UNIT 7: AUROBINDO'S SUPERMIND

UNIT STRUCTURE

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7.1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- explain the nature of Supermind.
- describe the various types of ignorance.
- explain the triple stages of Supermind

7.2. INTRODUCTION

Among the many remarkable men born in the latter half of the 19th century who tried to mould India's destiny Sri Aurobindo Ghose was one of them. He was a contemporary of Mahatma Gandhi, an admirer of Swami Vivekananda, a colleague of Tilak and the idol of Rabindranath Tagore. His original name is Arabinda Akryod Ghose. He was a non-academic Indian philosopher. But the philosophical thought and ideas contained in the teachings of some social, political, cultural and religious leaders of outstanding ability and consecrated life influenced him strongly. Sri Aurobindo is the exponent of ancient Indian Philosophy. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy carries on it the stamp of a number of influences. He was well acquainted with classical western philosophy and idealistic philosophies of modern times as well as classical Indian philosophy

specifically Advaita Vedanta and Yoga. All these influences are reviewed and reorganized in the thoughts of Sri Aurobindo. As a result his philosophy is the blending of both classical and contemporary thoughts of east and west. We find a new synthetic, comprehensive vision of Reality in his thought. His philosophy can also be called as Integral Advaitism. It is said as Advaita as Sri Aurobindo regards Brahman or the Absolute as one and the fundamental reality. It is Integral for it does not deny the reality of any of the aspects of existence.

In the broad sense Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can be called idealistic. Firstly, it conceives reality as spiritual and secondly, it fixes up an ideal for mankind towards which all human efforts have to be directed. But his philosophy can never be said as Monism. According to Haridas Choudhury, "The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo may aptly be described as integral non-dualism (purna-advaita) or integral idealism (purna-vijnana) or integralism (purnavada)." This non-dualism is different from rationalistic Monism which is based on a conceptually formulated, determinate principle of unity. In fact in a principle of integralism, reality has to be indeterminate and even monism can not be attributed to it. It is called Integral as it both aspects and sublimates the opposition between the lower nature and the higher nature.

The material out of which Aurobindo tried to evolve his grand system was in a sense much richer, vaster and more varied than that of any other compatriots. His mastery of Greek and Latin classics not only enabled him to understand by comparison the classical roots of Indian thought, Indian epic and mythologies, into all of which he dived deep with a receptive mind and out of which he gathered new and precious ideas. He translated, annotated, reinterpreted and expounded many of the creative and non-technical sources of Indian philosophy—the Vedas, the upanisads, the Bhagawad-Gita and the later epics. He explores an integral point of view which would harmonize the divergent trends of Indian thought, and synthesize them also with the valuable elements of western thought. He builds, with rare confidence, on the divergent spiritual trends, the perennial streams of western and Indian thought.

Besides these his main work on philosophy is *The Life Divine*, *The Human Cycle, Lights on Yoga, Synthesis of Yoga, The Ideal of Human Unity, Savitri* etc.

The fundamental basis upon which the whole structure of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo stands is the recognition of the reality of both spirit and matter. He is aware that Materialism and Spiritualism are the two prevalent and rival theories that have attempted to explain the world in their own ways. His philosophy synthesizes or integrates the two. Either spirit or matter can give the human mind only some sense of ultimate reality for a time being. Thus it must seek always a complete affirmation that can be found only by a luminous conciliation. Here all the conflicts and the contradictions of existence which represent the central truth can be synthesized. In reality both matter and spirit are the two modes of manifestation of the one ultimate reality. According to Aurobindo, the fact is that matter and spirit are like the two aspects of the same thing. If matter is to ascend to the spirit, there must be corresponding descent of the spirit in matter. The material can not be completely false; even if it has to be spiritualized that it has to be given some status and reality. Ancient Indian philosophy has committed the mistake that it does not realize that every evolution must have a corresponding involution. That is why Sri Aurobindo tries to work out an integral view in which both spirit and matter are given their dues.

Sri Aurobindo regards Ultimate Reality as, in its essence, utterly transcendent which can not be described. This Ultimate Reality is above and beyond all that is thinkable or conceivable. Creation is the expression of the essential unity of Reality. In order to understand the nature of Reality, it is essential to consider the levels or the cords of Being. So the cords of Being are the expressions of the Reality viewed from the standpoint of creation. Aurobindo talks about eight such principles. These are Existence, Consciousness-force, Bliss, Supermind, Mind, Psyche, Life and Matter. The first three principles are the triune principle of Saccidananda or the Ultimate Reality. The first four belongs to the higher hemisphere and the last four to the lower hemisphere. The lower

hemisphere seeks to represent the stages that evolution has been able to reach and the higher hemisphere seeks to represent the stages into which evolution is going to enter.

