
UNIT 1 THE DIVINE LIFE AND INTEGRAL (PURNA) YOGA

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to provide an insight into The Divine Life and Integral Yoga as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo. Systems of yoga are as old as human civilization itself. Several systems of Yoga have evolved over the ages and each one is a systematic technique to take human life to its highest state of perfection. The Integral Yoga is a unique method of Yoga invented, practiced and taught by Sri Aurobindo in the light of his yogic experiences. This unit shall contain the following units:

- Objects of Integral Yoga
- The Foundations of Integral Yoga
- The Triple Transformation

1.1 OBJECTS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

Yoga is a union with the Divine. It is a joining of the limited human consciousness with the infinite divine consciousness. The word 'yoga' for Aurobindo, has a wider, significance. To him, yoga is a complete union in the soul as well as nature by a moulding of the entire being into an image of the Divine. Not a partial union in the inner existence alone but an integral union in all elements of our being is the aim of Yoga. This calls for a change of the inner and outer life so that it may become a channel of joy of the Divine and a fit instrument of his works. All the elements of our personality – soul, mind, sense, heart, will, life and body - must fulfill themselves in a supreme perfection by their complete turning and self-giving to the Divine. The object is a complete spiritual change so that the being by degrees may become ready to express the Divine in its every thought, feeling and action.

Our life is a series of struggles to outgrow its ordinary limitations for rising to a higher status of existence. The true progress of life consists in an evolution from darkness to light, from sorrow to bliss, from weakness by limitation to the perfection of the infinite. The whole of life according to Aurobindo, is yoga, a series of mental, vital, or psychic movements towards full development of all our latent divine possibilities. The evolution going on in universal nature is also yoga, because it is an unconscious effort for revealing the spirit hidden within herself. Both man and Nature are evolving towards the same ultimate goal of perfect expression of the Divine in every sphere or plane of existence. But human beings need not follow the tardy method of cosmic evolution; they can hasten the slow natural process of his individual evolution by applying to it his own intelligence, will and endeavor.

Nature is leading man in a double evolution, one relating to his outward life and nature and the other to his occult inner being and nature. According to Aurobindo, the latter is now at a preliminary stage, for only a few have evolved beyond the mental into the spiritual level. The human mind has been for a long time past increasing in range, height and subtlety. Man's vital and physical parts are pressing on for expression of their yet unknown powers and capacities. This shows that Nature intends a full growth of the entire being in all its parts, which must also be the aim of Yoga. The Integral or Purna Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is therefore identical with Nature's Yoga, because the ultimate aim of both is a divine perfection of the human being. The object is not merely an outward or mundane perfection of the normal human mind, life and body. The aim is the full development of all members of the being, both inner and outer, for the greatest fulfillment of embodied existence. The demands of the spirit must not be ignored nor of material nature, for a balanced growth of our personality. A perfect yoga requires a perfect balance, a harmonious growth of all the parts.

Human fulfillment lies in uniting with God who is the only true being, and participating in His perfect purity, peace, light, force and bliss. One should seek for perfection because perfection is the nature of the Divine and the more one grows into His perfection, the more one feels Him manifest in the natural being. By turning our whole being to the Divine, we shall unite with the being, consciousness and delight of the Divine through every part of our human nature which will be moulded into an image of the divine Nature. The outcome will be that we shall always feel the Divine presence within us and become a perfect channel for the expression of the Divine in the world. The whole meaning of Integral Yoga is in fact a growth into the happy perfection of likeness to the divine, which means a rendering of the human into divine nature.

The primary need of man is a harmony among the discordant elements of his personality. A ceaseless fight is going on among them, each pressing for its own delight and fulfillment in disregard of the total welfare of the whole being. For instance, the vital part runs after many low and self-seeking pleasures which the mind does not accept as the true enjoyment of life. Human beings thirst for many objects and satisfactions which conflict with one another. He is constantly wavering between the right and the wrong; his nature contradicts what his soul regards as the true object of life. His knowledge, will and emotion show great disparity, which must be replaced by a divine harmony. The jarring elements must be harmonized by union with our inner Self who is the divine individual within us. That alone can bring peace, joy and harmony into being. Life in ignorance brings sorrow, suffering, limitation, weakness and mortality. An inner divine urge compels man to seek for light, power, peace, perfection and delight of existence. The soul within has an inherent longing for God; it needs self-giving, love, devotion, and union, which can only be satisfied by the Divine. The root cause of all evils of life is the separation of the finite being from its infinite source which possesses all bliss and power and knowledge. The remedy lies in the re-union of the individual with the Divine, the origin of his being, master of his life and beloved of his heart. Yoga is the path that leads to such union and spiritual fulfillment of life. The Divine confers on us the rich treasures of his spirit as recompense for all our toil and trouble. He is the giver of spiritual gifts that are infinitely more valuable than any material riches. Yoga gives us the delight of the Divine and the divine consciousness, which means the joy of peace and silence, of inner light, of growing inner knowledge and power, of divine love and bliss and numerous other spiritual experiences. The central object of the Yoga is union with the Divine. All other aims are only part of this one supreme fulfillment. Not personal power, liberation or perfection but integral union with the divine is the object of the yoga. Yoga

should be done for the fulfillment of God's will in us, His manifestation in the world and not for a personal achievement. We seek God not to attain an egoistic aim but to serve him, to manifest him in our lives and carry out his will in creation.

To attain the above objective, three yogic movements are necessary. First is to live in the tranquil inner self instead of the restless outer nature for an opening to the divine. One must by inner concentration awaken the inmost soul or the psychic being so that it may use its power to purify and change the ignorant nature and make it ready for divine union and spiritual transformation. Secondly to develop the cosmic consciousness by which the yogi becomes conscious of his union with the universal self and Nature. Thirdly to come in contact with the divine beyond the cosmos through the consciousness of the supermind, which is the ideal or divine mind in full possession of the truth. The supermind upon descending into nature will begin a miraculous operation for a divine change of the human being. By opening to the action of the supermind, the human consciousness will be changed into the divine and the ignorant nature into the supreme Supernature. The Supermind will change our mind, life and body for their complete conversion to divinity. This implies that the entire being will turn towards the divine, live and act for him and become full of the divine consciousness. All the elements will be recast into moulds of the divine consciousness growing ever more in peace, light, force love and bliss. The divinization of the whole human personality is the ultimate aim of this yoga which is therefore called purna or integral yoga.

Three processes become necessary for effecting an integral transformation. First, psychic change by direct action of the inmost psychic being; secondly spiritual change by descent of a higher consciousness from the upper planes; thirdly, supramental change by the transforming action of the Supermind which is the creative power of the Divine. The influx of light, peace, power, knowledge and delight from higher principles will convert the lower human consciousness into the higher consciousness and its higher working. The outer being by virtue of this essential change will learn to know, feel and act in terms of the higher principles. But the highest principle of Supermind alone has the power bringing about a radical transformation. Hence for the final perfection, which consists in the divinization of man, descent of the supermind into human consciousness is indispensable.

The descent of higher consciousness from upper spiritual planes is a remarkable element in Integral yoga. An internal realization may lead to liberation or some such change of the inner being but cannot transform the outer nature. An ascent of the lower consciousness to the higher planes followed by the descent of forces from them is the means of transformation. For complete transformation the whole higher consciousness with its Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge and Ananda must descend into the entire being – mind, life and body – for its transformation. Here the ultimate object is change of the life and existence, for which a full descent of the Divine consciousness into the whole nature is indispensable. Man must receive into himself the power and presence of spirit and by the direct action of that power become a fit instrument of its self-expression. His whole being must be tuned with the Divine and turned into a channel for the outpouring of divine love and power in the world. The legitimate activities of Nature are not to be suppressed or stopped; all the members must be allowed to function and express their powers in full, but in growing harmony with the divine truth. Vedanta seeks for an inner realization and identity of our spiritual self with the divine being with the object of release from rebirth. The Tantra aims higher at the mastery over nature and its spiritual change; it also seeks for release

but by identification with the divine shakti. The Integral Yoga aims at union in both aspects so that the human being may become divine and manifest fully the eternal truth in all its movements. The Integral Yoga by adoption of the dynamic ideal of self-perfection, becomes a yoga of expression. We must know and possess the highest truth and also express it in our life and action. We should love and serve our fellowmen as visible forms of the divine. Our life should be divine example to others, an expression of the supreme law of love and harmony. The object here is not merely the joy of inner communion with God but the delight of expression of the realized Self in the material world.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) What are the three important yogic movements that are necessary for the fulfillment of God's will in us?

- 2) What is the importance of the descent of higher consciousness in Integral yoga?

- 3) 'The primary need of man is a harmony among the discordant elements of his personality'. Explain.

1.2 THE FOUNDATIONS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

Qualities such as faith, quietude, sincerity etc are regarded as basic requisites for all spiritual progress. They are psychological states that dispose and prepare the mind for getting spiritual experience. Integral yoga prescribes certain effortful practices for the attainment of these qualities or movements that lead to perfection in Yoga. All of them are helpful for getting rid of mental or vital oppositions and disturbances that prevent our opening to the true consciousness. Anything that disturbs us for example fear, anger, greed, lust, hatred, jealousy is a wrong movement which can be countered by the cultivation of certain spiritual virtues that prevent its occurrence. The following are the essential qualities along with the disciplines required for their attainment in order that an aspirant may properly qualify himself for a systematic practice of Integral Yoga:

- a) Faith – Faith is certitude in the soul, belief in some truth that does not depend on reason or experience. It is a call or influence from the Supreme Spirit accepted by the inner soul. When the whole being assents to the truth seen by it or offered to its acceptance, the faith becomes perfect. A faith supported by the mind, heart and life-mind is an irresistible force for realization. Belief in divine grace or divine power will bring all rich and boundless perfections of the Spirit. Also it will ensure protection against all dangers, difficulties and apparent failures.

