



# INTEGRAL YOGA : ITS NATURE & SIGNIFICANCE

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## Misconceptions about Yoga

The word 'Yoga' is characteristically Indian in its origin and practice. In general 'Yoga' has a repulsive meaning for the people who are interested in the pleasures of the world. By long association the word 'Yoga' is associated with the practice of severe self-control, aversion for the pleasures of the senses, body and mind, an attitude of withdrawal from the world, denial of worldly life and apathy for striving for the prosperity of the material life, love for seclusion, desire for the attainment of supernatural and occult powers, exercising severe and harsh control over the working of the sense-organs, practising certain physical postures and breath-control etc. Such a popular impression about the Yoga is found very commonly, and it is further believed that the life of Yoga is not meant for young men and women who naturally desire to enjoy a full and healthy life of senses, body, mind and intellect. Youths are naturally interested in enjoying the life of senses and sex, and wish to attain wealth, fame, power and all worldly goods. To such a great majority of people, it is no wonder, Yoga becomes repulsive and detestable. If the real meaning of Yoga is not explained to the young people they are bound to be misled by wrong prevailing ideas about Yoga, and they need not also be blamed for their apathy and antipathy for Yoga. It is traditionally believed that Yoga is meant only for exceptionally few religiously-minded individuals, and for the mature and aged persons who have experienced the worldly life in all its aspects, and have realised the futility, hollowness and worthlessness of the life of material and worldly enjoyment after a good deal of experience and struggle through which they may have passed during their long career.

It is true that many of the prevalent ideas about Yoga are really misleading, wrong, distorted and perverted. A large number of hypocrites, pseudo-sadhus, Hathayogins and dishonest Yogic practitioners have created wrong, repulsive, detestable and ridiculous ideas about Yoga. Unfortunately, it has become an instrument in the hands of many ignorant, hypocrite, dishonest and quack persons, and hence Yoga is unnecessarily criticised adversely by the some well-intentioned and educated people also on account of its large-scale misuse and wrong interpretations put on it by half-educated people and by people of malafide intentions, to suit their conveniences and interests. It is a misfortune that this great ancient invention of Indian wisdom has fallen into great disrepute and has become a subject for ridicule and blasphemy on account of its great misuse and perverted interpretations.

## Yoga for All

There is also a long-standing impression in the minds of several people that Yoga is essentially a part of Hindu religion, and only Hindus are entitled to its use and practice. This is not a fact. Yoga is not and need not at all be confined to the Hindu religion. Yoga is practised very seriously by the followers of Buddhism and Jainism also. Yoga is a *technique* of changing the consciousness and inner attitude of man, and it is not necessarily connected with



certain Hindu deities, and hence it can be accepted and practised by all persons irrespective of their belonging to this or that religion, creed, tradition, complexion, race, culture, language, country etc. Yoga is a universal phenomenon, and it is such that it can be learnt and practised by any person who may have nothing to do with the creed and mythology of Hinduisim. Yoga belongs to and is meant for the entire humanity, and if it is practised faithfully the entire human race can improve mentally and spiritually, and attain a higher level of life and consciousness. The Yogic way of life can bring about an alround improvement of man, and it can help to evolve a man of superior calibre and attainments on the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual planes.

### **The Real Meaning of Yoga**

Yoga does not mean withdrawal into seclusion, renunciation and aversion for material and physical life, as it is generally believed to be. Yoga is not to be identified with the external physiological and ritualistic behaviour. Though it needs and values tremendously concentration and meditation, *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāma*, observance of the rules of conduct, both for the body and mind, restrictions on food and sensuous and sexual experiences, the real Yoga does not amount to a sum total or aggregate of all these features, which are usually associated with the life of the Yogins. The real emphasis of Yoga has to be not so much on its external features as on its *inner aspect*. Unfortunately, the popular mind takes Yoga to be nothing more than the external observances and rituals, and this is indeed not a correct meaning of Yoga. It has now become necessary to remove a lot of non-sense and hotch-potch deposited on the concept of Yoga, and to free it from all its unsound, wrong and misconceived entanglements, and to present it in its real and genuine form to the younger generations so that they can benefit themselves immensely from it to enrich their life, and make it meaningful, delightful and glorious. Yoga can certainly save the younger generation from the deep-seated sense of futility, meaninglessness and absurdity of life.

### **Man's Helplessness**

It is true that Yoga aims at God-realisation. Generally the goal of Yogic life is the attainment of the higher powers of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo says that the aim of Yoga is Divinisation of human life. The contact of the human and individual consciousness with the divine is the essence of Yoga. Yoga tries to reunite the individual soul with its original source. i.e., the Supreme Self. It is possible that every human person may not be having the particular keen urge for uniting with the Divine, and may not also possess the necessary faculty for such an experience. It is a common experience that the average men and women are not only interested in and attached to the world of sensuous and mental enjoyment, but they do not as well feel the necessity to rise above the routine human experiences and activities. They feel satisfied with the world, its ways and its gains and enjoyments although they are ceaselessly tossed by certain unpleasant and painful experiences. The average man is convinced that the world is not a straight road of pleasant and happy experiences. It is a mixture of good and evil, happiness and misery, success and failure and he is deeply involved in the contradictory experiences of life. He also feels helpless before the various forces of the world, and realising the limitations of human powers to control and change the conditions of the world, many times accepts a number of things which come to him unexpectedly, and mainly because he has no control over the forces which produce certain undesirable and harmful results. Every man realises that he is powerless before the natural and cosmic forces which rule our life, and then he quietly acquiesces in a situation which encircles him. Life is a series of adjustments with the environment and social situations ; but in these adjustments often man has to submit to the powerful forces which are not created by him and which also are beyond his powers. The man

in the modern civilization of science and technology ceaselessly tries to discover the causes of several undesirable and evil events and overpower them by employing certain remedial and curative measures. The man of the 20th century feels great confidence more than ever before to be able to diagnose the causes of several evils of the world, and tries either to prevent or stop or cure them by employing appropriate remedial measures. He does succeed in correcting and improving the situation, but he succeeds very little. As man's power over natural agencies and forces increases, his helplessness also increases in some other direction and sense. The capacity of man to control, modify and improve nature according to his requirements and expectations always falls short and inadequate, and therefore the problems of his life always continue to confront him.