7.3 AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF SUPERMIND

The human mind is the highest form of existence in the universe. The philosophical system, began by Aurobindo, is started with this belief. He says that the Ultimate Reality does not descend directly into the human consciousness or mind. In order to connect the Absolute (Super-Consciousness) with Mind (ordinary consciousness) a bond is essential between them. This bond is known as Supermind according to Aurobindo. Supermind belongs to the higher hemisphere and yet it is the end and the ideal of mind—that which mind is going to be. As a result it must have complete consciousness of Saccidananda. Similarly it is not mind itself but it is its culmination and fulfillment. It is only through the instrumentality of Supermind that Mind can raise to the Absolute and the Absolute can descend to the mind. It is creative and comprehensive. The Supermind develops the three aspects of the Absolute or Saccidananda without separating them. These are

- It has the knowledge of the One but is able to draw out of the One its hidden multitude.
- It manifests the Many but does not lose itself in its differentiation.
- It contains and upholds the diffusion of the One into the Many and prevents it from being a real disintegration.

Regarding Supermind Aurobindo says, "It is a power of conscious force expressing real Being, born out of real Being and partaking of its nature. It is neither a child of the Void nor a weaver of fictions. It is conscious Reality throwing itself into mutable forms of its own imperishable and immutable substance." The Supermind is the consummation of Mind. It is all that Mind strives for but can never attain. The Mind is not the principle of knowledge that we suppose it to be. It is merely a 'faculty for the seeking of knowledge, for expressing as much

as it can gain in certain forms of relative thought'. The Mind merely interprets the truth of universal existence for practical uses. It is a fall from the Supermind and its salvation lies in 'climbing back' to its original condition.

The nature of Supermind must through light on two aspects—

a) Supermind as Truth-Consciousness-as the spiritual principle having complete knowledge of Saccidananda and
b) Supermind as the ideal and the culmination of mind.

These two aspects are discussed below—

a) Supermind as Truth-Consciousness: Reality, in the philosophy of Aurobindo, is known as Saccidananda. It is expressed by him as the Creator, the Real-idea and the Supreme Truth-Consciousness. In Saccidananda we posit three entities and unite them in order to arrive at a trinity. These are Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

The universe is an expression of consciousness which although manifesting itself in the multiplicity. And through this consciousness creation essentially sees things as basically one. However it differentiates the One without dividing it. That is why it is called Truth-Consciousness. It is also called Supramental Consciousness which is differed from mental consciousness. Mind essentially makes divisions and thereby creates appearances contrary to the nature of real. Supermind neither creates divisions nor gives false pictures. It never misses the real unitary nature of the One and therefore it is called Truth-Consciousness.

It is already mentioned that Supermind is also named by Aurobindo as the Creator or the Creative idea. But it is not like the Brahman of *Advaita Vedanta* which is only real. And *Isvara*, *Maya* and the world-all become unreal. Therefore Sri Aurobindo feels that the creative principle must not be viewed as something over and above the one, but as something which is able to do justice both to the oneness of the one and to the world. Saccidananda is pure, conscious and blissful existence—beyond space and time. Creation, on the other hand, is a

movement or a development in space and time. There must be a link in between the two as it is capable of explaining both the unity of the one and its development. It is not anything different from Saccidananda. It is its own consciousness, its own idea. As pure consciousness, it is unitary, as an Idea, it is capable of development. For that reason Aurobindo says that Supermind is the vast self-extension of the Brahman that contains and develops on the one hand and that by the Idea it develops the triune principle of existence, consciousness and bliss out of their indivisible unity on the other hand. It differentiates them but not divide. So creation starts when Supermind differentiates the original unity of the three principles. It is Saccidananda itself that itself that is this principle (of Supermind) but it is not resting in its pure, infinite, invariable consciousness, but proceeding out of this primal poise….into a movement which is its form of energy and instrument of cosmic creation.
b) Supermind as the ideal and the culmination of mind: Supermind is the culmination and consummation of mind. Sri Aurobindo here creates a distinction between Mind and Supermind. It consists in the difference between their manners of apprehending reality, mind, by its very nature. It is like the relation of part and whole. Generally Mind creates divisions not only between the knower and the known, but also in the objects that it apprehends. On account of this mind is not capable of having knowledge of the reality. Reality can be known only as one. Mind first breaks the original unity of the object of its knowledge and then tries to synthesize the broken parts again into a whole. That is why the mind fails to 'know' in the proper sense of the word 'know'.