- b) Quiet and Calm – Calmness and quietude are essential for sadhana. Yoga is impossible if the mind is restless. A mind that is tossed about by restless and unruly thoughts, by vital desires and passions and by impulses of the body, is unfit for yogic practices. But quietness does not mean absence of all thought or mental or vital movement. By a quiet mind Aurobindo means a mind free from disturbance and trouble, steady, light and glad so as to open to the force that will change the nature. We have quietude (*achanchalata*) when the mind and vital are free from constant restlessness, over-activity or trouble that keeps them in a state of ceaseless agitation. The next step is calm, *sthirata*, which is a positive condition. It is a state that remains unaffected by any movement on the surface. This denotes a strong and firm quietude that can exist in spite of superficial disturbances. The mind is said to be calm when thoughts, feelings etc may pass through it, but it is not disturbed. It feels that the thoughts are not its own, it observes them but is not perturbed by anything. A more positive condition is *shanti* which carries with it a sense of settled and harmonious rest, a feeling of liberation and full satisfaction. This is a calm deepened into a secure quietude where no disturbance can come. Quietude, calm and peace in the mind and therefore in the vital, are the indispensable first conditions for success in yoga.
- c) Wideness – Consciousness must become not only calm but also wide. It should be felt as spreading out and enveloping everything so that one may dwell in it. Wideness is a sign of the extension of consciousness out of ordinary limits. The ordinary consciousness in each person is narrow and shut up in the mind, life and body. It sees itself as the centre of everything and does not know the truth of anything. But when by yoga the true consciousness which is that of the Self or Atman comes, the barrier begins to break down. The mind, the vital and even the physical consciousness grows wider and wider until one feels the whole universe within oneself. The wideness of consciousness which results from the realization of the Self within or above the being is of utmost importance in the yoga. This wideness will help the calm and peace to be stable even amidst activity. The limiting ego sense which is the root cause of all evil, will disappear on entering into cosmic vastness. A wideness of being is the secure foundation of the permanence of all higher spiritual experiences.
- d) Silence – Silence, *nischala niravata*, is a higher state of consciousness than calm or quietude and belongs to a higher state of yoga. Silence is a state in which either there is no movement of the mind or vital or else a great stillness which no surface movement can pierce or alter. The mind is altogether free from thoughts, desires or impulses or these are felt as surface movements that cannot touch the inner peace or calm. Complete silence can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind, keeping it vacant and voiceless. The ordinary mind is never silent; the silent mind is a result of yoga. The state of silence comes by the practice of a silent concentration in the inner being or Purusa. This yogic discipline leads to a division in the being; the inner self or Purusa is silent and watches, while the outer nature is the field of all active movements. The former is then felt as something separate from and unaffected by the activities of outer nature. The agitations of the mind and vital are regarded as surface movements which do not disturb the inner calm and silence. Afterwards one has to proceed to silence or quiet the prakrti or external nature. This can be done by the help of the will in the Purusa, one has the native power of rule or mastery over nature. This Rajayogic discipline of separation of the Purusa from prakrti is a most helpful practice for establishing peace and silence in the entire consciousness. But silence like peace is more easily established by a descent from

a higher consciousness in which silence is an inherent state unaffected by any movement. The descent may come as a result of a calm and deep aspiration or an act of grace of the divine. One has to open the mind upward lifting the consciousness out of the body and call calmly and steadily for peace and silence of the higher self above. These things will then descend first into the mind and then into the lower planes, even into the body. At the time of meditation the sadhak must not fight with the mind or make mental efforts to pull down the peace or silence. He should remain quiet, keeping only a silent will and aspiration for them.

- e) Sincerity – Sincerity is also an indispensable condition of success in sadhana. To be sincere means to have the sole aspiration of finding the divine giving up all personal demand or desire. Usually some vital demand is mixed with our sadhana for the divine. Many do yoga for personal reasons, some because they are disgusted with life, others because they are unhappy, some others because they wish to have more knowledge, others again because they wish to have more knowledge, others because they want to be spiritually great, yet others because they want to learn things so that they may teach them to others. Aurobindo says that to be entirely sincere means to desire the truth only, to surrender yourselves more and more to the Divine mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the divine and do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. Every movement of the being – every thought, every feeling, every impulse – should flow towards the divine as the river towards the sea, that means a surrender of the whole being in all its parts.
- f) Surrender – Surrender is the chief secret and the central process of yoga. The Integral yoga seeks to realize the divine truth not beyond but here in earthly life. For this purpose it is necessary to transform the mind, life and body. But transformation is not possible unless one opens and surrenders to the divine being and to the divine mother, the supreme shakti. For the shakti, the divine consciousness force and world-mother is the mediatrix between the eternal one and the individual soul in the manifestation. Surrender is giving oneself to the divine – to give everything one is or has to the divine and regard nothing as one's own, to obey only the divine will and no other, to live for the divine and not for the ego. A complete trust and confidence in the divine power is indeed the main condition or essence of surrender. The inward acceptance or consent to receive is what we mean by the inner surrender of the mind, the vital and the physical being. But there is also the outer surrender. This means the giving up or rejection of all that conflicts with the spirit or need of the sadhana. It also implies obedience to the guidance of the Guru or of the divine whether through the psychic or at a later stage by direct intervention. Complete surrender is done in order That the whole being may become a fit temple for the divine presence and a faultless instrument for divine work. The chief obstacles to surrender are desire and ego.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the role of faith in process of Integral Yoga?

2) Explain the widening of consciousness in the process of Integral Yoga.

3) What is the importance of silence in Integral Yoga?

1.3 THE TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

The most important feature of Integral Yoga is the triple transformation. This refers to the process through which reality is transformed into the divine. This is described in *The Life Divine* part 2, ch.25, and *Letters on Yoga* part 4, section 1. The Triple Transformation refers to the two-fold movement of spiritual transformation - the inward psychicization by which the sadhak gets in contact with the inner divine principle or Psychic Being, and the spiritual transformation or spiritualization. For Sri Aurobindo, both these stages are equally necessary and important, as both serve as necessary prerequisites for the third and by far the most difficult element of change in the triple transformation, the Supramentalisation of the entire being.

Psychicisation

Psychicisation is one of the most essential stages of the integral yoga. As described in *The Life Divine* (book II - chapter 25) it refers to a spiritual movement inward, so that one realizes the psychic being - the psychic personality or Divine Soul - in the core of one's being, and enable this to transform the outer being, as well as serve as a spiritual Guide in the yoga. It is thanks to this Psychic transformation that the sadhak can avoid the pitfalls of the spiritual path, such as the intermediate zone. The three central spiritual methods here are Consecration, Moving to the Depths (Concentration), and Surrender. Consecration is to open to the Force before engaging in an activity. Moving to the Depths (or Concentration) is a movement away from the surface existence to a deeper existence within. Surrender means offering all one's work, one's life to the Divine Force and Intent. In connecting with the evolving divine soul within, the sadhak moves away from ego, ignorance, finiteness, and the limitations of the outer being. Psychicisation can serve as a prequel to spiritualisation, although they do not have to follow any sort of order. However, both the psychic and the spiritual transformation are equally necessary for the final stage of Supramental transformation.

Spiritualization

As a result of the Psychic transformation, light, peace, power is drawn into and descends into the body, transforming all of its parts — physical, vital, and mental. This is the Spiritual transformation, or Spiritualization, which refers to the bringing down of the larger spiritual consciousness or spiritual transformation. The spiritual transformation in itself however is not

sufficient to avoid pitfalls of the spiritual path, or bring about Supramentalisation. For that, the psychic transformation is needed as well.

Supramentalisation

Supramentalisation is the ultimate stage in the integral yoga. It refers to the bringing down of the Supramental consciousness, and the resulting transformation of the entire being. The supramental transformation is the final stage in the integral yoga, enabling the birth of a new individual fully formed by the supramental power. Such individuals would be the forerunners of a new truth-consciousness based supra-humanity. All aspects of division and ignorance of consciousness at the vital and mental levels would be overcome, replaced with a unity of consciousness at every plane, and even the physical body transformed and divinized. A new supramental species would then emerge, living a supramental, gnostic, divine life on earth.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the 'triple transformation' in the context of Integral Yoga.

2) What is psychicization? What is its role in Integral Yoga?

3) Explain spiritualization and supramentalization.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

According to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo integral yoga is directed towards a union of one's self with the divine or the transmutation of all the chaotic elements into higher level of divine consciousness and harmony. It is concerned with attaining union or oneness with the universe and the highest possible level of divinity. While most disciplines of yoga, with a few exceptions, focus greatly on the development of a single aspect of the self, having their aims like achieving a state of liberation and transcendence, or the achievement of optimum physical fitness, integral yoga seeks a complete transformation of the entire being and is therefore regarded as being a wholesome discipline by practitioners. Where most disciplines concentrate on one aspect whilst neglecting others, integral yoga takes a broad and wholesome approach, leaving no area neglected. According to Sri Aurobindo all the areas of one's being need to be transformed. The

main aim of integral yoga is to achieve union and harmony with the karma, the jnana, and the bhakti, which would basically imply a combination of the Physical self, Vital self, Mental, Psychic, and Spiritual arenas. Integral yoga is a lot more complex than most other forms of yoga. It involves every fiber of your being and pervades every area of your life, which is why most people do not have the time or patience for a discipline like integral yoga. Integral yoga treats the discipline as a way of life and one that is learnt through ongoing experience.