### The Functions of Yoga

Man therefore stands in need of improving his powers either by scientific and technological means or by some other method. Yoga, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a method and technique of improving and enhancing man's powers in various directions. According to the traditional belief, Yoga primarily performs one function of giving peace of mind and freedom excitability and perturbability of the mind. Yes, Yoga certainly sets man in his self firmly and brings to him peace, tranquillity and imperturbability. But this is a limited function of Yoga. Yoga formerly acted as a technique to give man liberation (*Mokṣa*) by helping him to enter into an experience of trance and *Samādhi*. It is all true. The traditional Yoga had a specific and limited purpose and function, and the Yogic training did enable man to overcome some of his hurdles and attain certain super-moral and super-natural (occult) powers (*siddhis*). The traditional idea of Yoga had serious limitations and since it appeared to be cut off from the usual and normal current of life, the sphere of Yoga was as if reserved for and confined to individuals of special interests, aptitudes and aspirations.

### Yoga for Everyday Life

Now in the present century there has been a revolutionary change in the outlook on and attitude to Yoga. Yoga is now brought also to man's normal and daily life. Yoga has now ceased to be a secret and sacred occupation of a few privileged persons. The Yoga is brought close to the life of the present man and its help is called upon to solve the problems of the current life. Sri Aurobindo is the first and the most original thinker and a pioneer in this field of Yoga. He carried out Research of tremendous significance in the field of Yoga, and showed how Yoga can be made to bear on the current life of man. He is the first to declare "All life is Yoga"; that Yogic life is not something very much mystical and unconcerned with the life of the average man. He brought down the secrets of the spiritual life and the life of Yoga to the life of the common and normal man, and showed by his own experiences and example how Yoga transforms the life of earthly man.

### Yoga not Indifferent to Man's Social Life

Perhaps it is a misunderstanding which is continuing from very ancient times that Yoga is unrelated to the worldly life, and that it is indifferent to the current problems of the social life. There is an aspect of Yoga, which deals with the attainments of higher states of consciousness, and Yogins interested in such pursuits may be said to be indifferent to the actual problems of life of the man in society. But it is Sri Aurobindo who has emphatically given a new turn to this approach to Yoga. Yoga, according to him, has a *positive role* to play in the progress and enrichment of life. A Yoga which feels no concern for the perplexing problems of man's life and does not seek to solve those problems cannot be considered to be a sound or ideal kind of Yoga, since it provides only for an individual's personal gain.



### No Cheap Utilitarian View of Yoga

Though Yoga is to be used for the well-being of the individual and society, Yoga is not to be made instrumental to social uplift and amelioration in a materialistic and pragmatic sense. When it is said that Yoga has a contribution to make to the development of the society and the world, it is not to be understood in a cheap, utilitarian and pragmatic sense. Sri Aurobindo says that the idea of usefulness to humanity is the odd confusion due to second hand ideas imported from the West. Obviously, to be 'useful' to humanity there is no need of Yoga ; everyone who leads the human life is useful to human life in one way or another. Thus though Yoga solves the problems of human life it does not solve them in a temporary and ordinary way. It strikes at the roots of the problems and seeks to solve them in a radical manner. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo makes it clear that the true object of Yoga is not philanthropy, but to find the Divine, to enter into the divine consciousness and to find one's true being (which is not the Ego) in the Divine. He further says that Yoga is directed *towards Gods, not towards man*. The object of *Sādhana* can only be to live in the divine consciousness and to manifest it in life.

### Inadequacy of Human Reason

When Sri Aurobindo emphasises that Yoga is meant for the improvement of life and action, he means that Yoga is not going to solve particular worldly problems in this or that way. When he says "Yoga must include life and not exclude it", he does not mean that we are bound to accept life as it is with all its stumbling ignorance and misery and obscure confusion of human will and reason and impulse and instinct which it expresses. The modern man labours under the illusion that intellect can ably solve all the problems. Sri Aurobindo maintains that neither the human intellect nor the reason is competent to solve the real problems of the world, though people expect so much from them and rely on their saving capacity. He says that the human reason is a convenient and accommodating instrument and works only in the circle set for it by interest, partiality and prejudice. The politicians reason wrongly or insincerely and have power to enforce the results of their reasoning so as to make a mess of the world's affairs, the intellectuals reason and show what their minds show them, which is far from being always the truth. Thus Sri Aurobindo has great doubt about the capacity of the present mind and reason of man to solve the stupendous problems which humanity is facing at present. The reason of man is not impartial, disinterested and pure. It often becomes muddy on account of mixing with the narrow and selfish passions and desires of individual persons, and so it is unable to take a total view of problems. Since it works in the service of individuals and seeks to satisfy their limited particular and conflicting purposes, it cannot take a detached view and guide the world-affairs so as to serve the universal aims and interests of the entire humanity. People make too much of reason and logic, but both the reason and logic of men work for and under the influence of man's narrow egoistic motives. The universal reason alone is free from the defects of narrow and selfish motives of individuals.

The main problem is whether man thinks sincerely, honestly, unselfishly and in the wider interests of the entire world and humanity or he acts with reservation and serves his selfish interests knowingly and unknowingly.

### Ego

The tendency of man to serve his own selfish interest or the interests of his group is his 'Ego'. According to Sri Aurobindo, as long as the ego of man remains intact and it is allowed to serve and satisfy its various desires directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, man's universalisation and divinisation becomes impossible.

