

Eventually, they meet and become one.

Secondly, there is that which he knows only indirectly by his mind and bodily senses and its effects upon them, yet must strive always to know more and more completely: for he sees also this rest of being with which he is so closely identified and yet from which he is so separate, -the cosmos, world, Nature, other individual existences whom he perceives as always like himself and yet always unlike... Finally, he sees or rather divines something else which he does not know at all except quite indirectly; for he knows it only through himself and that at which his being aims, through the world and that at which it seems to point and which it is either striving obscurely to reach and express by its imperfect figures or, at least, finds them without knowing it on their secret relation to that invisible Reality and occult Infinite.

This third one is God, of whom we do not know anything directly or indirectly. It is interesting: of myself, I know directly, of nature I know indirectly, and of God, I do not know at all. We can know Him by identity, but not yet. Sri Ramakrishna would say that God exists and that he saw him as concretely as he sees the person in

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front of him. How did he arrive at that point? Swami Vivekananda said that Sri Ramakrishna came to know that his own self and God are one and the same. That is the secret. We cannot first know God indirectly, but once having known him directly, we can know Him indirectly also. That's the beauty. Once I know myself as the Divine, then I can see the Divine in the objective world.

Right away we cannot see the godhead in the flower or the sunrise, though we may feel a sense of elation.

Sri Aurobindo had the experience of Vasudeva in the bars of the jail, in the trees, in the jailor etc. – that comes only when one knows oneself as the Divine. This is the mystery of life.

Sri Aurobindo continues:

This third and unknown, this *tertium quid*, he names God; and by the word he means somewhat or someone who is the Supreme, the Divine, the Cause, the All, one of these things or all of them at once, the perfection or the totality of all that here is partial or imperfect, the absolute of all these myriad relativities, the Unknown by learning of whom the real secret of the known can become to him more and more intelligible.

What is our definition of God? If we ask people what or who is God, we will perhaps get thousands of definitions.

Somebody may say God is beauty, God is love, God is perfect and so on – we can keep adding epithet after epithet. It is the sum and substance of all these things.

Sri Aurobindo says here, that He is “the absolute of all these myriad relativities”. That is our sense of God. One may say that the most powerful love is God. Another may say the greatest power is God. We give Him this kind of

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* an absolute superlative, – He is absolute power, absolute compassion, absolute peace, and so on. Whatever we have in limited forms we extend it infinitely and say that is God.

Then Sri Aurobindo says,

Man has tried to deny all these categories, — he has tried to deny his own real existence, he has tried to deny the real existence of the cosmos, he has

tried to deny the real existence of God. But behind all these denials we see the same constant necessity of his attempt at knowledge; for he feels the need of arriving at a unity of these three terms, even if it can only be done by suppressing two of them or merging them in the other that is left. To do that he affirms only himself as cause and all the rest as mere creations of his mind, or he affirms only Nature and all the rest as nothing but phenomena of Nature-Energy, or he affirms only God, the Absolute, and all the rest as no more than illusions which That thrusts upon itself or on us by an inexplicable Maya. None of these denials can wholly satisfy, none solves the entire problem or can be indisputable and definitive;—least of all the one to which his sense-governed intellect is most prone, but in which it can never persist for long; the denial of God is a denial of his true quest and his own supreme Ultimate.

This is something new that we need to add to our various definitions of God. Sometimes mankind defined God as the absolute of all that is incomplete in man. But there have also been atheists who deny the existence of God, and who believe that there is no such thing as God.

If we ask the atheists, what has created this Nature? They

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may say this is only some universal energy. They will satisfy themselves by saying that we do not have to think that there is a personal godhead or some such thing. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that these periods of denial are short-lived. In the very first paragraph of the first chapter of *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo says, “the earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation, for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment, is also the highest which his thought can envisage”. He suggests that it may be possible for one or a few centuries, but we cannot indefinitely banish God. He says the ages of naturalistic atheism have always been short-lived because they can never satisfy the knowledge of the soul which is hidden in humanity and which all mental knowledge is labouring to bring out. This is why Sri Aurobindo is not much bothered with all these ideas of atheism and scepticism, modern Science, and even communism. He says these are all passing phases because human beings

have a kind of secret knowledge within them and will never be able to reject that knowledge, that is what he calls the secret Veda. In spite of these attempts to banish God, the Divine is within us and we can never suppress him for long.

Sri Aurobindo said about Russia in 1917 - when the Russian revolution was taking place and communism was about to establish itself - that communism will not last. How? It was not that he wanted to be a fortune-teller or prophet, for him it was a logical answer. If communism suppresses the liberty of the individual, it can never survive because the liberty of the individual is a fundamental and universal truth. Similarly, if

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* democracy suppresses the inner being of man and just gives expression to the outer being it can never survive.

It is a simple theorem of spirituality like the theorems of mathematics. Similarly, if the idea of God is suppressed, it can never last long; the idea of God will return.

The first argument is that the knowledge of God is there within us, so it will surface again. The second is that man cannot survive for long without this concept of the Absolute. He says,

Man as he is not sufficient to himself, nor separate, nor is he the Eternal and the All; therefore by himself he cannot be the explanation of the cosmos of which his mind, life and body are so evidently an infinitesimal detail... He feels that there must be an Infinite which holds these finites, is in, behind and about all this visible cosmos, bases the harmony and interrelation and essential oneness of multitudinous things. His thought needs an Absolute on which these innumerable and finite relativities depend for their existence, an ultimate Truth of things, a creating Power or Force or a Being who originates and upholds all these innumerable beings in the universe. Let him call it what he will, he must arrive at a Supreme, a Divine, a Cause, an Infinite and Eternal, a Permanent, a Perfection to which all tends and aspires, or an All to which everything perpetually and invisibly amounts and without which they could not be.

This is simple logic. Sri Aurobindo says that we need this Absolute to hold these innumerable finite. This is an argument which I think we should understand very easily because there must be some common factor which

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is holding all this together. It is like we are 50 people sitting here in this hall, but there is holding power in the hall. But can mankind hold this entire universe?

Obviously not! The man knows his defects. I cannot hold the mountains in my consciousness, the oceans in my consciousness, all the plants and animals in my consciousness. There must be a third something beyond myself and nature; in Latin, it is called the '*tertium quid*'.

the third something. Sri Aurobindo doesn't bother about if you call it Perfection, or Energy, or Force, or God, or the Absolute, or the Brahman as long as we accept the idea that there is some supreme element which is holding everything together.

Yet even this Absolute he cannot really affirm by itself and to the exclusion of the two other categories; for then he has only made a violent leap away from the problem he is here to solve, and he himself and the cosmos remain an inexplicable mystification or a purposeless mystery. A certain part of his intellect and his longing for rest may be placated by such a solution, just as his physical intelligence is easily satisfied by a denial of the Beyond and a deification of material Nature; but his heart, his will, the strongest and intensest parts of his being remain without a meaning, void of purpose or justification, or become merely a random foolishness agitating itself like a vain and restless shadow against the eternal repose of the pure Existence or amidst the eternal inconscience of the universe.

Here too there is a beautiful argument. He says if we accept only God and reject the universe, whereas it may be intellectually convincing but the heart and

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* the will may not be satisfied. The Advaitins led by Sri Shankaracharya has done that. They said Brahman is the only truth and all this world is *mithya*, an illusion.