1.5 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 2 TRANSPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGY: EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To explore some basic insights of transpersonal psychology.
- To enable us to understand consciousness and its evolution.
- To open the students to the possibility of evolution of their own consciousness.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we attempt to understand the transpersonal psychology of Aurobindo and how he understands the evolution of consciousness in his integral vision. This unit is based primarily on the excellent article of Arabinda Basu, an acknowledged Aurobindo scholar (Basu 2001).

2.2 SRI AUROBINDO'S PSYCHOLOGY

Sri Aurobindo was a yogi and a mystic. He has said that the materials of his spiritual philosophy were provided by experiences obtained by practice of yoga. This is equally, if not more, true of the system of his metaphysical psychology. Some people who have no or little idea of yoga may wonder what yoga has to do with psychology or at the most they may think that breath control, sitting or lying in particular ways or trying to make the mind quiet by meditation or other means is yoga. In fact, these are specialised methods of yoga but not its essence (Basu 2001).

According to Sri Aurobindo, yoga has the same relation with the inner being and nature of man as science has with the forces of external nature like steam or electricity. Yoga, he says, is scientific in that its methods are observation of and experiment with the states, forces, functions of our subjective, that is, inner being and nature. Yoga is both science and art. It is a science because it knows by experience what man is inwardly and it is an art because it can apply that knowledge to change man's inner being and nature. Yoga is known as a means of attaining spiritual liberation, *mukti* or *moksha*. While that is true, it must be clearly understood that by the practice of yoga, it is possible to know the essential nature of our being, our true self. And yoga discovers the nature of our real self as consciousness. And this is where yoga and psychology meet. Indeed yoga is according to Sri Aurobindo practical psychology (Basu 2001). It is also transpersonal psychology, since it goes beyond individual and focuses on the collective, integral growth of consciousness of the whole reality.

2.3 AUROBINDO AND CONSCIOUSNESS

In expounding his experience-concept of Consciousness, Sri Aurobindo in a letter first states what it is not. On this fundamental point of his psychological system, we would like to quote his own words because they are precise and yet carry a wealth of suggestions and their nuances are difficult to convey in other terms. "Consciousness", he writes, "is not to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Nature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions, as there would be no seeing or interpretative action, there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of yoga, e.g. a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in the being, the Self or Purusha" (Ghose, 1969).

Several things stand out in this passage which need to be understood clearly. We can only see a few salient points which it is essential to grasp for the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical psychology as is done by Arabinda Basu (2001). First, consciousness is not a phenomenon; it does not depend on the reactions of the personality to stimulus from outside or on mental activities. When the mind falls silent and ceases to function, consciousness abides. It is true that ordinary people cannot silence their minds. On the other hand, its experience is not very uncommon. Many people have the experience of a still mind though they do not fall into the state of unconsciousness.

Secondly, consciousness is immobile, i.e., not in its essence activity. In the same letter from which a paragraph has been quoted above, Sri Aurobindo says that consciousness is not only a power of knowledge of self and things, it is or has a dynamic and creative energy. It is free to act or not to act and free in action and inaction.

Thirdly, it is universal, spread throughout the cosmos. It is difficult for ordinary people to conceive or imagine the nature of consciousness because it is mistakenly identified with the individual, which is only a formation of consciousness.

Fourthly, consciousness is the Self, *Atman*, the *Purusha*, the cosmic Soul. Those who are familiar with Vedantic thought may wonder that the Self and the Soul are being mentioned in terms of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo has even said that God is a manifestation of Consciousness. Elaboration of this aspect of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual philosophy will take us into deep metaphysics. It is enough for us to say that consciousness, though indeterminable, has the power of self-determination, and its primary self-determinations are the Self, the Soul, God or the Lord. Thus consciousness is the ultimate Reality, it is inherent in existence, it is Existence or sat.

Finally, consciousness is self-luminous, *sva-prakasa*. It is not revealed by anything other than itself; indeed it is in the Light of Consciousness that everything is revealed and known. Consciousness is Conscious-Force. The Conscious Force hierarchically arranges itself on many levels, on each of which it appears progressively less conscious and less forceful. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are seven principal levels of which Matter is the lowest. He speaks of the Inconscient from which Matter is formed by the completely involved and hidden and to all intents and purposes lost conscious force in it. In Matter consciousness is physical which is the base of the vital and mental consciousness. Mind itself has more than one layer of which the subconscious is now recognised in psychology. The subliminal mind is another level of mind (of consciousness also). The difference between the subconscious and the subliminal is this that the former while conscious in essence is not actually so and hovers between the unconscious and the physical consciousness, the latter is conscious though not fully so. Though the subliminal has a good deal of knowledge in it, it is capable of errors and mistakes (Basu 2001).

2.4 SUBCONSCIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Sri Aurobindo cites a remarkable example of the “subconscious consciousness”. He used this paradoxical phrase for the subconscious to show the formation of consciousness though below our surface mind. An uneducated maidservant was employed in the household of a professor of Hebrew, of which she knew not a word. But as she went on doing her daily chores, she used to hear willy-nilly the ringing tones of the professor's recitation of Hebrew poetry. Slowly the servant could repeat Hebrew verses verbatim. How could she do it? Her conscious mind did not understand or remember a word of what she used to hear, besides, she was using her conscious mind to do her job as best as she could.

The purpose of dealing with the subconscious and the subliminal is to show that they are levels of consciousness (Basu 2001). The fact that consciousness is not apparently present in the former and though the latter is conscious in itself, our mind does not know it is so, owing to one of the fundamental principles of the metaphysical psychology, viz., consciousness has the power to self-limit itself and appear as less conscious than it is in its essence.

2.5 METAPHYSICS AND PSYCHOLOGY

What is metaphysics and what is psychology? “Metaphysics”, writes Sri Aurobindo, “deals with the ultimate cause of things and all that is behind the world of phenomena. As regards mind and consciousness, it asks what they are and how they come into existence, what is their relation to Matter, Life etc. Psychology deals with mind and consciousness and tries to find out not so much their ultimate nature and relations as their actual workings and the rule and law of these workings”(Ghose 1969). Further he says, “Psychology is the science of consciousness and its status and operations in Nature and, if that can be glimpsed or experienced, its status and operations beyond what we know as Nature.”(Ghose 1994) This latter idea of psychology will push it to the borders of metaphysical or Vedantic or Yogic psychology.

Sri Aurobindo quite clearly reserves the term psychology to the levels of mind and vital in contrast with what pertains to the spiritual soul for which he employs the term psychic. In *The Human Cycle* he has written that there is the beginning of a perception that there are behind the economic motives and causes of social and historical development profound psychological, even perhaps soul factors, where also he distinguishes the psychological from the psychic (Ghose 1962).

But it will be a mistake to think that because Sri Aurobindo has such a metaphysical experience-concept of consciousness, he has neglected to deal with the phenomenal aspect of consciousness. He has dealt with human psychology in great detail. Not only that, the material theory of consciousness has engaged his close attention and he has given an objective, dispassionate critique of it. He has described that theory accurately, accepted what is true in it, but also shown where it falls short of accounting for the appearance of intelligence from non-intelligent matter. Needless to say, he rejects the identification of mind and brain which is the thesis of “physiological psychology”, a phrase he has employed in his writings on psychology. Incidentally, it is both interesting and instructive to note that he acknowledges that if the brain is damaged, the operations of consciousness are hampered which uses the brain as an instrument. He says consciousness is involved in the brain and that is why conscious activities are accompanied by activities of the brain cells.

The materialist hypothesis regarding consciousness, says Sri Aurobindo, is not enough. In fact, sense and reflex action become absurd if we try to explain by it thought and will, the imagination of the poet, the attention of the scientist, the reasoning of the philosopher. Call it mechanical cerebration, if you will, “but no mere mechanism of grey stuff of brain can explain these things; a gland cannot write Hamlet or pulp of brain work out a system of metaphysics.” There is a gulf here that cannot be bridged by any mechanical explanation of consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo further says that there may be connection of consciousness and an inconscient substance, there may be mutual interpretation, they may act on each other, “but they are and remain things opposite, incommensurate with each other, fundamentally diverse” (Basu 2001). To say that an observing and active consciousness emerges as a character of an eternal Inconscience is to indulge in a self-contradictory affirmation.

In fact, Sri Aurobindo himself has not described his system of psychology as “integral psychology”. He has employed the very suggestive phrase “complete psychology”, which he says “must be a complex of the science of mind, its operations and its relations to life and body

with intuitive and experimental knowledge of the nature of mind and its relations to supermind and spirit” (Ghose 1964). We hold that “consciousness is itself found to be not essentially a process,—although in mind it appears as a process.” By its very nature it is a self-existent being. Being or the Self of things can only be known by metaphysical—not necessarily intellectual—knowledge. This self-knowledge has two inseparable aspects, “a psychological knowledge of the process of Being, a metaphysical knowledge of its principles and essentiality” (Ghose 1964 and Basu 2001).

Sri Aurobindo is clear that “Vedantic psychology explores the idea and intuition of a higher reality than mind” (Ghose 1994). Therefore for him, “Yogic psychology is an examination of the nature and movements of consciousness as they are revealed to us by the processes and results of Yoga” (Basu 2001).