The ego is the most deceptive mechanism. It always escapes man's conscious understanding of it. It is highly elusive and difficult to trace. Its ways of working are surreptitious,

and it tries to maintain itself under several attractive, socially acceptable, polite and generous garbs. But it is all deception. The ego always works under several disguises and is extremely tenacious in its behaviour. It is difficult to control. Sri Aurobindo does not recommend its mutilation and assimilation, but prescribes its regulation by the higher self and its transformation.

### Apathy for Work

Yoga is not of one kind only. There is a Yoga of Devotion (*Bhaktiyoga*), a Yoga of Knowledge (*Jñānayoga*), a Yoga of Action (*Karmayoga*), *Hathayoga*, *Rājayoga*, and some other kinds of Yoga. An individual may adopt any kind of Yoga according to his inclination and tendency which suits his temperament. Unfortunately, in the past many centuries Yoga has been predominantly Devotional in character, and it has resulted into a kind of indifference to and apathy for work. It has also resulted into a kind of idleness, which has adversely affected the work which is required for social well-being, material enrichment and progress. Apathy for work has indirectly resulted into impoverishment of the material wealth and into shortage of things of utility and the material needs of the society. As there is an unhealthy cleavage between the life of thought and experience or spiritual life, a life of meditation and devotion on the one hand and a kind of life of work, activity and labour on the other hand. Excessive and one-sided concentration on either of these two sides has resulted into an unsound and unhealthy mode of life. The spiritualists are dubbed as idlers indulging in abstract thinking, feeling, meditation and devotion having no contact with the concrete world of facts and experience, and the men of work and activity are ridiculed as men of the concrete world, absorbed in the production of utilities. They are branded as positivists, materialists, sensualists and heretics having no regard for the higher and spiritual values of life. Over-emphasis on either of these two approaches has become a source of distortion and that has created split-personalities, a kind of schizophrenia, and life of either kind has become defective and unhealthy in its own way.

### Integral (Synthetic) Yoga

Sri Aurobindo does not appreciate and favour this kind of broken or divided life. He advocates a new Yoga known as Integral Yoga to cure this unhealthy and artificial division of the two. He takes into consideration the *whole man* in whom all these tendencies form organic parts. Knowledge, Devotion, Work, Meditation etc., are inherent in the natural constitution of man, and all of them have their own roles to play. When they are not allowed legitimate expression in the human experience, some of them get suppressed, and suppression usually leads to some kind of abnormality. But it is also true that since all the individuals are not and should not be exactly alike, it is also proper that some individuals emphasize some aspects more than others, and therefore we come across individuals who are more prone and dedicated to different kinds of Yoga such as *Jñānayoga*, *Bhaktiyoga*, *Karmayoga*, *Hathayoga* and so on. Sri Aurobindo maintains that a healthy integration of Knowledge, Devotion and Work is necessary for a sound Yoga, and he advocates such a synthetic Yoga in the form of Integral (*Pūrṇa*) Yoga. The Integral Yoga is not an invention of Sri Aurobindo himself. It has been advocated and explained by the Bhagavadgītā. Sri Aurobindo has expanded the philosophy of the Bhagavadgītā in his several essays published in a book "Essays on the Gita". He brings out the essence of the teaching of the Gita in these essays. Perhaps his interpretation of the Gita is the most faithful to the essential spirit of the Gita.

Sri Aurobindo emphasises not the external and the physical aspect which consists in the mechanical observance of certain Yogic practices, for example strict control over the working of the sense-organs, abstinence, renunciation of sensuous experience, withdrawal from the worldly life, which are usually supposed to be characteristics of the life of a Yogin. But according to Sri Aurobindo this is based on a misunderstanding and distorted view about Yogic life.



### All Life is Yoga

Sri Aurobindo says that all life is either consciously or unconsciously or subconsciously a Yoga. It consists in a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and the cosmos. All Life, when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of Nature, attempting to realise her perfection in an ever-increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, he thinks, for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious mean and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be swiftly and puissantly attained. Yoga, as Swami Vivekananda has said, may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few years or even a few months of bodily existence. Yoga is a kind of compressed but concentrated and intense activity according to the temperament of an individual.

Sri Aurobindo maintains that it is this view of Yoga that alone can form the basis for a sound and rational synthesis of Yogic methods. He further says that if we look at Yoga from this point of view, Yoga ceases to appear something mystic and abnormal which has no relation to the ordinary processes of the World-Energy or the purpose she keeps in view in her two great movements of subjective and objective self-fulfilment ; it reveals itself rather as an intense and exceptional use of powers that she has already manifested or is progressively organising in her less exalted but more general operations. Going further he says that the Yogic methods have something of the same relation to the customary psychological workings of man as he has the scientific handling of the natural force of electricity or of steam to the normal operations of steam and of electricity. And they, too, are formed upon a knowledge developed and confirmed by regular experiment, practical analysis and constant result.

### The Aim of Yoga

Sri Aurobindo do not favour the popular forms of Yoga such as the *Hathayoga*, *Rājayoga* and the *Tāntrikayoga* which have less of spiritual aims. The aim of Yoga, according to Sri Aurobindo, should not be the attainment to physical goods, wealth, property, power, fame nor certain occult powers but the spiritual elevation and transformation of the entire being of man. In a way the whole of life is the Yoga of Nature. The Yoga that we seek must also be an integral action of Nature, and the whole difference between the Yogin and the natural man will be this that the Yogin seeks to *substitute* in himself for the integral action of the lower Nature working in and by ego and division the integral action of the higher Nature working in and by God and unity. Sri Aurobindo does not propose an escape from the world to God, but he advocates a transformation of our integral being into the terms of God-existence. Sri Aurobindo advocates a new Integral Yoga by which he seeks to facilitate the Descent of the Divine in man and on the earthly life. For this purpose he advises to put our whole conscious being into relation and contact with the Divine and to call him in to transform our entire being into His, so that in a sense God Himself, the real person in us, becomes the *sādhaka* of the *Sādhana* as well as the Master of the Yoga by whom the lower personality is used as the centre of a divine transfiguration and the instrument of its perfection.