Intellectually we can accept it to a certain extent, but Sri Aurobindo asks the question “will your heart accept such a vacuum?” We have three parts within us – the mind, the heart and the body. He says the heart will not accept, and the heart and the will are the strongest and most intense parts of our being if they are nullified then they will remain without a meaning.

Our heart itself cannot reject God, because within the heart there is a longing for God. It longs for a beloved, and though this longing may be felt for our spouse, our children, our parents, our relatives, there is something more it longs for which it calls God, or the goddess Durga or Kali, or Krishna or Shiva – it doesn't matter.

This is the intensest part of us which longs for fulfilment and without that life has no meaning.

Once I saw a beggar on one of the footpaths in Pondicherry. She had a small kid that was maybe a few months old. She was there on the footpath on a worn-out mat. Her clothes were torn and dirty, and the little baby was naked, crawling all over her. Near the head of the mat, there was a little bundle in a plastic bag, in which were all her belongings, and at one corner of the mat, she had a framed picture of a god. That really moved me. She had almost no other possessions except the picture of the god in a little frame which she kept beautifully with her.

That is true India! She had nothing but she held on to the Divine.

Many people have devotional songs as incoming call tunes or ringtones. It is a beautiful invocation to

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the Divine. They feel that when others call them, they hear the name of God. This shows our heart's longing.

Without it life in this universe becomes a void.

As for the cosmos, it remains there in the singular character of a carefully constructed lie of the Infinite, a monstrously aggressive and yet really non-existent anomaly, a painful and miserable paradox with false shows of wonder and beauty and delight. Or else it is a huge play of blind organised Energy without significance and his own being a temporary minute anomaly incomprehensibly occurring in that senseless vastness. That way no satisfying fulfilment lies for the consciousness, the energy that has manifested itself in the world and in man: the mind needs to find something that links all together, something by which Nature is fulfilled in man and man in Nature and both find themselves in God, because the Divine is ultimately self-revealed in both man and Nature.

This last sentence is a crucial one “the mind needs to find something that links altogether, something by which Nature is fulfilled in man and man in Nature and both find themselves in God, because the Divine is absolutely self-revealed in both man and Nature”. God can be rejected only on the intellectual level but not on the emotional level. No amount of intellectual scepticism can get rid of God forever because he exists so deep within us that the mind can’t even reach him let alone dethrone him. We may keep him under a cloud for a while but the inner Veda is bound to come to the surface.

Now we take up the next paragraph: An acceptance, a perception of the unity of these

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* three categories is essential to the Knowledge; it is towards their unity as well as their integrality that the growing self-consciousness of the individual opens out and at which it must arrive if it is to be satisfied of itself and complete. For without the realisation of unity the knowledge of none of the three can be entire; their unity is for each the condition of its own integrality. It is, again, by knowing each in its completeness that all three meet in our consciousness and become one; it is in a total knowledge that all knowing becomes one and indivisible.

This is a new idea. It is by knowing these three principles God, Man and Nature in their completeness that mankind can become aware of the underlying oneness. We have to know each one of them in completeness, then only we can know the indwelling oneness. If we just know God and God alone, say through Raja Yoga and meditation, and reject the world and man, it is incomplete knowledge. In Sanskrit we call it Avidya.

It could be knowledge of God but if it is incomplete, it is still Avidya. Even if one realises God but does not know the world and man, he/she is still in Avidya. On the other side, the scientist who knows Nature but not God has incomplete knowledge and he too is in Avidya. We have a famous verse in the Isha Upanishad which says that those who know God alone are in greater darkness than those who know only Nature. This Avidya of knowing the world is lesser darkness than the Avidya of knowing Brahman alone. Therefore, let us not rush to Brahman and say, “I renounce the world; I will only meditate on you”. We will be in an even greater Avidya than the scientists who say alone Nature exists, there is no God.

But the main point is that both are incomplete knowledge

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and only the person who can integrate God and Nature within himself has complete knowledge.

Let us read this portion again: “by knowing each in its completeness that all three meet in our consciousness and become one”. In our consciousness, we can have a synthesis of both the outer world and God, and therefore the individual person is the centre piece. He needs to gather the knowledge of the Being as well as the Becoming, then only his knowledge Becomes one and indivisible.

Sri Aurobindo says,

Man therefore has to enlarge his knowledge of himself, his knowledge of the world and his knowledge of God until in their totality he becomes aware of their mutual indwelling and oneness.

Moreover, Sri Aurobindo explains that it is through the knowledge of self and the world that mankind arrives at the knowledge of God and he cannot attain it otherwise.

He says,

It is not by rejecting God's manifestation, but by rejecting his own ignorance of it and the results of his ignorance, that he can best lift up and offer the whole of his being and consciousness and energy and joy of being into the Divine Existence. He may do this through himself, one manifestation, or he may do it through the universe, another manifestation.

Arriving through himself alone, it is possible for him to plunge into an individual immergence or absorption in the Indefinable and to lose the universe. Arriving through the universe alone, he can sink his individuality either in the impersonality

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of universal being or in a dynamic self of universal Conscious-Force; he merges into the universal self or he becomes an impersonal channel of the cosmic Energy. Arriving through the equal integrality of both and seizing through them and beyond them on all the aspects of the Divine, he exceeds both and fulfils them in that exceeding...

He says that if we go through the realisation of the individual, then we can get absorbed in God and lose Nature. If we go through the universal or Nature then we can lose the individual and God. Therefore, we need a synthesis of these approaches, as he says. "through the equal integrality of both and seizing through them and beyond them on all the aspects of the Divine", then only can we get complete knowledge.

To put it in a simple manner, Avidya or Ignorance is an exclusive knowledge of either Nature or man or God.

When we say Nature, we mean the universal, when we say man, we mean the individual, and when we say God it generally means the transcendental. But an integral realisation of God which is inclusive of both man and

Nature is in fact a shortcut. We cannot know Nature completely even if we were the greatest scientist and spent hundreds of years in research. But if we realise the Divine first and then come back to Nature and man there is a possibility of knowing both man and Nature completely as manifestations of One. This is the best route.

Here is a simple example. Suppose we want to contact somebody in Delhi. If we go by train or by air it will take a lot of time. But if we connect with them through our mobile phone, that is, via a satellite, we can contact them

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immediately. Similarly, the quickest way to know the individual and the universal is through the transcendent.

God is like that satellite, if we connect with him we can connect with the whole universe and with each individual.

Sri Aurobindo concludes this paragraph by saying All this becomes entirely real and effective by an ascension into a supramental and supreme supernature and the descent of its powers into the manifestation; but even while that consummation is still difficult and distant, the true knowledge can be made subjectively real by a spiritual reflection or reception in mind-life-body Nature.

He says that this integral realisation may not be possible fully and completely without the realisation of the Supermind, but still, we could have an initial subjective experience of that integral knowledge in spiritual consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo says,

But this spiritual truth and true aim of his being is not allowed to appear till late in his journey: for the early preparatory business of man in the evolutionary steps of Nature is to affirm, to make distinct and rich, to possess firmly, powerfully and completely his own individuality. As a consequence, he has in the beginning principally to occupy himself with his own ego.

In these next three or four paragraphs Sri Aurobindo is going to discuss the place and necessity of the human ego. Normally, we think of the ego as a barrier to spiritual

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* growth, but as he says in one of his aphorisms, initially ego is the helper. He will explain it to us.

In evolution, mankind must first establish himself in Nature because he has just come above the animal level.

When Nature produced this new species, it had first to give to mankind sufficient space and time and energy to exist as a species apart, not one like the previous species.