The metaphysical reality is not the subject matter of psychology. Let us be very clear that yoga is practised by something in our nature as human beings. It may discover in us unknown means of knowledge, action and enjoyment and instrument of the direct knowledge of the Self. Thus Vedantic psychology and yogic psychology are significant descriptions of Sri Aurobindo's psychological system in one aspect.

2.6 INTEGRAL YOGA AS APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Sri Aurobindo has said, as pointed out above, that metaphysics deals with the fundamental principles of existence and life and in the final analysis it aims at knowing the ultimate Reality. Since yoga is applied psychology aiming at connecting psychological truths with metaphysical principles, its final goal is the Divine. Sri Aurobindo never tires of pointing out that the Divine is the object of the yoga. It is not to become a superman or a great yogi. These aims may be realised in the course of yoga's progress towards the Divine.

But what is to be noted especially is that Sri Aurobindo's view, shall we say vision, of the Divine is much more complex than is found in the earlier *yogas*. The reason is, these other visions are partial and the consequent realisations of God according to them are of one or more than one aspects of God but they do not have the integral experience of the Supreme. Sri Aurobindo is definitely of the view that the realisations of the Divine obtained by the partial *yogas* are not integral owing to the fact that they are achieved by levels of consciousness which do not harbour the integral knowledge. This is why he insists that the seeker must arise to the level of *vijnana*, (the Supermind) because it is that level of consciousness which has inherent in it the integral knowledge.

A brief review of the different *yogas* current in India for thousands of years can demonstrate the truth of Sri Aurobindo's contention regarding the partial character of those spiritual disciplines. Without trying to trace the history of yoga right from the time of the Veda, we refer to the five disciplines still current in India and widely practised. It is also noted that these *yogas* select one or the other of the principles of Nature instead of taking the whole of life which is the instrument of the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo (Basu 2001).

Hatha yoga for example takes the principle of life in the nervous system as its means. It may arrive at the knowledge of God but, in point of fact, its practices are so complicated and take such a long time and at the same time have to be disconnected with life in general, that it cannot be of any use directly to the goal of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo which is the radical transformation of all Nature down to the physical as a means of integral union with the Divine on all planes of existence.

Raja yoga takes mind as the instrument of its discipline. It is a very effective practice and is consummated by the separation of unconscious *Prakrti* which evolves as the world and all that is in it from *Purusa*, the pure conscious Soul. Raja yoga does not know of an overall reality like Brahman of the Vedanta.

Karma yoga takes the Will as its chief instrument of spiritual discipline. It starts with giving up the desire of fruits of action followed by the perception that the egoistic self is not the doer at all, combined with the perception that universal Nature is the real actor. It ends with surrender of fruits, actions, the ego, all of this to the Supreme Master of Will which brings about the closest possible union with the Divine, the Purushottama, *visatetadanantaram*.

Jnana yoga utilises the purified intelligence as the chief means for realisation of identity with Brahman which results in reducing the world into an utter unreality. This again is another great yoga the fruit of which, identity with Brahman, is one of the results that can be achieved by the integral yoga. Though Sri Aurobindo believes in the world as a self-manifestation of the dynamic Absolute, it is to be noted that he emphatically says that it is necessary for an integral yogin to have knowledge at a certain stage of the progress of yoga that the world is unreal. Otherwise, he says, there is great possibility that there would be some attachment to something in the world. Bhakti yoga's chief instrument is the heart, the emotional being, and it aims at turning all human emotions towards the Divine who is most prominently looked upon and experienced as the Beloved to whom complete adoration is due (Basu 2001).

The integral yoga is integral because it has seen the possibility of a new self-discovery of the Divine in and as completely spiritualised Matter by the supramental Knowledge-Will. And Sri Aurobindo is emphatic that the actualisation of this possibility is inevitable. It is the express purpose “to make Matter aware of God” and to enable it “to remember God.” (Basu 2001)

2.7 THE EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

[In the following extract, written around 1930, we see what the Master himself writes on evolution of consciousness.]

“All life here is a stage or a circumstance in an unfolding progressive evolution of a Spirit that has involved itself in Matter and is labouring to manifest itself in that reluctant substance. This is the whole secret of earthly existence.”

“But the key of that secret is not to be found in life itself or in the body; its hieroglyph is not in embryo or organism,—for these are only a physical means or base: the one significant mystery of this universe is the appearance and growth of consciousness in the vast mute unintelligence of Matter. The escape of Consciousness out of an apparent initial Inconscience,—but it was there

all the time masked and latent, for the inconscience of Matter is itself only a hooded consciousness—its struggle to find itself, its reaching out to its own inherent completeness, perfection, joy, light, strength, mastery, harmony, freedom, this is the prolonged miracle and yet the natural and all-explaining phenomenon of which we are at once the observers and a part, instrument and vehicle.”

“A Consciousness, a Being, a Power, a Joy was here from the beginning darkly imprisoned in this apparent denial of itself, this original night, this obscurity and nescience of material Nature. That which is and was for ever, free, perfect, eternal and infinite, That which all is, That which we call God, Brahman, Spirit, has here shut itself up in its own self-created opposite. The Omniscient has plunged itself into Nescience, the All-Conscious into Inconscience, the All-Wise into perpetual Ignorance. The Omnipotent has formulated itself in a vast cosmic self-driven Inertia that by disintegration creates; the Infinite is self-expressed here in a boundless fragmentation; the All-Blissful has put on a huge insensibility out of which it struggles by pain and hunger and desire and sorrow. Elsewhere the Divine is; here in physical life, in this obscure material world, it would seem almost as if the Divine is not but is only becoming. This gradual becoming of the Divine out of its own phenomenal opposites is the meaning and purpose of the terrestrial evolution.”

“Evolution in its essence is not the development of a more and more organised body or a more and more efficient life—these are only its machinery and outward circumstance. Evolution is the strife of a Consciousness somnambulised in Matter to wake and be free and find and possess itself and all its possibilities to the very utmost and widest, to the very last and highest. Evolution is the emancipation of a self-revealing Soul secret in Form and Force, the slow becoming of a Godhead, the growth of a Spirit.”

“In this evolution mental man is not the goal and end, the completing value, the highest last significance; he is too small and imperfect to be the crown of all this travail of Nature. Man is not final, but a middle term only, a transitional being, an instrumental intermediate creature.”

“This character of evolution and this mediary position of man are not at first apparent; for to the outward eye it would seem as if evolution, the physical evolution at least were finished long ago leaving man behind as its poor best result and no new beings or superior creations were to be expected any longer. But this appears to us only so long as we look at forms and outsides only and not at the inner significances of the whole process. Matter, body, life even are the first terms necessary for the work that had to be done. New living forms may no longer be appearing freely, but this is because it is not, or at least it is not primarily, new living forms that the Force of evolution is now busied with evolving, but new powers of consciousness. When Nature, the Divine Power, had formed a body erect and empowered to think, to devise, to inquire into itself and things and work consciously both on things and self, she had what she wanted for her secret aim; relegating all else to the sphere of secondary movements, she turned toward that long-hidden aim her main highest forces. For all till then was a long strenuously slow preparation; but throughout it the development of consciousness in which the appearance of man was the crucial turning point had been kept wrapped within her as her ultimate business and true purpose.”

“This slow preparation of Nature covered immense aeons of time and infinities of space in which they appeared to be her only business; the real business strikes on our view at least when we look with the outward eye of reason as if it came only as a fortuitous accident, in or near the end, for a span of time and in a speck and hardly noticeable corner of one of the smallest provinces of a possibly minor universe among these many boundless finites, these countless universes. If it were so, we could still reply that time and space matter not to the Infinite and Eternal; it is not a waste of labour for That—as it would be for our brief death-driven existences—to work for trillions of years in order to flower only for a moment. But that paradox too is only an appearance—for the history of this single earth is not all the story of evolution—other earths there are even now elsewhere, and even here many earth-cycles came before us, and many are those that will come hereafter.”

“Nature laboured for innumerable millions of years to create a material universe of flaming suns and systems; for a lesser but still interminable series of millions she stooped to make this earth a habitable planet. For all that incalculable time she was or seemed busy only with the evolution of Matter; life and mind were kept secret in an apparent non-existence. But the time came when life could manifest, a vibration in the metal, a growing and seeking, a drawing in and a feeling outward in the plant, an instinctive force and sense, a nexus of joy and pain and hunger and emotion and fear and struggle in the animal,—a first organised consciousness, the beginning of the long-planned miracle.”

“Thence forward she was busy no more exclusively with matter for its own sake, but most with matter useful for the expression of life; the evolution of life was now her one intent purpose. And slowly too mind manifested in life, an intensely feeling, a crude thinking and planning vital mind in the animal, but in man the full organisation and apparatus, the developing if yet imperfect mental being, the Manu, the thinking, devising, aspiring, already self-conscious creature. And from that time onward the growth of mind rather than any radical change of life became her shining preoccupation, her wonderful wager. Body appeared to evolve no more; life itself evolved little or only so much in its cycles as would serve to express Mind heightening and widening itself in the living body; an unseen internal evolution was now Nature's great passion and purpose.”

“And if Mind were all that consciousness could achieve, if Mind were the secret Godhead, if there were nothing higher, larger, [no] more miraculous ranges, man could be left to fulfil mind and complete his own being and there would or need be nothing here beyond him, carrying consciousness to its summits, extending it to its unvalled vastnesses, plunging with it into depths unfathomable; he would by perfecting himself consummate Nature. Evolution would end in a Man-God, crown of the earthly cycles.”