While explaining the essence of Yoga Sri Aurobindo points out that Yoga is the founding of all life and consciousness in the Divine, so also love and affection must be rooted in the Divine, and a spiritual and psychic oneness in the Divine must be their foundation.

### New and Old Yogas

Sri Aurobindo compares his new idea of Yoga with the old ideas, and says that the old Yoga demand a complete renunciation extending to the giving up of the worldly life itself. This (new) Yoga aims instead at a new and transformed life. But it insists inexor-

ably on a complete throwing away of desire and attachment in the mind, life and body. The aim of the new Yoga is to refound life in the truth of the spirit, and for that purpose to transfer the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind. That means that in the new Yogic life all the connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present consciousness. One must be prepared to renounce at the higher call what are spoken of as the natural affections. All must be given up to the Supreme Master of the Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo while describing the nature, aim and speciality of the New Yoga, says that the new (Integral) Yoga aims not at a departure out of the world and life into Heaven and *Nirvāṇa*, but at a change of life and existence, not as something subordinate or incidental, as a distinct and central object. In it the ascent is the first step, but it is a means for the descent. It is the descent of the new consciousness attained by the ascent. Moreover the object sought after by the New Yoga is not an individual attainment of divine realisation for the sake of the individual, but something to be gained for the earth-consciousness here on the cosmic level, and make it active. It mainly aims at a total and integral change of the consciousness and nature. Thus the aim of the Integral Yoga, as enunciated by Sri Aurobindo, is to facilitate and hasten the Descent of the Divine into the earth-consciousness. He does not simply want to attain peace and *mokṣa* for the individuals, but seeks to transform spiritually the life on the earth.

He says that man cannot improve and reform the present man and the social atmosphere simply by means of mental and intellectual changes which remain on the surface-consciousness, and do not change the depths of the spirit of man.

### Superficiality of Mind

Sri Aurobindo is not prepared to trust the mind for bringing liberation to man. Though the psyche is absolutely necessary for developing spiritual consciousness at the same time he thinks that neither mind nor intellect nor reason is competent to reach the Supreme Truth of the Self. He says that the human Mind is not the self. The mind works only on a superficial plane of consciousness, and its powers of comprehension have serious limitations. He says that Yoga is not a thing of idea but of inner spiritual experience. Merely to be attracted to any set of religious or spiritual ideas does not bring with it any realisation. The mind can think and doubt and question and accept and withdraw its acceptance, make formations and unmake them, pass decisions and revoke them, judging always on the surface and by surface indications and therefore never coming to any deep and firm experience of Truth, but by itself it can do no more. Mind has the tendency to play with ideas, concepts and relations. Mind by itself is incapable of ultimate certitude; whatever it believes, it can doubt; whatever it can affirm, it can deny, whatever it gets hold of, it can and does let go. Mind is a small instrument with limited capacities. It deals with trifling things and indulges in trivialities and superficialities. But Yoga is not a mental field; the consciousness which has to be established is not a mental, logical or debating consciousness. It is even laid down by Yoga that unless and until the mind is stilled, including the intellectual and logical mind and opens itself in quietude or silence to a higher and deeper consciousness, vision and knowledge, *sādhana* cannot reach its goal.

### No Mentalisation and No Intellectualisation

Yogic consciousness, thus, is not the ordinary consciousness of the mind and intellect with which we are familiar. Such a consciousness cannot be changed by the mental activity. Yogic consciousness cannot be brought about by intellectual, rational and logical thinking. Mind cannot arrive at the Supreme Truth; it can only make some new mental constructions and formulas, build systems and put one system against another, justify one and pull down another, attack one and defend another, and justify and at the same time disprove the same from a



different point of view. But neither the mind nor the intellect can penetrate deep into the heart of Reality. Sri Aurobindo rightly points out that as long as we remain in the domain of the intellect only, an impartial pondering over all that has been thought and sought after a constant throwing up of all the possible ideas, and the formation of this or that philosophical belief, opinion or conclusion is all that can be done.

Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo, all mental, intellectual, rational and logical thinking suffers from its inherent limitations, and all of them prove to be inadequate for the understanding of spiritual truths. Therefore the modern Western way of mentalising, intellectualising and conceptualising the real spiritual truths is bound to prove inadequate, insufficient and futile for reaching in the real sense the spiritual experience, which ought to be the base of the new way of life.

### **Spiritual Transformation**

Sri Aurobindo advocates a radical change in the consciousness of man, and he describes it as 'Transformation'. In regard to the spiritual transformation which he advocates, he says that by transformation he does not mean some change of the nature like sainthood or ethical perfection or Yogic *siddhis* (like the *Tāntrik's*) or a transcendental body. He used transformation in a special sense ; it is a change of consciousness radical and complete and of a certain specific kind, which is so conceived as to bring about a strong and assured step forward in the spiritual evolution of the being of a greater and higher kind, and of a larger sweep and completeness than what took place when a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world. He makes the idea of transformation more clear and says that there must be a descent of the light not merely into the mind or part of it but into all the being down to the physical and below before a real transformation can take place. A light in the mind may spiritualise or otherwise change the mind or part of it in one way or another, but it need not change the vital nature ; a light in the vital may purify and enlarge the vital movements or else silence and immobilise the vital being, but leave the body and the physical consciousness as it was, or even leave it inert or shake its balance. And the descent of Light is not enough, it must be the whole higher consciousness, its Peace, Power, Knowledge, Love, Ananda. Moreover, the descent may be enough to liberate, but not to perfect, or it may be enough to make a great change in the inner being, while the outer remains an imperfect instrument, clumsy, sick or unexpressive. Finally, transformation effected by the *sādhana* cannot be complete unless it is a supermentalisation of the being. Psychicisation is not enough, it is only a beginning, spiritualisation and the descent of the higher consciousness is not enough, it is only a middle term ; the ultimate achievement needs the action of the supermental consciousness and force. Something less than that may very well be considered enough by the individual, but it is not enough for the earth-consciousness to take the definitive stride forward, it must take at one time or another. The idea of spiritual transformation is quite new and unique, and it is the original contribution of Sri Aurobindo to Yoga. By spiritual transformation he means something dynamic and not merely liberation of the self or realisation of the one which can very well be attained without any descent. It is a putting on of the spiritual consciousness, dynamic as well as static, in every part of the being down the subconscious. That cannot be done by the influence of the Self leaving the consciousness fundamentally as it is with only purification, enlightenment of the mind and heart, and quiescence of the vital.