First, he had to establish himself at the cost of even denying the higher levels of spirituality. Unless he was substantially established upon earth he could not really climb to the spiritual heights. Nature has in fact given him the psychological unit called the ego so that he will be occupied with himself. That is why Sri Aurobindo calls the ego a helper. It means first of all he sees who he is on the face of this earth, what is his unique individuality vis-a-vis the animals and the plants and all that nature has so far brought forth. He is completely enclosed in his own ego.

We see that it is also the normal growth of a human child. The child is at first self-centred; the attention of the parents, the relatives and everybody is given to the little child. All its demands, whims, fancies and cries are responded to so that it will have self-confidence and know that “you too matter”. They say, “You may be a little kid, but you are important to us”. Such an establishment of the individual ego is important. Similarly. Mankind, in the beginning, is occupied with his own ego and in this phase of his evolution, the world and others are less important to him than himself, or indeed only as aids and occasions for his own self-affirmation.

In the next sentence, Sri Aurobindo beautifully says, God too at this stage is less important to him than he

is to himself, and therefore in earlier formations, on the lower levels of religious development, God or the gods are treated as if they existed for man as supreme instruments for the satisfaction of his desires, his helpers in his task of getting the world in which he lives to satisfy his needs and wants and ambitions.

This is the description of the primitive role of religion; in it every god exists as if only to fulfil our wishes. At this stage, even the gods are considered to be our helpers.

It is only later that people come to realise that the gods have an independent existence and are not made to help humans. Usually, people go to temples and churches only to ask for the fulfillment of their desires. That is the self-centredness of mankind. We don't ask of God anything to help in our spiritual growth towards the higher reality or towards greater values; we ask him for smaller things like wealth, possessions, power, success in marriage or job or a hundred different things because we only are looking after our own needs. Just as we use the world for our own satisfaction, we use the gods for our desires. That is what we call primitive religion, and we have many rituals and pujas that we do to satisfy the gods so that they in return will satisfy our needs. It is a kind of economic bartering.

These rituals help to take mankind a step forward from his animality. Animal nature is crude, violent and uncontrolled. These rituals and ceremonies are at least Godward in their movement. They may not have anything to do with the divine consciousness, but they are at least Godward and to that extent, they serve a positive role in human growth. Sri Aurobindo says, Man the individual has to affirm, to distinguish his personality against Nature, to be powerfully himself,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* to evolve all his human capacities of force and knowledge and enjoyment so that he may turn them upon her and upon the world with more and more mastery and force; his self-discriminating egoism is given him as a means for this primary purpose.

We can clearly understand humanity's efforts towards force and knowledge and enjoyment. We are constantly striving for enjoyment, for knowing the world, for mastery over our environment. Essentially, fundamentally, these efforts are distancing ourselves from our animal nature and establishing ourselves as human beings. Nature is interested to establish this mental creature so that she may bring out of him the supramental being. She has given him all the liberty, all the freedom, and all the enjoyment to become the human mental creature. Sri Aurobindo says, Until he has thus developed his individuality, his personality, his separate capacity, he cannot be fit for the greater work before him or successfully turn his faculties to higher, larger and more divine ends. He has to affirm himself in the Ignorance before he can perfect himself in the Knowledge.

The conclusion is that unless a person has developed his individuality, he cannot really be used for a greater purpose.

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Mankind in general, and individual in particular move from the development of the physical ego to the vital ego and then to the mental ego. That is the process of our growth. Children first develop their physical ego, their sense of being physically distinct from their surroundings and from others, and later they attempt to satisfy their

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own life needs and desires – that is the vital ego. Only later do they develop a sense of their unique mental ideas, interests, skills, understandings and perspectives of life and of themselves. Collective groups go through a similar gradual development. The next step in this development is that of the soul, the true individual. So far, we have established only the outer ego, but now we must establish ourselves as the true individual, the soul.

The soul has come directly from the Transcendent or the Divine Nature. It is there within us but we are identified with our outer being and the ego which are under the influence of the inconscience; that is why it is difficult to bring out our true soul. The influence of the inconscience is stronger than that of the soul within us because we are separated from the soul by the

physical, vital and mental ego and they distort its influence on our outer nature.

Abolishing the ego is imperative for the psychic being to influence outer nature. Sri Aurobindo says, Still, to find his egoistic individuality is not to know himself; the true spiritual individual is not the mind ego, the life ego, the body ego: predominantly, this first movement is a work of will, of power, of egoistic self-effectuation and only secondarily of knowledge.

Therefore, a time must come when man has to look below the obscure surface of his egoistic being and attempt to know himself; he must set out to find the real man: without that he would be stopping short at Nature's primary education and never go on to her deeper and larger teachings; however great his practical knowledge and efficiency, he would be only a little higher than the animals.

Sri Aurobindo says our egoistic knowledge and abilities

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* are only a kind of primary education. We should not be too proud of our achievements – even if we have built the wonderful rock temples, produced extra ordinary poetry, composed supreme music – all this greatness in the present world is from the evolutionary point of view only a primary education. It is as if we have just passed kindergarten and have miles to go. There are greater horizons beyond awaiting us. It means Nature wants to open up its deeper and higher levels in which we will have greater knowledge and greater divine consciousness.

Now, we are only a little higher than the animals. It might be shocking to realise our level of consciousness at present but it gives us a truer perspective. It humbles us but at the same time opens a vast horizon of possibility that is awaiting us. It stimulates us to rise higher.

How do we go beyond ego-personality? Sri Aurobindo answers:

First, he has to turn his eyes upon his own psychology and distinguish its natural elements, —

ego, mind and its instruments, life and body,—until he discovers that his whole existence stands in need of an explanation other than the working of the natural elements and of a goal for its activities other than an egoistic self-affirmation and satisfaction. He may seek it in Nature and mankind and thus start on his way to the discovery of his unity with the rest of his world: he may seek it in supernature, in God, and thus start on his way to the discovery of his unity with the Divine.

We get a practical guidance here. He says, first of all we have to analyse ourselves. Turn the eye on our psychology and distinguish its natural elements. This is why

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Sri Aurobindo's Integral Psychology and Integral Yoga are so important because they encourage self-analysis.

First of all, we must know who we are and what are the different elements of our being. Then he says we must see that the goal of all the activities of our nature is not simply an “egoistic self-affirmation”, a truer goal is to find and establish our unity with Nature and mankind or with God. We should remember that we have been discussing the relationship between God, Nature, and Man. When we want to exceed our ego, one way is to seek unity with Nature and mankind. This is what the scientists do –

they seek unity with Nature. Others endeavour to help humanity or the environment. This expands us and we go beyond the intimate circle to help the community, the country or the world; there is an enlarging horizon.

Many people follow this. Some others go towards God and try to unite with him through religion or spirituality.

These are two different paths mankind has attempted till now. He says,

Practically, he attempts both paths and, continually wavering, continually seeks to fix himself in the successive solutions that may be best in accordance with the various partial discoveries he has made on his double line of search and find.

But through it all what he is in this stage still insistently seeking to discover, to know, to fulfil is himself; his knowledge of Nature, his knowledge of God are only helps towards self-knowledge, towards the perfection of his being, towards the attainment of the supreme object of his individual self-existence.

Directed towards Nature and the cosmos, it may take upon itself the figure of self-knowledge, self-mastery—in the mental and vital sense—and

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* mastery of the world in which we find ourselves: directed towards God, it may take also this figure but in a higher spiritual sense of world and self, or it may assume that other, so familiar and decisive to the religious mind, the seeking for an individual salvation whether in heavens beyond or by a separate immergence in a supreme Self or a supreme Non-Self,—beatitude or Nirvana.