“But Mind is not all; for beyond mind is a greater consciousness; there is a supermind and spirit. As Nature laboured in the animal, the vital being, till she could manifest out of him man, the Manu, the thinker, so she is labouring in man, the mental being till she can manifest out of him a spiritual and supramental godhead, the truth conscious Seer, the knower by identity, the embodied Transcendental and Universal in the individual nature.”

“From the clod and metal to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man, so much has she completed of her journey; a huge stretch or a stupendous leap still remains before her. As from matter to life, from life to mind, so now she must pass from mind to supermind, from man to superman; this is the gulf that she has to bridge, the supreme miracle that she has to perform before she can rest from her struggle and discontent and stand in the radiance of that supreme consciousness, glorified, transmuted, satisfied with her labour.”

“The subhuman was once here supreme in her, the human replacing it walks now in the front of Time, but still, aim and goal of the future there waits the supramental, the superman, an unborn glory yet unachieved before her.”

[This is extracted with slight adaptation from an essay written in two pieces "Man and the Supermind" and "The Involved and Evolving Godhead", around 1930. It was first published in the Bulletin in November 1976 as the first of two separate pieces under the title "Evolution"]

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How does Aurobindo understand psychic being of Human person.?

2) Explain the higher levels of consciousness.

2.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen the basic understanding of transpersonal psychology, as advocated by Sri Aurobindo. We also related it to our collective search for integral development and the evolution of consciousness.

2.9 KEY WORDS

Purusa: *Purusa* ("man") is the "self" which pervades the universe. It is one's true self, regarded as eternal and unaffected by external happenings.

Transpersonal psychology: It is a school of psychology that studies the transpersonal, self-transcendent or spiritual aspects of the human experience.

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UNIT 3 CONCEPTION OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

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- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
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3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the students to some key concepts of education as developed by Sri Aurobindo.
- To see the relationship between education and integral perfection (spirituality).
- To familiarize ourselves with some of the principles of education according to Sri Aurobindo.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

An explorer and adventurer in consciousness, a visionary of evolution, Sri Aurobindo has proposed a new world-view, which can be realised by proper education. This unit, heavily depending on an excellent article by Professor M.K. Raina (2000), attempts to situate his philosophy of education on his integral world-view. In his writings on education, Sri Aurobindo formulated a theory that could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, fostering the growth of the integral consciousness in every pupil and bringing back to legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter.

3.2 INTEGRAL PERFECTION AND EDUCATION

There are many ways of approaching Sri Aurobindo, but the light that one can gain from him, will depend upon the height and breadth of one's own quest. It is in raising most comprehensive questions in their profundity relating to the world and its future possibilities and the role that we are required to play as also how we should prepare ourselves to fulfil that role that we shall find the real relevance of Sri Aurobindo and find ourselves truly equipped to study him and the supra-mental consciousness that he has discovered and brought down on the earth (Raina 2000).

Three fundamental problems which gave direction to the spiritual quest and philosophical thinking and helped to fashion Sri Aurobindo's major theories, relate to the paradox of the national life of India, the supposed conflict between spirituality and action, and the evolution of man. The search for solutions to these problems relates to the unique and creative tension in his own experience between spirituality and politics, both during his years of political activity and during his four decades of *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) at Pondicherry.

Aurobindo's writings provide the needed force for action, realization and transformation which is reflected in his philosophy arrived at through inner experience. He wrote "in fact I was never satisfied till experience came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy". His integral philosophy grew out of his Yoga—not the other way round. Two phrases that surge out of Sri Aurobindo's writings that sum up his message are: "Integral perfection" and 'spiritual religion of humanity'. His call for integrality and synthesis is most distinctively reflected in his statements: "We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to such a new and larger synthesis. [...] We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future." To attain integral perfection, Sri Aurobindo has found education to be very crucial.

3.3 INTEGRAL EDUCATION FOR THE GROWTH OF THE SOUL

Originally a poet and a politician, not a philosopher, Sri Aurobindo engaged himself for forty-five years out of his seventy-eight years in the practice of Yoga, and developed a philosophy of complete affirmation, affirming the reality of the world from the ultimate standpoint and the meaningfulness of socio-political action from the spiritual standpoint. He was sovereignly aware of the significance of variations in the concept of man, his life and destiny, of the nation and of humanity and the life of human race, which get reflected in the respective philosophies of education, and developed his scheme of integral education rooted in "the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self creation, to her eternal spirit."

India, according to Sri Aurobindo (Ghose 1990), has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. In his educational philosophy, Sri Aurobindo upheld the basic but commonly forgotten principle that "it is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with, and there the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilisation and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future". In devising a true and living education, three things according to Sri Aurobindo—the man, the individual in his commonness and his uniqueness, the nation or people and universal humanity—should be taken into account.

Accordingly, Aurobindo conceived of education as an instrument for the real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. He thought of education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation—soul and its Dharma (virtue) and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being (Raina 2000). It is the concept underlying the true and living integral education.

Integrality of education is conceived as a process of organic growth, and the way in which various faculties could be developed and integrated is dependent upon each child's inclination, rhythm of progression and law of development, *Swabhava* (inherent disposition) and *Swadharma* (inner nature). Integral education is not conceived as a juxtaposition of a number of subjects and even juxtaposition of varieties of faculties. The idea is to provide facilities for varieties of faculties, varieties of subjects and various combinations of pursuits of Knowledge,

Power, Harmony and Skill in works. These faculties are so provided that they could be made use of by each student and the teacher so that a natural process of harmonious development could be encouraged (Raina 2000).

3.4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PHYSICAL AND MORAL EDUCATION

Seeking to effect a synthesis of the East and the West in the contemporary philosophy of education, Sri Aurobindo insisted that a healthy body is a necessary condition for intellectual or spiritual attainment. For him physical education means not only the proper functioning of the various organs of the body but also the development of strength, balance, and a sense of beauty. According to him, beauty is the ideal which physical life has to realise. "If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being", says Aurobindo, "the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis, the body is the instrument which we have to use. [...] The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by means at our disposal" must be the ultimate aim of physical culture". Therefore, "a development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, but for that the right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible" (Raina 2000).

The education of the intellect, opines Aurobindo, divorced from the perfection of the moral and emotional nature, is injurious to human progress. He admits the difficulties involved in providing a suitable moral training for schools and colleges. He distinguishes the heart from the mind, and says, that to instruct the mind is not to instruct the heart. He senses the danger of moral textbooks being used for the purpose, in that they make the thinking of high things mechanical and artificial, and whatever is mechanical and artificial is inoperative for good. Further, he points out pertinently that "the attempt to make boys moral and religious by the teaching of moral and religious text-books is a vanity and a delusion, precisely because the heart is not the mind and to instruct the mind does not necessarily improve the heart.

The best kind of moral training that Sri Aurobindo conceives of is, "to habituate himself to the right emotions, the noblest associations, the best mental, emotional and physical habits and the following out in right action of the fundamental impulses of his essential nature". By way of moral and religious education, any attempt at imposition of a certain discipline on children, dressing them into a certain mould, lashing them into a desired path is essentially hypocritical and heartless. Only what the man admires and accepts, becomes part of himself; the rest is a mask. On the other hand, to neglect moral and religious education is to corrupt the race. In moral training, Sri Aurobindo stresses the value of suggestion and deprecates imposition. "The first rule of moral training", he says, "is to suggest and invite, not command or impose. The best method of suggestion is by personal example, daily conversation and the books read from day to day" (Raina 2000).

"Every boy should", says Aurobindo, "therefore be given practical opportunity as well as intellectual encouragement to develop all that is best in the nature. If he has bad qualities, bad habits, bad *samaskaras* (behaviour patterns), whether of mind or body, he should not be treated harshly as a delinquent, but encouraged to get rid of them by the *Rajayogic* (a type of yoga)

method of *samyama* (self-control), rejection and substitution”. Instead of discouraging such people, Aurobindo would like them to be rather encouraged to think such bad traits, “not as sins or offences, but as symptoms of a curable disease, alterable by a steady and sustained effort of the will—falsehood being rejected [...] and replaced by truth, fear by courage, selfishness by sacrifice and renunciation, malice by love” (Raina 2000). So the bad traits must be positively transformed

No religious teaching, according to Aurobindo is of any value “unless it is lived, and the use of various kinds of *sadhana*, (spiritual self-training and exercise) is the only effective preparation for religious living. The ritual of prayer, homage, ceremony is carved for by many minds as an essential preparation and, if not made an end itself, is a great help to spiritual progress; if it is withheld, some other forms of meditation, devotion or religious duty must be put in its place. Otherwise, religious teaching is of little use and would almost be better ungiven” (Raina 2000).

3.5 THE PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AND THE TRAINING OF THE SENSES

In a series of articles that Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1909–10, he enunciated three fundamental principles of teaching. He accepts the basic principle that nothing can be taught to the mind, which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature. So also all perfecting of which the outer man is capable, is only a realizing of the eternal perfection of the Spirit within him. We know the Divine and become the Divine, because we are That already in our secret nature. All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process (Ghose 2003).

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind; he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not impart knowledge to him; he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself. He does not call forth the knowledge that is within; he only shows him where it lies and how it can be habituated to rise to the surface. The distinction that reserves this principle for the teaching of adolescent and adult minds and denies its application to child is a conservative and unintelligent doctrine. Child or man, boy or girl, there is only one sound principle of good teaching (Ghose 2003). Difference of age only serves to diminish or increase the amount of help and guidance necessary; it does not change its nature.