### **The Special Mission of the Integral Yoga**

It means a bringing down of the Divine consciousness, static and dynamic, into all these parts and the entire replacement of the present consciousness by that. Sri Aurobindo believes that such a spiritual transformation can be brought about, and the supramental consciousness can and does descend in the whole nature, top to bottom, to transform the entire being of man.



Only for a limited spiritual liberation less than transformation became enough, but if the supramental has to govern and change the entire structure, it has got to come down to mental, vital and physical planes by an earnest, ardent and intense *sādhana* by the individual self. Sri Aurobindo prescribes aspiration for and complete surrender of the Ego to the Divine for this purpose. For attaining such fundamental spiritual attainment no metaphysical and logical reasoning can be of use and so philosophy cannot do it.

Sri Aurobindo says that the one and only aim of the Integral Yoga is to bring down the supramental Truth into the world. Truth alone is its aim. He further says that the Integral Yoga is not something brand new in all its elements. It is integral because it takes up the essence and many processes of the old Yogas, and its newness consists in its aim, standpoint and the totality of its method. According to him neither Sri Krishna nor Buddha nor Śankara nor Rāmakrishna had any idea of transformation of the body. Their aim was spiritual *mukti* and nothing more than that.

The aim of Integral Yoga is to change spiritually the world and not to escape or abandon it. Man has to become a fit instrument of the Divine and to facilitate the descent of the supramental into the world. According to him never such an attempt was made in the past even by the great veterans of spiritual life. According to Sri Aurobindo there are some grades of consciousness between the Mind and the Supermind, and the great sages and spiritual veterans had reached some of the grades or rungs of spiritual consciousness. For example, Sri Aurobindo believes that *Sri Krishna's* mind was overmentalised, *Rāmakrishna's* intuitive, *Chaitanya's* spiritual-psychic, Buddha's illumined higher mental ; but none of them had experienced the supramental. The object of spiritual seeking is to find out what is eternally true, not what is new in Time.

#### Divinisation

Sri Aurobindo repeatedly says that the aim of Yoga is not and should not be either social reform or moral perfection or greater material enrichment of the society, nor should it be merely mental, intellectual and rational development and enrichment. In his opinion the only aim of Integral Yoga is total Divinization of the human being. He uses a new term 'Divinisation' which does not mean the destruction of the human elements; but divinisation consists in taking up the human elements, showing them the way to their own perfection, raising them by perfection to their full power and *Ānanda*, and that means the raising of the whole earthly life to its full Power and *Ānanda*. While elaborating it further he says that divinisation of life means a greater art of life, for the present art of life produced by ego and ignorance is comparatively mean, crude and imperfect, and it is by a spiritual and psychic opening and refinement that it has to reach its true perfection. This can only be done by its being steeped in the Divine Light and Flame in which its material will be stripped of all heavy dross and turned into the true metal. This Yoga is not a rejection of life but of closeness and intimacy between the Divine and the *sādhakes*. Its ideal aims at the greatest closeness and unity on the physical as well as the other planes, at the most divine largeness and fullness and joy of life.

#### Complete Surrender

The practice of Yoga is *Sādhana*. It can be performed in many ways. In *Sādhana* one has to return one's all facilities and powers such as the passions, emotions, thoughts, mind, heart, will and even action to the Divine. One can adopt knowledge, devotion (*Bhakti*), work or *Tapasyā* of Self-purification. Sri Aurobindo says that there is no single rule for all, it depends on one's personality and nature. Surrender is the main power of the Yoga. One has to offer not only one's thoughts and emotions but one's very will and entire being to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo's main emphasis is on offering oneself or a complete surrender to the Divine. If



one's surrender to the Divine is complete, unreserved and without any expectation one can attain the Grace of the Divine more easily. By surrender Sri Aurobindo means 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. One's spiritual transformation becomes impossible without one's unreserved surrender to the Divine. Surrender can be outer as well as inner. The *inner* surrender is of the mind, heart and the vital. The core of inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. The attitude should be to want the Divine and nothing else. The process of surrender itself is a *Tapasyā*. Sri Aurobindo says that 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; and reciprocally it happens that the Divine also gives itself to those who give themselves totally and without reserve to the Divine.

Surrender is not easy to practise. It is an attitude to life and the world, and it gets gradually consolidated and set in one's habits. Usually there is a resistance to the surrender form the vital and mind of man, but inspite of the passive reluctance of man's vital and mental nature, and also frequently stern opposition by them to offer surrender to the Divine man has to determine firmly and tell oneself, "I want the Divine and nothing else. I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be but that I shall meet and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action in me to bring me to him, his action secret or open, veiled or manifest. I do not insist on my own time and way ; let him do all in his own time and way ; I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all the difficulties and delays, relying on him and never giving up. Let my mind be quiet and trust him and let him open it to his light, let my vital be quiet and turn to him alone, and let him open it to his calm and joy. All for him and myself for him. Whatever happens I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving, and go on in perfect reliance that it will be done." According to Sri Aurobindo, surrender is an attitude which must always remain growing. Surrender is not a thing that is done in a day. The mind clings to its ideas and the body also is a slave to its habits. It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender.