These two processes of uniting and knowing God or Nature are perhaps subconsciously a seeking for self-knowledge and self-mastery. In discovering knowledge of the world and mastery over it we also gain greater knowledge and mastery of ourselves. Similarly, in discovering knowledge of God we may also gain knowledge and mastery over ourselves. However, it is also possible that our religious or spiritual seeking takes us away from an understanding of ourselves by focusing on salvation in heaven or union with the Transcendent or extinction in Nirvana. For example, if we practice Raja Yoga, it leads to samadhi which is a blissful state that is completely disconnected from this world.

However, by going towards unity with the Divine or with Nature, the essential aim often remains individualistic, or even what Sri Aurobindo says, it leads to an expanded ego. Why is it so? Because if we seek religious salvation, it is often our own individual salvation we seek. We do not think

of the victory of the Divine. That means we are working for ourselves. To aim at one's salvation, Moksha, is not such a great ideal, it is almost selfish and aimed at increasing one's ego. If we strive for unity with Nature and mankind we often land up in altruism or philanthropy which can also be a form

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of spiritual ego. In fact, altruism and philanthropy in the name of service to mankind can be a very refined ego-sense which is the most difficult to overcome because it is not obvious and easily misunderstood, unlike the typical vital or mental egoism. In becoming a guru, one may think that one is working for the Mother when in reality one is building up one's own ego, one's name and fame and influence over others. This is the most slippery ground and to erase that is extremely difficult because one cannot see it objectively. It then becomes a hindrance in one's spiritual progress. It is very difficult to escape ego. I think without the Divine Grace we cannot surpass or overcome it.

Some people went out of the Ashram and became gurus, but the Mother told them, "don't use our names".

They were not to speak in the name of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. There is a tradition in different Ashrams that gurus who come in succession claim to represent their original gurus. But, here one cannot establish oneself by saying I am a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and thereby I am a Guru. I do not have any right to become a Guru in the name of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. If one does so, it is one's own karma.

They can become gurus but cannot and should not claim to represent Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They did not establish any kind of order of gurus because that becomes dangerous and can turn into a cult, a creed or a religion.

If we are to be transformed, we must surrender all our egos, and the spiritual ego can be one of the greatest hurdles.

Sri Aurobindo says,

It is because of the spiritual Person, the Divinity

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* in the individual, that perfection or liberation—

salvation, as it is called in the West—has to be individual and not collective; for whatever perfection of the collectivity is to be sought after, can come only by the perfection of the individuals who constitute it. It is because the individual is That, that to find himself is his great necessity.

It is in complete surrender and self-giving to the Supreme that one finds the true Self because the true Self is the Transcendent, the Divine. As it is said in the Chandogya Upanishad, *tat tvam asi*, “That thou art.”

We have many different levels of our being including the physical, the vital, the mental, the psychic and the superconscient. We must first establish our ego at the physical, vital and mental levels, but then we must go further and find our psychic being and our spiritual Self.

It is through complete surrender and self-giving to the Supreme that comes to our perfect self-finding. This is, if I may say, the real shortcut.

Sri Aurobindo says,

In his complete surrender and self-giving to the Supreme it is he who finds his perfect self-finding in a perfect self-offering. In the abolition of the mental, vital, physical ego, even of the spiritual ego, it is the formless and limitless Individual that has the peace and joy of its escape into its own infinity.

I would like to add here a quotation from the Mother.

Sri Aurobindo has written here that “in its complete surrender and self-giving to the Supreme it is he who finds his perfect self-finding in a perfect self-offering”.

The Mother says,

Three typical modes of total self-giving to the Divine: (1) To prostrate oneself at His feet, giving up all pride in perfect humility.

(2) To unfold one's being before Him, open one's whole body from head to foot, as one opens a book, exposing one's centres so as to make all their movements visible in a complete sincerity that allows nothing to remain hidden.

(3) To nestle in His arms, to merge in Him in a loving and absolute trust.

These movements may be accompanied by three formulas or any one of them according to the case: (1) Let Thy Will be done and not mine.

(2) As Thou willest, as Thou willest.

(3) I am Thine for eternity.

Generally, when these movements are done in the true way, they are followed by a perfect identification, a dissolution of the ego, giving rise to a sublime felicity. (CWM 14: 102-103)

To prostrate oneself at His feet, giving up all pride, in all humility. The attitude that Sri Aurobindo is referring to here is one in which we feel "I am no one, I am nothing. The Mother you alone are. I don't know anything. I am not capable of anything. Whatever I am doing is because of Thy Grace, Thy Force, Thy Consciousness, Thy Energy." We have to be completely humble and the gesture of that humility is to prostrate at his feet.

This is something that I have seen that Western minds do not easily take to. Indians naturally prostrate at the

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* feet of Sri Aurobindo – it comes to us very naturally because of this sense of humility.

Years ago, I was on a lecture tour to Germany. At Berlin, the members wanted to establish a Sri Aurobindo Centre. I was there at the occasion and at my behest, they had installed a huge cut-out of Sri Aurobindo on the wall.

His head touched the roof and his feet touched the floor.

The image was overpowering. As a natural instinct, I prostrated before the Lord and did my *pranams*. To my astonishment, many of the German people too did the same. I had not asked them to do so. It is not even a part of their culture. But they prostrated spontaneously. It was a lovely sight, each one of them brought flowers from the side basket, put them near his feet and did what we call in India *sashtang pranam*. When there is a movement of surrender genuinely from inside, the body itself likes to prostrate in front of the Lord. It is not a ritual. It is as if to say, “O Lord, my whole body and my being are at thy feet”. That day it was a spontaneous gesture from all. There was such a feeling of surrender, of offering to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother that naturally they prostrated.

The second is “to unfold one’s being before him... as one opens a book”. This is what the early sadhaks in the ashram used to do – open themselves in diary writing.

They wrote all the details about their feelings and thoughts and actions, both good and bad, the moral and the immoral. The Mother always advocated exposing all our centres so as to make their movements visible.

The third attitude is “To nestle in his arms, to merge in him in loving and absolute trust”. In this way, we feel as if in the lap of the Mother.

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Then she gives three formulas to accompany these attitudes. These are the inner mantras or prayers. We can use any of these mantras depending upon our own relationship with the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, whichever is closest to our heart.

In the experience that he is nothing and no one, or everything and everyone, or the One which is beyond all things and absolute, it is the Brahman in the individual that effectuates this stupendous merger or this marvellous joining, Yoga, of its eternal unit of being with its vast all-comprehending or supreme all-transcending unity of eternal existence.

For the self is not the ego, it is one with All it is the All and the One that we discover in ourselves. The contradiction, the separation disappears. The Self, the spiritual Reality remains united with the One and the All by that delivering disappearance.

In this experience, there is a merger, but at the same time, this merger is not a self-losing. Although the word

‘merger’ may suggest that we lose our individuality, it is not so. He says the separation disappears, the contradiction disappears, but the spiritual Reality remains. Perhaps Sri Aurobindo indirectly refers to Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa, who said, “I want to eat sugar, but not become sugar.” (Nirodbaran, *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* I: 7) This is the truest merger, that we have united with the One and can still taste the honey of Divine Love. This is not the Nirvanic experience where we lose ourselves, it is not the Advaitic experience where the world does not exist as reality. Sri Aurobindo caught it most wonderfully. This world is our own body, our own beehive, and it is full of honey, but it is just wrapped

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* up in this mental and vital ego so that we are not able to drink from the deep source. If we watch a honeybee, it goes straight to the centre of the flower; it doesn’t touch the petals, it does not touch the leaves, it goes straight to where the honey is! That is the highest experience of the abolition of the ego.