The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature. There can be no greater error than for the parent to arrange beforehand that his son shall develop particular qualities, capacities, ideas, virtues, or be prepared for a prearranged career. To force the nature to abandon its own dharma is to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over a human soul and a wound to the nation, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and is forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate, perfunctory and common. Every one has in him something divine, something his own, a chance of perfection and strength in however small a sphere, which God offers him to take or refuse. The task is to find it, develop it and use it. The chief aim of

education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself, which is best, and make it perfect for a noble use (Ghose 2003).

The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be. The basis of a man's nature is almost always, in addition to his soul's past, his heredity, his surroundings, his nationality, his country, the soil from which he draws sustenance, the air which he breathes, the sights, sounds, habits to which he is accustomed. They mould him not the less powerfully because insensibly, and from that then we must begin. We must not take up the nature by the roots from the earth in which it must grow or surround the mind with images and ideas of a life, which is alien to that in which it must physically move. If anything has to be brought in from outside, it must be offered, not forced on the mind. A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development. There are souls, which naturally revolt from their surroundings and seem to belong to another age and clime. Let them be free to follow their bent; but the majority languish, become empty, become artificial, if artificially molded into an alien form. It is God's arrangement that they should belong to a particular nation, age, society, that they should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit.

Therefore, Aurobindo is very clear: "The wise teacher will not seek to impose himself or his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is productive and sure as a seed, which will grow under the divine fostering within. He will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will give a method as an aid, as a utilizable device, not as an imperative formula or a fixed routine. And he will be on his guard against any turning of the means into a limitation, against the mechanizing of process. His whole business is to awaken the divine light and set working the divine force" (Ghose 2003).

These principles, it will be observed, are subtle and complex, and no rigid formula of practice can be derived from them. They impose a great responsibility on the teacher and demand from him extraordinary qualities of a profound psychologist (Joshi, 1975). In the matter of the training of the senses, Aurobindo aims at nothing less than perfection. This, he says, must be one of the first cares of the teacher. The two important things that are needed of the senses, he points out are "accuracy and sensitiveness" (Raina 2000). The senses depend for their accuracy and sensitiveness on the unobstructed activity of the nerves which are the channels of their information and the passive acceptance of the mind, the recipient. In case of any obstruction, the remedy lies in the purification of the nerve system. "This process inevitably restores the perfect and unobstructed activity of the channels and, if well and thoroughly done, leads to a high activity of the senses. The process is called in yogic discipline *nadi-suddhi* or nerve – purification" (Aurobindo, 1990).

Six senses which minister to knowledge, sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, mind or *manas* (the sixth sense of the Indian psychology) can be developed through the physical nerves and their end—organs, but *manas* could be developed through yogic discipline *sukshmadristi* or subtle reception of images. Aurobindo wrote (Raina 2000): "Telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, presentiment, thought-reading, character-reading and many other modern discoveries are very ancient powers of the mind which have been left undeveloped, and they all belong to the *manas*.

The development of the sixth sense has never formed part of human training. In a future age it will undoubtedly take a place in the necessary preliminary training of the human instrument. Meanwhile there is no reason why the mind should not be trained to give a correct report to the intellect so that our thought may start with absolutely correct if not with full impressions.”

Sri Aurobindo while analysing the causes of inefficiency of the senses, as gatherers of knowledge, attributes it to ‘insufficient use’. Students, he suggests, should overcome tamasic (optuseness of the mind and the senses) inertia and ought to be accustomed to catch the sights, sounds, etc., around them, distinguish them, mark their nature, properties and sources and fix them in the *citta* so that they may be always ready to respond when called for by the memory. “Attention” according to him, is the chief factor in knowledge and considers it the first condition of right memory and accuracy. Besides attention “concentration on several things at a time” says Aurobindo is often indispensable. He holds the view that it is quite possible to develop the power of double concentration, triple concentration, multiple concentration, which is a matter of *abhyasa* or steady natural practice.

Along with faculties of memory, judgement, observation, comparing and contrasting and analogy which are indispensable aids in the acquisition of knowledge, Aurobindo emphasizes Imagination as the most important and indispensable instrument. It has been divided into three functions, the forming of mental images, the power of creating thoughts, images and imitations or new combinations of existing thoughts and images, the appreciation of the soul in things, beauty, charm, greatness, hidden suggestiveness, the emotion and spiritual life that pervades the world. “This is in every way as important as the training of the faculties which observe and compare outward things” (Raina 2000). These mental faculties, as Aurobindo suggests, should first be exercised on things, afterwards on words and ideas.... All this should be done informally, drawing on the curiosity and interest, avoiding set teaching and memorising of rules.

Sri Aurobindo is critical of the practice of teaching by snippets which is in practice in the existing system of education. Teaching by snippets, says Aurobindo, must be done away with. He is critical since: “A subject is taught a little at a time, in conjunction with a host of others, with the result that what might be well learnt in a single year is badly learned in seven and the boy goes out ill—equipped, served with imperfect parcels of knowledges, master of none of the great departments of human knowledge” (Raina 2000).

He characterizes such a system of education as one attempting to “heighten this practice of teaching by snippets at the bottom and the middle and suddenly change it to a grandiose specialism at the top. This is to base the triangle on its apex and hope that it will stand” (Raina 2000). Aurobindo has, therefore, found some meaning in the old system which was more rational than the modern: “If it did not impart so much varied information, it built up a deeper, nobler and much more real culture. Much of the shallowness, discursive lightness and fickle mutability of the average modern mind is due to the vicious principle of teaching by snippets”.

However, Aurobindo is clear that in the future education we need not bind ourselves either by the ancient or the modern system but select only the most perfect and rapid means of mastering knowledge. For him, “every child is an inquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist.” Appeal to these qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right

temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiring. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the ground work of the faculty of the artist (Raina 2000).

It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us. Aurobindo is particular that the first attention of the teacher must be given to the medium and the instruments and, until these are perfected, to multiply subjects of regular instruction is to waste time and energy. "The mother tongue", he says "is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium" (Raina 2000). In connection with language teaching he advocates that when the mental instruments are sufficiently developed to acquire a language easily and swiftly, that is the time to introduce him to many languages, not when he can partially understand what he is taught and masters it laboriously and imperfectly. He believes in the disciplinary value of learning one language, especially one's own language, which he says, prepares one for mastering another. He maintains that with the facility developed in one's own language, to master others is easier.

3.6 THE PSYCHIC AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

Aurobindo also speaks of mental and psychic education, but his real interest is in a still higher stage, which according to him is spiritual or supra-mental education. This does not imply the annihilation of the individual but his enrichment through contact with the Absolute. The spiritual stage transcends the mental and the psychic stage. The justification for psychic and spiritual education rests upon three important considerations (Raina 2000): a) education should provide to the individual a steady exploration of something that is inmost in the psychological complexity of human consciousness; (b) the most important question of human life is to consider the aim of human life and the aim of one's own life and one's own position and the role in the society; and this question can best be answered only when the psychic and spiritual domains are explored and when one is enabled to develop psychic and spiritual faculties of knowledge; and (c) the contemporary crisis of humanity has arisen because of the disbalancement between the material advancement on the one hand and the inadequate spiritual progression on the other. (Ghose 1972a)

If, therefore, this crisis has to be met, development of psychic and spiritual consciousness should be fostered. Aurobindo tries to draw a distinction between psychic and spiritual in the following terms. At the level of psychic life, the individual feels an unbroken continuity in the world of forms and sees life as an immortal function in endless time and limitless space. The spiritual consciousness goes beyond time and space and is an identification with the infinite and the eternal. Aurobindo is expressing the same idea when he says that in psychic life selfishness must be discarded, but in the spiritual life there is no sense of the separate self. Aurobindo insists that it is not annihilation of the individual but its transformation which is the end of integral education. When man attains such education there is total transformation of matter. He calls it supramental education as it will work, not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and even upon the physical environment in which they live (Raina 2000).

An unprecedented kind of experiment in education was launched by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, when in 1943, a school came to be established at Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry with merely 20 students on its rolls; soon it began to grow, and in 1951, when the number of students had increased, and studies in Higher Education had to be organized, it was expanded into Sri Aurobindo International University Centre. The Centre was conceived as one of the best means of preparing humanity for future that would be marked by the manifestation of a new light and power—the supra-mental light and power. It was launched so that the elite of the humanity may be made ready who would be able to work for the progressive unification of the race and who at the same time would be prepared to embody the new force descending upon the earth to transform it. The Centre conducted a programme of experimental research under the direct guidance of the Mother, and it became a laboratory of education for tomorrow.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How does Aurobindo understand 'education?'

2) Give a detailed account Aurobindo's educational philosophy.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

The educational doctrine of Sri Aurobindo is closely linked with his futuristic vision of human destiny which is reflected in his statement: They should be children of the past, possessors of the present, creators of the future. The past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Aurobindo's visionary mystic mind articulated a concept of life which was unique since he conceived of it as a lavish and manifold opportunity given us to discover, realize, express the Divine and accordingly, visualized a system of education which would help expression of unrealized potentialities, in line with his concept of life. This called for a creative vision and an extraordinary adventure. For him human destiny is an ascent towards the supermind, towards realization of the Godhead and his philosophy of education provides a forceful and resilient framework to attain this goal (Raina 2000).