#### **Sādhana**

For making the surrender, a determined and ceaseless efforts is indispensable. Such an active willed and voluntary effort and practice is the '*Sādhana*.' Making the idea further clear he says that active surrender consists in associating one's will with the Divine will and rejecting what is not Divine. The surrender is a continuous process, the *Sādhaka* has to be very much vigilant against falling directly or indirectly into the trap of his individual self or ego. Those who surrender completely and unreservedly to the Divine, the Divine takes their care and then his position become like that of a Baby-cat which is entirely at the mercy of the Mother-cat. The Mother-cat carries the Baby-cat from place to place by holding it in mouth. The Baby-cat has to do no effort whatsoever.

#### **Empty Vessel**

If the devotee surrenders to the Divine so completely and says to him 'I am in your hands do whatever you like, with me'. It becomes a Yoga of a very high level. Then the Divine decides and does every thing for the devotee (*Sādhaka*) who has no separate desire of his own. He almost empties himself and negates his separate individual being and plays into hands of the Divine like a doll or a passive instrument. Sri Aurobindo says that the *Sādhaka* then becomes a vessel or medium for the expression of the Divine light and consciousness. The *Sādhaka* then retains to no consciousness of himself as a separate being, and in him is left no craving no choice no preference. He says to the Divine "Thy will be done, I have nothing different of my own and nothing to ask for; I am totally yours and your decision and action will be final, and it will be for my good, it will be a saving grace to me."

A real surrender does not come easily and in a short time. It is a long arduous process. A complete surrender means to cut the knot of the ego in each part of the being and offer it, free and whole, to the Divine. The Mind, the vital, the physical consciousness and even each part of these in all its movements have one after the other to surrender separately, to give up their own way and to accept the way of the Divine. All kinds of knots are to be loosened and cut simultaneously and completely ; then alone the grip of the 'ego' can be removed. Such an attitude should govern not only meditation but every thought, every feeling and every action of a person.

### Opening to the Divine

The process of surrender is very closely connected with the 'Opening to the Divine.' In fact, a real surrender consists in becoming a passive or non-resisting vehicle or medium of the Divine power and will. In this regard Sri Aurobindo says that in the Integral Yoga the whole principle is to open oneself to the Divine influence. It is there above every one waiting to descend into. When one becomes conscious of it one has to call it down into oneself. It is a gradual opening of the mind and heart and then the vital to it. This opening is the attitude to accept whole-heartedly the influence and guidance when the joy and peace come down, to accept them without question or cavil and without the slightest reservations of the ego, and when it comes to receive and accept it without opposition and resistance and make oneself an efficient and effective receptacle of it, and also a faithful transmitting instrument of the Divine knowledge and will. The Divine can lead, He does not drive. Especially in the Integral Yoga all depends on whether one can open to the Divine Influence or not. If there is a sufficient sincerity in the aspirant and a patient will to arrive at the higher consciousness in spite of all obstacles, then the opening in one form or another is sure to come. It may take a long or short time according to the prepared or unprepared condition of the mind, heart and body of a person. What it requires is an earnest and intense desire or aspiration for it. One can actively make effort for its attainment by intensifying one's urge and aspiration. The Descent of the Divine Power is facilitated and hastened in proportion to one's earnestness and intensity of aspiration for it. It requires a patient waiting in addition to intensifying one's desire and aspiration. As Sri Aurobindo says there is no method in this Yoga except to concentrate, preferably in the heart, and call the presence and power of the Mother to take up the being and by the workings of her force transform the consciousness. When the mind falls quiet and the concentration becomes strong and the aspiration intense, then there is a beginning of the experience of the descending of the Divine light and consciousness in the individual's mind and heart.

### Faith

The more the faith and intenser the aspiration and yearning the more rapid is the result likely to be. One never ought to forget that the divinisation of one's being cannot be done solely by one's own effort and *tapasyā*, however intense and sincere it be. A corresponding response from the Divine to an individual's effort and calling are of great importance.

### The Way of Opening

Openness to the Divine is felt when the *sādhaka* becomes conscious of the Divine Force working in him or of its results at a least and does not obstruct its descent or its action by his own mental activities, vital restlessness or physical obscurity and inertia. Surrender is the best way of opening. Surrender means to consecrate everything in oneself to the Divine, to offer all one is and has, not to insist on one's ideas, desires, habits etc., but to allow Divine Truth to replace them by its knowledge, will and action everywhere. As long as the ego and the vital continue to make and press for their demands complete and effective surrender becomes impos-



sible. For one's real opening to Divine one has to be free from all preferences, and receive and accept joyfully whatever comes from the Divine Will. For such a willingness one should always cherish the idea that what the Divine wills is always for his best even when the mind does not see how it is so, to accept with resignation what one cannot yet accept with gladness and so to arrive at a calm equality which is not shaken even on the surface, there may be passing movements of monetary reaction to outward happenings. If that is once firmly founded, the rest can come.

If the complete surrender the vital and physical being also have to be surrendered. For a complete opening to be effective one has to offer more and more without any reservation and without holding anything back. Similarly if one has faults and weaknesses one should hold them up before the Divine to be changed or abolished.

### No Judging of the Divine

One should not try to judge the working of the Divine intelligence and will, because, as Sri Aurobindo says, the ways of the Divine are not like those of the human mind, or according to our patterns, and it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for him what he shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we can know. Once one admits the Divine one should do so totally, and should not place one's thinking and demands against the will of the Divine and should not entertain any idea, desire or aspiration which will not be acceptable to the Divine. The true attitude of the *Sādhaka* should be not to impose one's mind and vital will on the Divine but to receive the Divine's will and follow it.