We have seen the argument about the utility of ego in human nature, and not only its utility, but also why it has been purposely created by Nature. It is not a mistake or a curse that we are all stuck in ego. Building of ego on the

mental, vital and physical levels is a stage of self-consolidation while we are in ignorance. It means that we have first to become quite different from the animal species. We have to establish ourselves as a creation of Nature distinct from animal nature, and due to that need for consolidation and concentration on oneself, one has got to be a bit enclosed within oneself. Our self-enclosure in the ego is a time when we can concentrate on the development of the different parts of our being.

It is a normal process. If I want to study *The Life Divine* and decide what I should say about it this morning I have first to find myself a corner in my house where I can focus. That is the same reason why we need the ego that Nature has given us – so that we can concentrate on our own development.

Our entire history until now has been such a concentration. Over the long span of human history, there have been three phases in this development. The first is when mankind developed the physical ego. That was the pre-cultural stage when man was only a physical being developing and sustaining his body. Then out of the physical stage humanity has grown to the vital

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stage to concentrate on the development of the vital ego. Here culture with its kingdoms and temples began.

It was a long period but this is where the entire cultural aspect of mankind came forward, whether it be the arts, religion, architecture, poetry, literature, music and so on. This stage manifested the vital ego of man. Then in the last few centuries beginning with the Industrial Revolution or even before that with the dawning of the rationalistic age during the Renaissance period there has been a concentration on the mental ego. When we talk about these stages, we cannot just draw a line and say one stage is over and the next begins. There is an overlapping of one into the other and the next stage is prepared by some experiments in the previous stage. Now we have developed the intellectual ego sufficiently enough for the spiritual age to dawn, and that is why we now have to prepare conscientiously for the next stage in evolution. It is this new spiritual personality that we want to develop which can best be developed by the process of surrender.

We need to note that till the intellectual age, we had to develop ourselves by self-effort. Even religion insisted on self-development by one's own endeavour to go towards God. Now spirituality says God will come to you, just surrender. Just open up yourself and call him. There is a complete reversal in the attitude of the consciousness.

The new spiritual personality will come, he says, by

“complete surrender and self-giving to the Supreme”, and we have seen three mantras of surrender: “Let thy Will be done and not mine”, “as Thou willest, as Thou willest”, and “I am Thine for eternity”.

The more one goes towards the psychic the more one experiences “I am thine”. In spite of all that is happening,

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* I am thine, and then one suddenly realises that I have been Thine all along because that is the truth of the psychic being. The truth is, we eternally belong to the Divine. The third mantra in particular is more directly coming from the psychic being whereas the first ones are more from the outer being though under the influence of the psychic being.

Now let us take up the next point which is about how to get beyond the sevenfold ignorance. Chapter 19 is called “Out of the Sevenfold Ignorance towards the Sevenfold Knowledge” and it is interesting that in this paragraph of Chapter 17 we get a brief summary of that.

We will not discuss this paragraph in detail because we will cover it in detail later, but we can give it a quick reading so that we come to know the stages. First, he says,

One step is to know that this life is not all, to get at the conception of his own temporal eternity, to realise, to become concretely aware of that subjective persistence which is called the immortality of the soul. When he knows that there are states beyond the material and lives behind and before him, at any rate, a pre-existence and a subsequent existence, he is on the

way to getting rid of his temporal ignorance by enlarging himself beyond the immediate moments of Time into the possession of his own eternity.

The temporal ignorance is the sense that we have only this one life, that I have taken birth as Mr A and this is the beginning and end of my life and my evolution.

He tells us that we have to realise that we have taken innumerable births before and will take innumerable births after this life. We must get beyond this belief that

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we are born only once. The knowledge that we are on the journey of our soul and that we have existed before and that we shall exist ever after takes us out of this temporal ignorance. Then,

Another step forward is to learn that his surface waking state is only a small part of his being, to begin to fathom the abyss of the Inconscient and depths of the subconscious and subliminal and scale the heights of the superconscient; so he commences the removal of his psychological self-ignorance.

To be in ignorance means not being aware. What is it that I am not aware of? That just my mind, life and body are not all I am, that I have different and greater layers of my being. The outer instrumentation is not the be-all and end-all of my existence. There is the subliminal, the subconscious, the inconscient, the circumconscient, the superconscient – there are many layers of my being. This he calls our psychological self-ignorance. We get rid of this ignorance when we realise that there are other layers of our being. Next,

A third step is to find out that there is something in him other than his instrumental mind, life and body, not only an immortal ever-developing individual soul that supports his nature but an eternal immutable self and spirit, and to learn what are the categories of his spiritual being, until he discovers that all in him is an expression of the spirit and distinguishes the

link between his lower and his higher existence; thus he sets out to remove his constitutional self-ignorance.

And in this last step, he says,

Discovering self and spirit he discovers God; he finds out that there is a Self beyond the temporal:

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* he comes to the vision of that Self in the cosmic consciousness as the divine Reality behind Nature and this world of beings; his mind opens to the thought or the sense of the Absolute of whom self and the individual and the cosmos are so many faces; the cosmic, the egoistic, the original ignorance begin to lose the rigidity of their hold upon him.

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The more we expand the mental, emotional and physical consciousness, the more we expand our ego, and the more we expand it into the cosmic consciousness, the more the ego disappears. That is the antidote for the egoistic consciousness. And lastly, he says, In his attempt to cast his existence into the mould of this enlarging self-knowledge his whole view and motive of life, thought and action are progressively modified and transformed; his practical ignorance of himself, his nature and his object of existence diminishes: he has set his step on the path which leads out of the falsehood and suffering of a limited and partial into the perfect possession and enjoyment of a true and complete existence.

The last ignorance is what he calls practical ignorance.

To give an example, we see the sunrise and sunset everyday. We often casually mention this phenomenon and our lives are governed by it. But is this the truth? Is the sun really rising? In reality, it is the sun rising and the earth rotating around it. A whole science has developed based on this single truth. If science were also to believe, as it did long back, that the earth was

fixed and it was the sun that was moving, it would have a completely different angle on the nature of our existence. Today, we are able

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to go to Mars and to the Moon because of this essential knowledge about the movement of the earth and the sun. What Sri Aurobindo refers to, is quite similar to this. Once we know who we really are – am I really the ego or am I the Self, the Brahman – this knowledge will have an effect on our day-to-day normal existence and our pattern of life. That is why this is called practical ignorance.

When we speak about yoga in daily life, what is the thing that we want to practice? We want to put true knowledge into action. And what is that true action?

In daily life, for a developing spiritual being, the true action is to surrender. How does this truth affect my action? Before I do anything, whether I take a class or go for sports, whether I go to the cinema or for lunch, immediately I tell the Mother that this action is an offering to Thee. Every time we offer, more and more the spiritual personality consolidates itself. That is how this one truth can influence our daily existence.