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UNIT 4 TOWARDS HUMAN UNITY

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

- To understand our search for human unity.
- To see Aurobindo's vision of our common spiritual destiny.
- To open the students to the possibility of humans living together.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Aurobindo's mature ideas on human unity are found in his famous book, "The Idea of Human Unity" and "The Life Divine." For our purpose we use the reflections of the Canadian-Iranian philosopher, Ramin Jehanbegaloo, the winner of 2009 UN Peace Prize. According to Jehanbegaloo, Aurobindo truly believed throughout his life that such a spiritual unity would not be possible unless it is preceded by a general change in humankind's consciousness.

Nevertheless, he made it clear in the last chapter of his book *The Life Divine* that the spiritual transformation of humanity had nothing to do with religion. "There is the possibility in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organized religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a creedal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual...A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the

whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself..." (Ghose 1949) In fact, Aurobindo summed up the nature of Man in the ideal of a united human society (Jehanbegaloo 2006).

So in this unit we trace the human journey to unity, as developed by Sri Aurobindo. Then we study its contemporary relevance and the real need for such a collective destiny.

4.2 UNITY THROUGH YOGA

This unity, according to Sri Aurobindo, cannot take place unless Man's vital and mental nature was uplifted by a spiritual Supernature. Therefore, if true human unity is to be achieved Man needs "to pursue its upward evolution towards the finding of expression of the Divine... taking full advantage of the free development and gains of all individuals and nations and groupings of men, to work towards the day when mankind may be really and not ideally one family..." In other words, the Divine descends into Cosmic being, while Man ascends through the medium of a Supermind towards the Divine. Therefore, there is a double movement at work here. Man is eternally seeking the ultimate Reality, which Aurobindo calls *Saccidananda* using the Vedantic vocabulary. "*Saccidananda*", asserts Sri Aurobindo, "is the unknown" (Jehanbegaloo 2006). Reality is *sat*, *cit* and *ananda*, which Aurobindo translates by the three concepts of pure existence, conscious force and the delight of existence. The goal is "the flowering of the Divine in collective humanity." The ideal, says Aurobindo, is the free unity of mankind. "Today", writes Aurobindo in his book *The Ideal of Human Unity*, "the ideal of human unity is more or less vaguely making its way to the forefront of our consciousness...(It) is evidently a part of Nature's eventual scheme and must come about" (Ghose 50).

For Aurobindo the evolutionary process of human unity is possible not through rationality, but through Yogic experience. The way which leads to the life divine is "integral yoga." This is why Aurobindo thinks that every man is a Yogi, but not a conscious one. Those who have become conscious of this process through the Yogic experience can help the others. The simple reason to this is that, "All mankind is one in nature... Nothing which any individual race or nation can triumphantly realize ...has any permanent value except in so far as it adds something for this human march."

That is to say, Sri Aurobindo was against the old idea of separation of politics from religion and partly because to him nationalism was a spiritual process. "Nationalism is not a mere political program", wrote Aurobindo in his daily paper entitled *Bande Mataram*, "nationalism is a religion that has come from God; nationalism is a creed which you shall have to live.... If you are going to be a nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of nationalism, you must do it in the religious spirit. You must remember that you are the instruments of God... Then there will be a blessing on our work and this great nation will rise again and become once more what it was in the days of spiritual greatness. You are the instruments of God to save the light, to save the spirit of India from lasting obscurity and abasement..." For that he found yoga and other spiritual practices crucial.

4.3 THE SPECIAL ROLE OF INDIA

Aurobindo based his demand for Indian independence on the Romantic idea of the nation-soul. In his early writings, he talked about the "soul of India" and in his speeches and writings in 1907-1908, he defined nationalism as a civic religion. In another speech he went

further and equated Indian nationalism with the *sanatana dharma*. Yet, Aurobindo was not interested in perpetuating Hinduism as a sectarian religion. What he was interested in was “a new synthesis of religious thought and experience, a new religious world-life from intolerance, yet full of faith and fervour, accepting all forms of religion because it has an unshakable faith in the One.”

However, for Aurobindo this new synthesis had to go hand in hand with the inalienable right of nations to independence, simply because being ruled by foreigners was an unjust and unnatural condition. “Political freedom”, Aurobindo declared in 1907, “is the life breath of a nation: to attempt social reform, educational reform, industrial expansion, the moral improvement of race, without aiming first and foremost at political freedom is the very height of ignorance and futility.” In fact, from his early writings Aurobindo was keen to see India play a leading role in the progress of the world. This was because he saw the great stage of human progress as a moral and spiritual one and he believed that India had a lot to teach Europe at these levels.

Aurobindo considered Europe as “parcelled out in nations,” but in his view India was an old civilization (Jehanbegaloo 2006). India, according to Aurobindo, had a special place in Asia. Thus, “Asia”, from his point of view, “was the custodian of world’s peace of mind, the physician of the maladies which Europe generates. She is commissioned to rise from time to time from her ages of self-communion, self-sufficiency, self-absorption and rule the world for a season...when the restless spirit of Europe has added a new phase of discovery to the evolution of the science of material life, has regulated politics, re-based society, remodelled law, rediscovered science, the spirit of Asia, calm, contemplative, self-possessed, takes possession of Europe’s discovery and corrects its exaggeration, its aberrations by intuition; her spiritual light alone can turn the world.”

According to our author, Asia has always initiated, what Europe completed. The strength of Europe is in details, the strength of Asia is in synthesis. It is therefore the task of Asia to take up the work of human evolution, “when Europe comes to a standstill and loses itself in a clash of vain speculations, barren experiments and helpless struggles to escape from the consequences of her own mistakes. Such a time has now come in world’s history.”

Sri Aurobindo was a true believer in a dialogue of cultures. Therefore he was not in favour of India remaining isolated from the rest of the world, but he was against a blind imitation of the West. As a matter of fact, India’s blind imitation of the Western society was not only a mistake for India, but also for the whole world. “If India follows in the footsteps of Europe”, wrote Aurobindo, “accepts her political ideals, social system, economic principles, she will be overcome with the same maladies” as the Europeans.

Aurobindo was convinced that if India wants to survive as an independent state it had to be conscious about its spiritual force and its diversity. Indian unity would be achieved because of Indian diversity. “Diversity”, proclaimed Sri Aurobindo, “is as necessary as unity to our true completeness.” However, Aurobindo considered unity and uniformity as the law of life. Even though he considered the world union as the ultimate goal, he saw the nation as a “necessary unit” and an “indestructible” force. For him there was a limit to nationalism and India has to teach this lesson to the rest of the world.

4.4 PROGRESS OF CIVILISATION THROUGH SUPERMIND

Further, according to Aurobindo, the progress of the civilization depended on its advance towards human unity. “The perfect society”, affirmed Aurobindo, “will be that which most entirely favours the perfection of the individual; the perfection of the individual will be incomplete if it does not help him towards the perfect state of the social aggregate to which he belongs and eventually to that of the largest possible human aggregate, the whole of a united humanity.” Aurobindo saw the perfection of the individual as a widening and a heightening in human and cosmic development. This heightening results in the integration of all levels of life and the achievement of unity by the mind.

As such salvation for Aurobindo does not have a purely religious meaning. It is a rebirth of Man as a supramental being. “Man”, writes Aurobindo. “is a transitional being; he is not final. For in man and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees that climb to a divine supermanhood. There lies our destiny and the liberating key to our aspiring but troubled and limited mundane existence...Supermind is superman; a Gnostic supermanhood is the next distinct and triumphant evolutionary step to be reached by earthly nature.” In other words, the Supermind helps Man to achieve integral realization of his personality and of ultimate reality.

The Supermind is, according to Aurobindo, the supreme truth-consciousness. It is the infinite principle of knowledge. It is the necessary link between the existence, consciousness and bliss (*Saccidananda*) and the phenomenal worlds of life and mind. As long as the mind is separated from the Supermind it perceives only the particular and not the universal. That is to say, “the mind cannot possess the infinite...it can only lie blissfully helpless under the luminous shadow of the Real cast down on it from planes of existence beyond its reach.” The Supermind, therefore, can bring a big spiritual change in the nature of Man making possible the new integral personality.

Agreeing that realization of non-duality is the purpose of life, Sri Aurobindo holds that each unique individual has a singular path to realization of integral non-dualism. For this reason, he insists that daily action is itself the means of realization. Just as one practises yoga for the purpose of developing one's inner spirituality, so participation in worldly experience is of the same importance. This is true because, as Aurobindo insists, “All life is yoga.” In other words, the integral yoga prepares the conditions for the descent of Supermind. The yogi realizes himself through the cosmos and through the social life (Jehanbegaloo 2006).

This is why Aurobindo believes that the process of evolution has a purpose, which is advancing ineluctably toward the realization of the Life Divine here on Earth. Sri Aurobindo elaborated his educational ideas in relation with his ideals of human unity and “travel towards divine perfection”. For him, the goal of education was the study of the human mind, because he considered the mind as the principal instrument of knowledge. Thus the aim of education, according to Aurobindo is: “the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit, it is the formation or... the evoking of knowledge and will and the power to use knowledge, character, culture...” For Aurobindo, Man has to be transformed and spiritualized through the educational practice.