### Divine Grace

The Divine shows his Grace to the human soul in proportion to the intensity of the aspirant for him. The human soul tries to move up and ascend to the Divine by his *Tapasyā* which consists mainly in an earnest surrender to the Divine. When the devotee tries to ascent sincerely to the Divine, the Divine also responds to him equally and shows Grace to the aspiring soul by descending or coming down to him. As the devotee has already opened his total being the Divine finds it easy to enter him through his head and heart to the lower parts. It is difficult to say when and on whom the Grace of the Divine will dawn. It comes in different forms. The Grace moves and works spontaneously. The Divine Grace is a power that is superior to any rule, even to the Cosmic Law. It is not indiscriminate, but it has a discrimination of its own, which sees things and persons and the right times and seasons with another Visions than that of the Mind or any other normal Power. A state of Grace is prepared in the individuals often behind thick veils by means not calculable by the mind; and when the state of Grace comes, then the Grace itself acts.

### The Divine Alone and Nothing Else

When one really yearns for the Divine Grace, the sole occupation of his mind, heart and desires must be the Divine only; one should seek the Divine alone, and nothing other than the Divine. The Divine should be invoked to take complete charge and possession of one's being, and there should be no interference by any other idea, desire and craving. If one wants the Divine quickly, absolutely, entirely, that must be the spirit of the approach, absolute all-engrossing and nothing else should be allowed to interfere with it. The spiritual cannot be one of the many different things sought by the ego for its enhancement and recreation.

### The Mysterious Way of the Grace

Sri Aurobindo says that the human mind is incapable of understanding the Divine reason. The Divine Grace is something not calculable, not bound by anything that the intellect can fix as a condition. It does not act in the manner of the human mind and intellect on its

routine and conventional lines. It should not be supposed and expected that the Divine Grace should work in way that the human mind can understand. It works in its own 'mysterious' way. The human mind being partial and limited, is constitutionally incapable of grasping the Divine. The human mechanism of knowledge has very serious inherent limitations, and therefore all the available ways of understanding it fail to grasp it. It is not accessible to concepts, logical arguments and any abstract thinking. The Grace has no definite method of expressing itself and therefore there is no fixed law of attaining it. Its appearance cannot be anticipated, nor foretold. It makes its own choice and it descends in any way and in a manner which is beyond the comprehension of the human reason. One has to wait for it with complete faith, and no impatient calling for it becomes of use in its case. The Grace chooses its own moment to come, which can neither be anticipated nor hastened, except by ever-increasing intensity of yearning for it and deepening of the surrender. One should not entertain doubt, uneasiness and impatience for its arrival.

### **The Internal Preparation**

What one needs is an unflinching faith that the Divine will surely descend into him at a moment which He will choose. Sri Aurobindo says that the road of Yoga is long, every inch of ground is to be won against much resistance. All that the *Sādhaka* needs is unshaken determination, firmness of will, inexhaustible patience, singleminded perseverance, absence of nervousness, disappointment and weariness. One has to take and face life and its trials with a quiet mind, a firm courage and an entire reliance on the Divine power. The *Sādhaka* needs cultivating qualities such as peace, tranquillity, calmness and inner imperturbability. The spiritual progress does not and should not depend on outer conditions ; spiritual life consists in living from within without, and it should not take the form of reactions to external stimuli. The inner calmness, tranquillity, poise and contentedness should never be kept dependent on external happenings. No external events should be allowed to disturb the inner state of the deep peace and equality. The outer should be a mere instrument, and should not be allowed at all to compel or dictate our actions and overpower the inner life.

### **The Core of Spirituality**

Thus to be able to receive the Divine power and let it act through us in the things of the outward life Sri Aurobindo recommends a constant aspiration, inner stillness and quietude, absolute faith that what is for the best will happen, no craving for fruits of action, and calm receptivity to receive the Divine power and to allow it to work in one's ideas, desires, will and action. It is not the effort but the surrender which works effectively in the attainment of spiritual delight. Spirituality consists not so much in the external behavioural actions as in the attitude to look at and meet the changing situations, without being inwardly disturbed, confused and excited. All work or activity should be used as a means or instrument for the practice of spiritual attitude and inward experience. Spiritual life concentrates on inwardness and not outward attainments and material gains, nor on the reform of the world in its conventional sense.

### **The Supramental Manifestation**

The aim of the Integral Yoga is to enable men to live a Divine Life on the earth. As it is made clear in the earlier part, Sri Aurobindo does not want the Yogin to escape from the life in the world, but to remain in it and spread divinity in the worldly life itself. The man of divine life is not to shun the mundane life and live in isolation and seclusion; on the contrary he has to do the work of the Divine in the world, and not a work outside or away from it. He envisages a divine life in a divine body. Divinisation of life includes the transformation of human body also. According to the Integral Yoga, the body and its activities, must be accepted as part of the Divine life. It does not advocate the suppres-



sion of the physical body and its normal activities like the ascetics, but it tries to make the body a fit, efficient and effective medium and vehicle for the divine energy for its work. It must be remembered that for the divine life on the earth, earth and matter have not to be and can not be rejected, and have only to be sublimated, and to reveal in themselves the possibilities of the spirit, serve the spirit's highest uses and be transformed into instruments of a greater living.

### The Supermind

By 'Divinisation' Sri Aurobindo means the descent of the supramental consciousness in man. The Supermind is in its very essence truth-consciousness, which is always free from the ignorance which is the foundation of our present natural or evolutionary existence. The supermind is an eternal reality of the Divine Being and the Divine Nature.

The supermind is already involved in the present inconscient part of man and the world. It is not something to evolve as a new emergent quality, as Lloyd Morgan would say. The supermind is already here but is involved, concealed behind this manifest mind, life and matter and not yet acting overtly or in its own power ; if it acts, it is through these interior powers and modified by their characters, and so not yet conceivable. Sri Aurobindo says that it is only by the arrival of the descending supermind upon earth that it can reveal itself in the action of our material, vital and mental parts so that these lower powers can become portions of a total divinised activity of our whole being. Sri Aurobindo asserts in categorical terms that the manifestation of a supramental truth-consciousness is therefore the capital reality that will make the divine life possible. It is when all the movements of thought, impulse and action are governed and directed by a self-existent and luminously automatic truth-consciousness and our whole nature comes to be constituted by it and made of its stuff that the life divine will be complete and absolute.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, the Divine is already there immanent within us, and it is our inmost reality, and it is this reality that we have to manifest. It is that which constitutes the urge towards the divine living and makes necessary the creation of the life divine even in this material existence.