Now we come to the next point, the discovery of unity in the three categories of Man, God and Nature. When we try to go beyond any of these ignorances we enter into a process of integrating these three categories. He says, In the course of this progress he discovers step by step the unity of the three categories with which he started. For, first, he finds that in his manifest being he is one with cosmos and Nature; mind, life and body, the soul in the succession of Time, the conscient, subconscious and superconscient,—these in their various relations and the result of their relations are cosmos and are Nature. But he finds too that in all which stands behind them or on which

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* they are based, he is one with God; for the Absolute, the Spirit, the Self spaceless and timeless, the Self manifest in the

cosmos and Lord of Nature, — all this is what we mean by God, and in all this his own being goes back to God and derives from it; he is the Absolute, the Self, the Spirit self-projected in a multiplicity of itself into cosmos and veiled in Nature.

As the identity with the cosmos and with the Absolute Reality concretizes more and more one finds his unity with all other souls and beings. Unity in what sense? Unity through world harmony with Nature and humanity. We have to connect on all three levels – Man, God and Nature – and this is exactly what the modern world is focused upon. People may not even know of Sri Aurobindo, but they emphasise the environment these days. It is not accidental that mankind has started focusing on the environment, and it is not just because of the threat of the destruction of the earth.

There is a realistic threat, no doubt about it, but this consciousness itself is part of the coming of the spiritual age. With this growing sense of unity, our eye goes to the preservation of the environment and the furthering of human unity. That is how we got the United Nations Organisation and UNESCO. There are now many world unifying movements, world religious centres, and world philosophy centres. Many things are being done on the world level. Similarly, there are many efforts to bring cultures together.

The other day somebody was asking me what are the signs of the coming of the supermind? If these are not signs, what more can we see? Let us not think that humanity is talking about these things by chance or

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simply out of anxiety. Definitely, there is a pressure and that is a pressure brought forth by the dawning of the spiritual age. I would even include all the movements of terrorism and fundamentalism; these too are nothing but pressure of the spiritual age. We have to learn to look beyond the newspaper reports and TV coverage.

There is pressure from a higher level to cleanse this fundamentalism not only in religion but in our own nature. Each one of us has it within us. But what is fundamentalism? Basically, it is resistance to the new, resistance to change, and resistance to something higher.

Some people have given it the garb of violence and killing but I would not blame only those small number of fanatics. If the whole of mankind were more open, I am sure fundamentalism would never have raised its head.

As Sri Aurobindo wrote, “If only mankind consented to be spiritualised...” As long as mankind does not consent to be spiritualised it will have to undergo crushing circumstances. Fundamentalism is nothing but one of these.

It is not necessary that this pressure must manifest every time as a world war. Fundamentalism and terrorism maybe even more crushing because in a war we have a battlefield and we know where the enemy is. In one of the talks in the *Agenda*, the Mother said that there won't be a third war and that the enemy will be within.

The enemy is not this religion or that fundamentalism, this or that person, the enemy is within each one of us and the war is being waged on all of us. The problem is not outside of us. It is easy to balance all the terrorism and violence happening in the world, but it is hard to identify the enemy within. Turning to spirituality, turning

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* inward, will help us to find out the enemy within. All our nuclear weapons cannot wipe out fundamentalism or terrorism. Now the enemy is not hiding in a palace which can be bombed to kill him. There was a time when the enemy was outside, now it is within. Along with the positive movements happening under the pressure of the spiritual age — environmentalism, world unity, human harmony —the past that is resistant to the Divine is also surfacing.

Sri Aurobindo writes,

The unity of God and Nature cannot fail to manifest itself to him: for he finds in the end that it is the Absolute who is all these relativities; he sees that it is the Spirit of whom every other principle is a manifestation; he discovers that it is the Self who has become all these becomings; he feels

that it is the Shakti or Power of being and consciousness of the Lord of all beings which is Nature and is acting in the cosmos.

This is the ultimate result when we go beyond this sevenfold ignorance. With my limited knowledge, I believe that this classification of the various types of ignorance is not given anywhere else in any literature in the world. We have always said we want to remove Avidya, but what is the nature of this Avidya? How deep is it? What are its ramifications? What are its branches?

We get that for the first time in Sri Aurobindo. At the end of it he says, we come to realise that all this is the same Supreme Lord, that all this is the manifestation of the Divine, the Spirit and Self. But what is new and important is that he says, we will also come to realise Shakti, “Power

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of being”. We have been speaking about the Divine, the Spirit, but we will also realise that there is Shakti.

That is continued in the next paragraph where he writes,

Pursuing Nature through these categories in which he recognises his unity with the rest of the cosmos, he finds a Supernature behind all that is apparent, a supreme power of the Spirit in Time and beyond Time, in Space and beyond Space, a conscious Power of the Self who by her becomes all becomings, of the Absolute who by her manifests all relativities.

We begin to realise the role of Shakti. It is Shakti who manifests all the details of what Purusha wants. It is interesting because we see the same relation between the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. We know that the Mother declared: “Without him, I exist not; without me, he is unmanifest.” (CWM 13:32). Without Shakti, Ishwara is unmanifest. The Divine Shakti is the Power of the Self which manifests all the details of this universe, and this is one of the climax realisations of spirituality. In order that the world enters a spiritual age, this concept of Shakti must become strong if not dominant, because that will bring the equilibrium between Purusha and Prakriti, Ishwara and Ishwari, Brahman and Maya.

In Christianity originally there was this equilibrium between Purusha and Prakriti, the Divine and his Shakti, but because they wanted to, like in India, subdue women, Christ's image gained prominence among the followers and Mother Mary's importance receded. During one of my visits to Germany I saw that in a remote Church Mother Mary was a predominant figure. Right in the centre of the church, she was installed as a central figure.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* So, there are some old churches that have retained the importance of Mother Mary and I was told in that church that now slowly Christianity is bringing back Mother Mary. That is the need and the spirit of the times. What we think of the women's liberation movement that started in the West and is now active in India is not only for women's liberation, it is also for the liberation of the Shakti aspect of the Divine. It is remarkable that in the Ashram in Pondicherry was built by the Mother. It is an example and a symbol of the Shakti aspect coming forward and leading. It is She who, as he puts it here,

“manifests all relativities”. The Mother and Sri Aurobindo showed on the practical level how the female energy, the Divine Shakti, is really the executrix. When we talk about the Ashram we usually talk about the Mother, rarely do we speak about Sri Aurobindo! It is the Mother's *kripa*, grace, we say, nobody says it is Sri Aurobindo's *kripa*. It's not a psychological deficiency, it is a truth. This idea was given in the Ashram long ago in the 1920s. Now, in the entire world, we see women gaining importance.

On the human level, this idea and force have manifested as women's liberation. We think that it is basically due to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, but they were in a corner at Pondicherry and the world didn't know about them. They had a powerful silent influence.

We know how they have influenced hundreds of events in world affairs. If someone were to study the cause of world events as they were before Sri Aurobindo and after he came and worked for the world, he/she may be able to see remarkable changes in the world. That is what a spiritual being

always does – he remains quietly in one corner of the world and from there sends waves of

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thoughts which capture the world in the coming times.

One of these was the liberation of women.

In those early days of Ashram people had never heard or seen women wearing shorts in India. Nobody ever thought of such a thing. But there were some people who participated in the classes who said “who is that girl that came in shorts and T-shirt?” The Mother said, where is the difference, physical activities are for both men and women. They played the same games and participated in athletics as did men. So, so the Mother did not discriminate between the uniform for men and women. It was a groundbreaking thought. People may not know Pondicherry, but the thought waves go far and wide. There is a lot that has happened because of this Shakti, and the Mother has definitely opened many new horizons on the thought level, on emotional level and on physical level. People may not acknowledge this because they don’t want to lose their credibility. But the fact is that what the Mother thought of, started manifesting world over.