This process begins with self-knowledge which is self-mastery and it brings ultimately the transformation of Man into a spiritual being. The major task in education is to awaken the aspiration for the divine in the body and in the mind. However, Sri Aurobindo puts the weight of education on the supramental and the discovery of the psychic being. In his book *The Human Cycle*, he affirms “The true secret whether with child, or man, is to help him find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come

forward, and still more, if we call it into the foreground as ‘the leader of the march set in our front’, will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realization of potentialities.” Likewise, Aurobindo’s integral yoga contends that the union with the Divine Supermind is also possible through a complete cooperation with the cosmic creative power. “Yoga”, asserts Aurobindo, “is the exchange of an egoistic for a universal or cosmic consciousness lifted towards or informed by the super-cosmic, transcendent Unnamable who is the source and support of all things.” Yoga and education are one and the same process through which spirituality emerges in mind. That is why to Sri Aurobindo the eternal truths of ancient wisdom had an appeal. Spirituality unlike religion does not lay excessive stress on dogmas. “A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself”, writes Aurobindo in his book *The Life Divine*. For it is true that, according to Aurobindo, without the higher spirit, the lower mind cannot be spiritualized (Ghose1950).

4.5 ENLIGHTENED AWARENESS OF THE SPIRITUAL UNITY

As a spiritual and practical mystic, Aurobindo puts a lot of emphasis on the transcendent aspect of Man. For Aurobindo the only answer to the crisis in the human world is an enlightened awareness of the spiritual unity of our existence through which a sustainable world unity can be achieved. “The truth of the Spirit”, wrote Aurobindo, “may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection.” According to Sri Aurobindo, the perfection is yet to come, because Man has not constituted yet the final step in his evolutionary process. The goal of spiritual progress, therefore, ought to be creation of spiritual human being and spiritual communities.

In fact our author’s concept of human unity is not based on rational norms. It is not aimed at creating a more rational Man. Aurobindo’s goal is mainly aimed at achieving an enlightened spiritualized community. This spiritualized community would not have nation-states fighting with each other, because in such a community men are not egoistic and look beyond their self-interests. Similarly Aurobindo defines human unity as “the attempt of human mind and life to grow out of national idea and form and even in a way to destroy it, in the interest of larger synthesis of mankind.” For Sri Aurobindo the idea of “unity in diversity” would provide a solid basis for a durable synthesis of mankind. Because of this, he saw a common destiny and a common hope for both the East and the West. “East and West”, he wrote in 1949, “have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and outwardly we move.

Yet the unity of mankind, according to our author (Ghose 1950), is evidently a part of nature's eventual scheme and must come about. Only it must be under other conditions and with safeguards which will keep the race intact in the roots of its vitality, richly diverse in its oneness.

4.6 INTEGRAL APPROACH TOWARDS HUMAN UNITY

An integral approach is possible and necessary towards our progress towards human unity. The evolution of a universal consciousness in the life of each individual would facilitate the emergence of a world unity. The emergence of a real cosmic consciousness willing a unity not only in the individual members of the human organism

through a transformation of their nature itself but also in the institutions of the individual is a radical necessity. Thus the universal problem of unity is an individual problem. The individual must transcend his mentality and his mechanical rationality and his vital rationality. At the stage of the human evolution the mind dominated the lower physical and vital, and the physical and vital are geared up to its demands and thus each human individual has a mental soul so to speak (Varadachari 2011). But thanks to the preoccupations of its energies with the environment it had become restricted and is in fact ignorant. The social organisations of these individuals are at the same level. The mental life of the individual is on one side a practical mind with restricted aims of survival in the body and of the body, and an abstract mind which seeks to know the general order and structure of the environment and act on it on the basis of laws discovered by it through observation. Practically the universals of its discovery are partial truths and pragmatically valuable.

The organism of the individual must undergo a further evolution. In fact, a new force of being must be made active in the human individual, not the abstract universal or general will of the human society based on sentiment and gregarious feeling or vital love, but on a real Cosmic Intelligence, discovery of the Cosmic Self or Supermind and its action within each individual would transform the organic vital and psychical unity into a spiritual or supramental-psychical, vital and physical unity (Varadachari 2011).

4.7 CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Vasudhaiva kudumbakam, so proclaimed the ancient Indians: the world is one family. The ideal of human unity, which was already present at the dawn of civilisation, has never appeared so close to realisation, but paradoxically the closer we come to it, the more it seems to elude us. It is as if at the onset of the 21st century the need for human unity has never been so great, and yet quite often this very unity, seen as inevitable, is perceived as somewhat threatening (Auroville 2011) and even non-desirable.

We speak of globalisation, and in the same breath we deplore the dangers of uniformity. We speak of democracy as a universal ideal and of the progress of all nations towards it as irreversible, and yet at the same time this democratic model is perceived as a system imposed by some nations on others. We are facing environmental problems which threaten the very survival of our planet. We are aware of 'global warming' and a decrease in the finite resources of the planet, and we know that in order to tackle these common problems the individual nation-state is not an adequate institution anymore. But the very concept of a supra-national body is perceived as a possible infringement on the sovereignty of the nation-state, won in numerous cases after many decades - or longer – of collective struggle and pain (Auroville 2011).

Erasure of cultures

We claim that today's world is a global village, because technological progress has made our earth very small, and news can instantly reach every inhabitant of the earth through the highroad of information. But there is the fear that this global village culture may erase the diverse cultures ("mini narratives") of the earth; indeed it is argued that there is already an immense drive towards uniformity of life habits and uniformity of knowledge, which is not healthy.

Economic front

At the economic front, the much-talked-about liberalisation process is seen by many as an attempt to impose everywhere a capitalist model only suited to some countries, and to spread everywhere a culture of consumerism. So some critics ask: A computer for everyone and bread for only one quarter of the world population; is this the goal towards which we are advancing?

Science

In the 19th century, intellectuals saw the progress of science as the great factor which would lead to the unification of mankind, since science was a thing common to all men in its conclusions and was international in its very nature; but we know now that science can be misused, and is being misused, to discover more and more means of destruction. We have lost faith in science as a panacea for all evils, but what is there to replace it?

Aurobindo was certain that the ideal of human unity will emerge also because of sciences. “Still the ideal, having once made its way to the front of thought, must certainly be attempted, and this ideal of human unity is likely to figure largely among the determining forces of the future; for the intellectual and material circumstances of the age have prepared and almost impose it, especially the scientific discoveries which have made our earth so small that its vastest kingdoms seem now no more than the provinces of a single country” (Ghose 1950).

Biggest obstacle

We know that egoism is the biggest obstacle to a life of harmony and peace on earth, but after so many centuries of civilisation no amount of religious preaching or moral teaching has been able to convince the ego to forego its claims, as to speak to him of fraternity is to speak to him of something fundamentally contrary to his nature (Auroville 2011).

4.8 NEED FOR REAL UNITY TODAY

From the above considerations, it appears that although we are moving somewhat reluctantly towards a kind of unification, this is not a process likely to solve the many acute problems of the earth. Nor will the envisaged unity answer the deeper needs and aspirations of the human being. In fact, we have begun to understand that if we want to preserve the freedom for man to develop and grow in all liberty, this unity cannot be built through mechanical means. It cannot be achieved as long as man does not recognise a real unity between man and man; it cannot be arrived at through social and mechanical devices; and “we have even started to realise that if its aim is not to bring about a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind, this unity is hardly desirable” (Auroville 2011).

Man will be surpassed

Precisely here comes the relevance of Sri Aurobindo’s experiences. It becomes therefore urgent to realise what this unity is towards which we feel pushed in spite of ourselves. Man is a transitional being, claimed Sri Aurobindo shortly after the First World War. He held that evolution continues and man will be surpassed. Not only did Sri Aurobindo foresee the next step in the evolution of man, but he told us how to participate in it. Instead of remaining a passive spectator in a painful and incomprehensible process, he urges us to consciously

collaborate in our own evolution and break free of our seemingly inextricable bonds (Auroville 2011).

Using inner means

But for this, we have to reverse our mental process, said Sri Aurobindo, and instead of using external means, we have to turn inward, because without a change in man's nature no real changes in the external circumstances are likely to take place. The only way we can move towards unity is to progressively realise that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality in which we are all one, not only realise it mentally but discover it in ourselves and live this knowledge. The secret of unity is within, said Sri Aurobindo; the secret of brotherhood is within. "There is no unity except by the soul, there is no real brotherhood except in the soul and by the soul. Only when we live from the soul and not from the ego will a real unity reign on earth" (Auroville 2011).

Connecting with the new consciousness

This 'spiritual age of humanity' then will represent a transformation in the nature of man as momentous as the appearance of the thinking mind on earth. In the same way as for millennia the mind was the centre of our life, so, in the new age opening for humanity, or 'supra-mental' age, the soul will become the centre of all life and activities. A new stage in the evolution of man has already begun; a new consciousness, higher than the mind, a truth-consciousness, as Sri Aurobindo said, in which the dualities, hesitations and limitations of the mind and the greed and blindness of the ego will no longer exist, has already started to appear, and all the upheavals and convulsions that are at present so painfully tearing our earth are the outward signs of this evolutionary crisis. This new consciousness is already at work in the atmosphere of the earth: "we can connect with it, we can call it in ourselves, we can use it to transform our entire nature and consequently the world in which we live" (Auroville 2011). That is the challenge we are faced with.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Do you agree with the possibility of unity of all?

2) What is the need for unity today?

4.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have studied the human search for a common unity, without which we are doomed. For this a spiritual basis is a must. Even in our post-modern world, where many people speak of not one human story, the spiritual quest of Aurobindo is relevant. Such a quest gives meaning to our collective evolutionary journey.

4.10 KEY WORDS

Saccidananda or **Satchidananda** or **Sat-cit-ananda**: a compound of three Sanskrit words, *sat*, *cit*, and *ananda* meaning existence, consciousness, and bliss. It refers to the Ultimate in philosophy.

Vasudhaiva kudumbakam: is a Sanskrit phrase that means that the whole world is one single family.

4.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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