The difference between mind and Supermind lies in the fact that mind is nothing but an urge to realize the Supramental level. As Supermind has already descended into mind so mind is capable of spiritual activities. By some means Supermind is already present in the mind. That is why Aurobindo says that mind is actually a fall from Supermind. This fall is a necessary condition of creation as it represents the descent of the spirit. That makes it a precondition of evolution also.

This transmission of mind to Supermind is not abrupt or sudden. Mind belongs to the lower hemisphere and it has to ascend to the higher hemisphere. Hence there must be some intermediary steps through which this transition will be brought about. These steps are Mind, Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Over Mind, and Supermind. The passage from mind to Supermind is a passage from Nature to Super-Nature and as such mind must pass through some stages which would demonstrate the continuous nature of this transition.

Mind is essentially a consciousness which measures, limits and cut out forms of things from indivisible wholes and treats them as if each were a separate element. We have seen that Reality can not be known by such a process that mind somehow has to rise above its normal activities and try to cultivate some capacity for unification. The first condition for this transformation is that mind must somehow become aware of its own capacities and must be able to possess them. The necessity of such an observing intelligence which is conscious of its own actions is called by Aurobindo 'the Higher Mind'. Higher Mind is the spiritual parent of our conceptive mental ideation. In the Higher Mind there is no need of the analytical activities that mind normally performs and there is no need of ratiocination. So Higher Mind is a self-aware activity towards integration. Here Truths are not established by Logic and so they are sought to be seen in their pre-reflective unity. In this stage there is the initial attempt to break away from the bondage of logic and rational analysis and to enter into the realm of the ideal.

In the process of transformation from Mind to Supermind there is no need of a mind of higher thought, but a mind of spiritual light. Light is essentially illuminative. Through gradual steps thought process reveals its object piecemeal but there is the necessity of a sudden and a direct insight. And the stage in which mind can ascend is Illumined Mind. It does not work by thought, but by vision. Here thought is only a subordinate movement performed in order to make effortless insight. It only creates a representative-image of Truth. Higher Mind catches something of the

substance of the Truth also. As higher Mind brings a greater consciousness into the being through the spiritual power of its Truth so that the illumined Mind brings in a still greater consciousness through a Truth-sight and Truth-light and its seeing and seizing power.

But these two stages of the ascent of mind can get their authority and fulfillment only by a reference to a third level i.e. Intuition. Intuition is conceived as a power of consciousness. When the consciousness of the subject meets with the consciousness in the object, it sees, feels and vibrates with the knowledge of that which it contacts. According to Sri Aurobindo, Intuition is the beginning of knowledge as it brings message from the higher or spiritual realm. Intuition has four fold power viz. a power of revelatory Truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or Truth-hearing, a power of Truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance and a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth. These are the fourfold potencies of intuition. It is the capacity to see Truth and to hear it in its organized form in an act of direct and immediate revelation. Aurobindo admits that Intuition can perform all the functions or reason and intelligence, with the difference that its grasp of the object is direct and not mediate like reason.

The faculty into which Intuition has to develop is called the Over Mind. It is described by Aurobindo as 'a super conscient cosmic mind in direct contact with the supramental consciousness. Such a description of Over Mind emphasizes the two sides of its nature which is a kind of cosmic consciousness and it is in contact with the Supermind. Cosmic consciousness implies that the consciousness which has been ascending through the three previous stages. The previous stages including the stage of Intuition are not cosmic in nature but the knowledge of over mind becomes global and cosmic by going beyond the representations of consciousness in particular centre.

Over Mind is the proper link between mind and Supermind. It performs the mental activities in a spiritual manner and its cosmic consciousness is the consequence of its affinity with Supermind. It has been limited to individual's consciousness. And due to this limitation the intuitive

consciousness does not have universality about it. Over mind is capable of reflecting the universal light and that is why its consciousness is cosmic. But Over Mind is not Supermind. In spite of being super conscient and cosmic it lacks the integral character of Supermind i.e. it can not apprehend the Supreme Truth—the Absolute-as a unity.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: What is the original name of Sri Aurobindo?