### Descent and Ascent

The manifestation of the supermind will happen in the normal course of evolution of the universe because it is inevitable. It must happen in this world sooner or later. This evolution has two aspects *i.e.*, a Descent from Above and an Ascent from Below. The Descent is a self-revelation of the spirit, an evolution in Nature. But the Ascent is necessarily an effort, a working of Nature, an urge on her side to raise her lower parts by an evolutionary or revolutionary change, conversion or transformation into the divine reality, and it may happen by a process and progress or by a rapid miracle.

The evolutionary process is slow and tedious and it usually needs ages to reach new levels. But the pace of evolution can be made quick and rapid and the realisation of the Supermind can be expedited by another method, and it consists in the practice of Yoga. Sri Aurobindo advocates the supermental Yoga for an easy and speedy descent of the supermind to the lower levels of consciousness and material existence by supporting it with an ardent and sincere *ascent* of the individual self. The descent of the supermind itself becomes a process of divinisation of the mind, vital, body and senses. Sri Aurobindo says that the divine life will give to those who enter into it and possess it. An increasing and finally complete possession of the truth-consciousness and all that it carries in it—will bring with it the realisation of the Divine in self and the Divine in Nature. The God-seeker will then realise in his personal experience the *Sachchidananda*.

### The Supramental Experience

In the supramental experience man will become one with cosmic being and universal Nature ; he will contain the world in himself, in his own cosmic consciousness and feel himself one with all beings ; he will see himself in all and all in himself, and become united and identified with the self which has become all existence. He then feels the Divine Light, Power and Bliss filling every strand of his nature, every cell and atom of his being, flooding his soul and mind and life and body, surrounding him like an illimitable sea and filling the world, suffering all his feeling and sense and experience, making all his life truly and utterly divine. In the instance of such an experience all relations with the Divine will be his. He will live in God and with God, possess God, as it is said even plunge in Him forgetting all separate personality, but not losing it in self-extinction.

### Divine Life

The descent of the supermind will bring to one who receives it, and in the truth-consciousness all the possibilities of the divine life are fulfilled. A divine life on earth need not be a thing apart and exclusive having nothing to do with the common earthly existence ; it will take up human being and human life, transform what can be transformed and spiritualise what can be spiritualised. The supermind has the capacity and power to transform completely the nature and functions of the mind and body and to enhance their powers. Those who can open themselves and remain open to the influence of the supermind will feel in them a divinising change in their thought, will, feeling and acts, and all their resistances will be removed and difficulties will be solved by the pressure of the supramental light and power *from above*, pouring itself into the mind and life-force and the body.

### From Mind to Supermind

This is the meaning of spiritual transformation and divinisation of man. The present man will be then free from the serious limitations and handicaps of his mentality. He will cease to be a mental being and become supramental. He will rise from the status of man to that of superman. Sri Aurobindo says that after the transformation of the mental men the place of the mind will be taken by the supermind. The present or existing human mind is very much limited, imperfect, open at every moment to all kinds of deviations from the truth or missing of the truth, all kinds of errors and openness even to the persuasions of a complete falsehood and perversion of the nature. The present mind is blinded by its own irrational impulses and urges, and has a tendency to be pulled towards inconscience and ignorance. The intellect is prone to interpret the higher knowledge in abstractions and indirect figures. The supermind will be free from all kinds of limitations, and is capable of the free and utmost perfection of itself and its instruments. The new man will be then a qualitatively different man and the new society will naturally be better in every respect since the actions will not be based on and governed by the defective and imperfect nature of the mind and ego of the present man. Since it will be a level of superior life and consciousness. Sri Aurobindo chooses to describe it as *Super-Mind* and *Super-Man*. Such a change into supermind will happen not only individuals but also in the entire human or species.

### The Future Humanity

Sri Aurobindo says that the descent of the Supermind into the earthly existence will make tremendous changes in the life of man on the earth. The supramental change will exercise an immense influence on mankind as a whole, and it will bring about far reaching consequences. The Supermind will effect an uplifting and transforming change in the nature and function of the Mind itself. All the forms of thinking, willing and living of man will change fundamentally. A





new human (Superhuman) race will emerge. The supermind will be the directive and dictating power, and the mind will serve only as its channel and vessel for putting into action the decisions of the Supermind. The Mind of man will rise to higher levels and will act in such ways which are beyond the imagination of the present man. Sri Aurobindo says that the Supramental will be radically and qualitatively of a different kind. No effort to understand and describe it with the present available mental equipment of man will be of use to conceive it. Therefore Sri Aurobindo says that it is supra-intellectual, and no attempt should be made to mentalise, intellectualise and conceptualize the supramental. It has to be felt in a unique kind of experience, which too is beyond concepts and language.

The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo thus aims at transforming radically the basic structure of the human body, mind and ego by trying to bring about an ascent of the individual soul to the Supreme Self, which too in response to its earnestness, descends down and takes the possession of the entire human life, ego, mind and body, and reveals its Light, Knowledge and Power in and through individual beings, and thus seeks to transform and create a new race of supramentalised beings.

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You are aware of the body, while waking. You are not aware of the body in deep sleep. Still you remained in sleep. After waking up you hold the body and say, 'I cannot realise the self.' Did you say so in your sleep? Because you were undivided then, you did not say so. Now that you are contracted within the limits of your body, you say, 'I have not realised.'

Why do you feel yourself contracted with body and then become miserable? Be of your true nature and happy. Find out wherefrom this 'I' arises. Then the self is realised. Then this 'I' will disappear and the self will remain.

—Ramana Maharshi