Let us go to the next paragraph. Sri Aurobindo writes, The quest of man for God, which becomes in the end the most ardent and enthralling of all his quests, begins with his first vague questionings of Nature and a sense of something unseen both in himself and her.

Even if, as modern Science insists, religion started from animism, spirit-worship, demon-worship and the deification of natural forces, these first forms only embody in primitive figures a veiled intuition in the subconscious, an obscure and ignorant feeling of hidden influences and incalculable forces, or a vague sense of being, will, intelligence in what seems to us

Deliberations on *The Life Divine* inconscient, of the invisible behind the visible, of the secretly conscious spirit in things distributing itself in every working of energy.

This is a point that is wide open for interpretation. He says that humanity began with vague questions about nature; they had the sense of something unseen behind it. We see this in paganism, anthropomorphism— i.e. the worship of the sun god, the worship of the moon god; we said this leaf has a god, this flower has a goddess. He says mankind did not create paganism out of fancy. They felt that there is something beyond them but was not able to understand its meaning. It is because it was unknown, they started worshipping everything. Mankind was in awe of the spirit. Even today there are many people in Africa and India, especially in the forests, certain tribes, who have many things dedicated to spirits, which they sometimes call a god or a goddess, but basically, the idea is that there is something beyond the physical form.

We have to respect that and not feel some kind of false prestige that we are more evolved people. There are many modern minds who criticise the Vedas saying, this is all Paganism – they worship fire, the moon, the sun etc.

This is a gross misunderstanding. There is a truth behind things. It is not just a mental fancy.

Sri Aurobindo says,

Anthropomorphism is an imaged recognition of the truth that man is what he is because God is what He is and that there is one soul and body of things, humanity even in its incompleteness the most complete manifestation yet achieved here and divinity the perfection of what in man is imperfect.

That he sees himself everywhere and worships that as

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God is also true; but here too he has laid confusedly the groping hand of Ignorance on a truth — that his being and the Being are one, that this is a partial reflection of That, and that to find his greater Self everywhere is to find God and to come near to the Reality in things, the Reality of all existence.

This is a marvelous truth, our being and that Being is essentially one. Mankind has been led in all its spiritual and religious seeking by this innate sense, this intuitive sense that we are one with the Supreme.

When we write history, it should not be the about facts and events of the kings, their lives and deeds. They are not so important. History should be about the evolution of consciousness. Mankind has opened a million different ways to find only Him, and the study of this is real history. The Divine Being is attracting the divine being within us and this attraction between man and God is civilisation, culture and the history of mankind.

The most interesting point that comes out here, as we have just seen, is that the entire human effort is towards finding out the Divine Being. It says in the Bible that man is made in the image of God. This is the truth. We have a feeling, a kind of secret knowledge and faith, but we tend to deny this and thereby deny God, spirituality, Divine.

Then we arrive at agnosticism. However, Sri Aurobindo says that such periods never last long because the innate truth of mankind is that his being and the Divine Being are one and this truth cannot be suppressed by any philosophy or religion or 'ism' for long. The unity behind the diversity and the discord is the secret of the variety of human religions and philosophies; for they all get at

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* some image or touch some portion of the one Truth, they envisage one of its myriad aspects.

Often, I admire the language, the beautiful linguistic structure in Sri Aurobindo's writings. We often get lost in its meaning, its depths and heights and vast vision and tend to underplay its beautiful writing, but I

would like to present that also. In this sentence we see that Sri Aurobindo has repeatedly used the word ‘whether’

in a very long sentence to emphasise the diversity of expressions of the one Divine. Let us read a paragraph for the sheer beauty of language:

Whether they see dimly the material world as the body of the Divine, or life as a great pulsation of the breath of Divine Existence, or all things as thoughts of the cosmic Mind, or realise that there is a Spirit which is greater than these things, their subtler and yet more wonderful source and creator, – whether they find God only in the Inconscient or as the one Conscious in inconscient things or as an ineffable superconscious Existence to reach whom we must leave behind our terrestrial being and annul the mind, life and body, or, overcoming division, see that He is all these at once and accept fearlessly the large consequences of that vision,—whether they worship Him with universality as the cosmic Being or limit Him and themselves, like the Positivist, in humanity only or, on the contrary, carried away by the vision of the timeless and spaceless Immutable, reject Him in Nature and Cosmos, – whether they adore Him in various strange or beautiful or magnified forms of the human ego or for His perfect possession of the qualities to which man aspires, his Divinity revealed

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to them as a supreme Power, Love, Beauty, Truth, Righteousness, Wisdom, – whether they perceive Him as the Lord of Nature, Father and Creator, or as Nature herself and the universal Mother, pursue Him as the Lover and attracter of souls or serve Him as the hidden Master of all works, bow down before the one God or the manifold Deity, the one divine Man or the one Divine in all men or, more largely, discover the One whose presence enables us to become unified in consciousness or in works or in life with all beings, unified with all things in Time and Space, unified with Nature and her influences and even her inanimate forces, – the truth behind must ever be the same because all is the one Divine Infinite whom all are seeking.

It’s a long sentence but its sum and substance is that in all human activities we try to seek the Divine, whether it is through the truth of thought, the truth of beauty and form, the truth of religions, the truth of science or the

truth of power. We can study this sentence for its structural and sheer poetic beauty. Then he says that because everything is that One, there must be endless variety in human approaches to Him. It was necessary that we should find God in many different ways in order that we might come to know Him entirely.

In one of his letters Sri Aurobindo discusses the contributions of various religions – Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism. Then he says that no one religion can catch the Divine entirely. Hindu religion seem to have approached the Divine in more than one way. He says here that it was necessary that God should be seen variously. We can mark the magnificence of this insight.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* Why are we fighting against Islam or Christianity or Buddhism or Hinduism? Spirituality can never do that. In fact, what Sri Ramakrishna told us was that if you want to reach the Divine in its entirety you have to include all the religions in your embrace. Never say that Islam is lower than Hinduism or that Hinduism is lower than Christianity or that Christianity is better than Buddhism. Better in what? Lower in what? Whether we emphasise God as beauty, God as Power, God as Wisdom or God as harmony, can we say which aspect of God is greater than the other? Different individuals may have personal choices and attraction to certain form of Divine, but nothing can be generalised. It is possible that someone feels attracted to the aspect of Beauty, Harmony, Love, Strength of Divine. These are different aspects, like the four different aspects of the Mother, can we say which aspect is better or greater? It is not possible.

This comprehensive vision of Sri Aurobindo is indeed admirable.

If we want to follow Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, then we have to rise above our preferences and prejudices against other religions, castes, creeds, nationality or anything that divides and discriminates against one human being as higher or lower than the other. If we cannot do that it would mean that even mentally we have not been able to understand Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo himself advocates the necessity to find God variously in order that we might come to know him in his entirety. It is when knowledge reaches its highest aspects that it is possible to arrive at its greatest unity. Only Sri Aurobindo can write this, and he writes this because he believes it, he has experienced it. All

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religions are one because they all catch one facet of the same Divine. He says, this will become a reality for us when we go to the heights of consciousness, which is supramental. We will live this truth as we grow higher in consciousness. As we go from the mind to the higher levels of this reality will embrace us and become larger.

Our vision of the world's unity becomes more real and does not remain just a mental idea. To go beyond the mind has its immediate practical effect, and as we are speaking about harmony and unity between these different facets of the Divine, they will be realised only when we get the highest knowledge. All religions can be seen as approaches to a single Truth, all philosophies as divergent views looking at different sides of a single Reality. That for which our mind is seeking is found integrally in the realised unity of God and Man and Nature.

The last paragraph again talks about the unity of God, Man and Nature. We will just look at a few sentences because it summarises the entire chapter. Sri Aurobindo writes,

The same Absolute revealed in all relativities, the Spirit who embodies Himself in cosmic Mind and Life and Matter and of whom Nature is the self of energy so that all she seems to create is the Self and Spirit variously manifested in His own being...

Then he says,

This truth of the Absolute is the justification of the cycles of the world; it is not their denial. It is the Self-Being that has become all these becomings; the Self is the eternal unity of all these existences,—I am He.

Cosmic energy is not other than the conscious force

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* of that Self-existent: by that energy It takes through universal nature innumerable forms of itself; through its divine nature It can, embracing the universal but transcendent of it, arrive in them at the individual possession of its complete existence...

And then the last sentence:

The conscious unity of the three, God, soul and Nature, in his own consciousness, is the sure foundation of his perfection and his realisation of all harmonies: this will be his highest and widest state, his status of divine consciousness and divine life and its initiation the starting-point for the entire evolution of his self-knowledge, world-knowledge, God-knowledge.

One thing that I would like to bring to mark here is that Sri Aurobindo says “the conscious unity of the three, God, soul and Nature”. He has not written “God, Man, and Nature”. I am sure he has written it purposefully.

Now at the end of this chapter, he calls ‘man’ the soul.

This is the beauty, that he has used the word ‘man’ at the beginning of this evolutionary process of all the different activities, but it is only when man realises his soul that there is the integration of God, Man and Nature. That will be the highest status, that is the status of divine consciousness and the divine life. When we speak of the divine life, that Divine Life is a stage when mankind is united integrally with God, Nature and his own soul. He has used the word ‘soul’ and not ‘man’

because when we say ‘man’ we think of the outer being, the outer mind, vital and physical. When we say ‘mind’, we have all these philosophies and religions and their quarrels and the problems in ethics and morality. But,

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Sri Aurobindo refers to the essence of man, that when we are united with our soul then we are united with God. When we are united with God then we are united with Nature because Nature is the body of God. With the descent of Supermind in 1956 things have started moving in a different direction. Supermind is guiding humanity as a whole it is not partial to devotees of Sri Aurobindo. The sun's light has no partiality; when the sun rises it illumines everybody equally. But we have to open our doors and windows to see the sunlight. The choice is up to us whether we want to open or close our windows. To open our windows means to open our minds, our hearts, enlarge our feelings, and then the sunlight will be there. It is only those who are open to the new consciousness – whichever religion, whichever caste, whichever nation, whichever creed they may belong to

– Supermind does not bother about all that. And that is what is being practised in Auroville. I do not say, they have succeeded, but the Mother has said concretely that they must go beyond nation, religion, and caste, beyond these man-made divisions. It has to become a practical reality and Auroville has been given the challenge, to make that possibility a reality.

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## Lecture Notes

I. Man's ideal is to exceed himself a) The process of evolutionary consciousness.

b) In order to exceed himself man has to enlarge his partial being into a complete being. This process also involves man's realising his inner self. It is because of these possibilities that man is supposed to be a turning point in evolution.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* c) At present we are far from this ideal. We are but a figure of ego, but to exceed it and find the real self is the terrestrial destiny of man.

II. Man's principal categories of search a) Beyond man's intellectual knowledge & practical action, there are other faculties and instruments of consciousness which could help man in expressing dynamically his higher self and his divine universality.

b) His search for knowledge is preoccupied with the three principal categories: i. Himself — of which he is aware directly.

ii. Nature — of which he has only indirect knowledge.

iii. God — of which he has hardly any knowledge.

III. Man's understanding of God

a) His understanding of God is that he is someone who is the Cause, the All, the Supreme, the Unknown. Man has often denied all the three categories of his search but the denials have been always short-lived.

b) Logically too, man needs the Absolute to uphold the infinite finite.

c) At the same time, an exclusive affirmation of the Absolute is insufficient to solve the mystery of the cosmos and the individual. He needs to find something that links all together.

d) This unity of these three principles can be found by knowing each in its completeness: in their (God, Man, Nature) totality man can become aware of their mutual indwelling oneness.

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e) It is not by rejecting God's manifestation, but by rejecting his own Ignorance of it that man can best lift up his consciousness.

IV. Ego as the helper

a) In the beginning of his evolution, man occupies himself with his own ego. At this God is less important to him than he is to himself. Gods are useful to him as long as they satisfy his needs and wants.

b) The purpose of this stage of ego is to give the man his self-affirmation in Ignorance before he can proceed to perfect himself in Knowledge.

V. How does ego-centricity help in evolution?

a) The evolutionary emergence from die Ignorance works through two forces: i. A secret cosmic consciousness.

ii. An individual consciousness.

b) In the mass, the collective consciousness is nearer to the Inconscient; hence it is through the individual's growth that the cosmic spirit organises its collective units and thus raises Nature from Inconscience to Superconscience.

c) The suppression of the individual can give a practical efficiency to a nation, but this efficiency of the outer life cannot help the growth of the deeper parts of the human being.

d) An individual is a part of the cosmic being but he is at the same time a soul that has descended from the Transcendence. He has to fulfil himself first in his mental & vital ego before he can find his soul.

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Deliberations on *The Life Divine* VI. Abolition of the ego is imperative a) In order to look below this egoistic self, man has to first turn his eyes upon his own psychology & distinguish its natural elements. Then he could seek his unity with the rest of the world, that is, in Nature, God or Supernature.

b) Directed towards Nature, a man may get mastery of the world. Directed towards God, he may get individual salvation.

c) All this means a preoccupation with the individual self; but there is a deeper secret behind it — the secret of the Purusha.

d) The abolition of all the levels of one's ego is imperative; the surrender of one's total being is important for it is thus that the separation disappears leaving behind only the spiritual reality!

VII. To get beyond the sevenfold Ignorance a) Temporal ignorance... by growing into his eternal being.

b) Psychological self-ignorance... by enlarging his self-knowing beyond the waking self into the subconscious and the superconscious c) Constitutional self-ignorance... by realising his spiritual being d) The Cosmic ignorance... by discovering his timeless Self

e) The Egoistic ignorance... by realising the cosmic consciousness

f) Original ignorance... by opening to the Absolute Self

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g) Practical ignorance... by attaining self-knowledge VIII. Discovery of the Unity in the three categories a) Man finds that he is one with cosmos & Nature.

b) He finds his unity with all other souls & beings.

c) Finds that it is the Absolute who is all these relativities.

d) He finds that there is a conscious Power of the Self behind all becomings.

IX. The truth of anthropomorphism a) The quest of man for God which began with vague questionings will become in the end the most enthralling quest.

b) In the beginning man sees himself everywhere & worships that as God — but there is deeper truth beyond this perception: that his being & the Being are one.

X. The triune knowledge

a) There is an essential unity behind a b) Variety of human religions & philosophies. It was necessary that man should find God so variously in order to know him in his entirety.

c) The Absolute is the Lord of Nature; the Absolute is he of whom Nature is the self of His energy manifesting Him variously.

d) A triune knowledge is the Vast and full sense of the labour and effort of humanity. The conscious unity of God, Man & Nature is the sure foundation of a divine life.

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