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Q 2: What is the fundamental reality, according to Aurobindo?

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Q 3: Mention the significant work of Sri Aurobindo on Philosophical thought

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Q 4: What are the three aspects of the Absolute or Saccidananda developed by the Supermind?

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Q 5: According to Sri Aurobindo, "Intuition has four fold power." What are these four powers?

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7.4 TRIPLE STATUS OF SUPERMIND

Supermind descends down to mind and mind seeks to ascend back to its supramental status. The process of Involution goes down from Mind to psychic, Life, Matter and even to Nescience. Again the process of Evolution is a reverse process from Nescience to Supermind.

But Supermind can not have the same poise through out the entire process of Involution and Evolution. Here Aurobindo speaks about its three general status or poise. These are nothing but the three different sessions of its cosmic and spiritual consciousness. Through these poises we are to understand Supermind as the Creator. The integral status of Supermind consists in its pure unitary consciousness, for that is a timeless and space less concentration of Saccidananda itself. Every status of Supermind has a definite relation with the world-process.

The first stage is the state when unity is ready to be disturbed. It is the state of 'Pure Ideation' Aurobindo gives here an analogy to understand the nature of this poise. Just as thoughts and images that occur to our minds are not separate existences to us, so to this poise of Supermind, individuals and the world are not separate existences. Just as thoughts and images appear to us as forms of consciousness, so are all forms to this primary poise of Supermind.

The second stage is the stage in which the Supermind appears to be expressing its consciousness in all forms. It realizes itself as one in many and again as many in one. The process of Creation has now begun and Supermind has to come out of its state of inalienable unity. Here jivatma is distinguished from the universal Divine. The individual jivatma would express and realize itself in an individual centre of unity while the universal Divine realizes itself in all soul-forms universally. In fact the universal play in which the one has manifested itself in many though the multiplicity is regarded as having a unity behind. In the first stage everything was regarded as unity and in the second poise the multiplicity appears and still in the multiplicity unity is received.

In the third poise Supermind has to project itself in the movement and in a way involved in it. The first poise is the casual stage—*Karana-avastha* -in which the play has begun. The poise is understood as the fully manifested state—the *Purna-Vyakta-avastha* -in which creative processes are fully at work and consciousness, is expressed in all forms and centers.

The three poises can be described differently in a different way also. The first poise is the stage in which the unitary character of the supramental consciousness is still intact, though it is potentially ready to be differentiated. In the second poise, the process of differentiation starts and multiplicity makes it appearance. And in the third stage this multiplicity is fully expressed. But the urge towards unity is always there in all the poises since consciousness of integral unity represents the basic character of Supermind.

7.5 TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION OF SUPERMIND

In the ascending process of evolution it begins with matter as having descended to the level of matter consciousness feel that the veiling or the closing up has been carried to the farthest limit. Consciousness made itself the prisoner of matter and forces matter to take up the upward gradient. As a result life is born that signifies the first sprouting of consciousness in matter. But consciousness is not satisfied and still ascending higher to higher. The next step in evolution must necessarily be an ascent to the level of Supermind. It can be achieved through a three fold process of transformation. These transformations would first require a complete and radical change of our terrestrial existence—of the material, the vital and the mental and it require then a final transformation resulting from the combined forces of one's own efforts. These triple transformations consists the stages namely Psychic transformation, Spiritual transformation and Supramental transformation. These three can be stated below—

Psychic transformation: The unfolding of the psychic soul is the first step towards supramental change. The psychic entity is the subliminal aspects of our being. Psychic change consists in the removal of the veil which hides our psyche or soul. Aurobindo describes the psyche as 'the ever-pure flame of the divinity in things' which remains undimmed through all the experiences of our life. It is necessary that the light of psyche should flood the whole of our being and permeate life, mind and

matter within us. This is accomplished through psychic change. In this regard Sri Aurobindo attaches great importance to the education of emotions since it is only through such education that we feel the pressure need for a psychic transformation. Yoga is such an education leading to the Awakening of the soul within us.

Spiritual Transformation: Psychic change has to be supplemented by the spiritual change, the descent of a higher light into our being. By the process of psychic transformation matter, life and mind are purified but there must also be an opening out of the soul to spiritual intimations. The psychic being must be turned towards whatever seems to belong to a higher reality. This is spiritual transformation. When the soul is awakened and is able to guide and regulate life and mind, it must try to bring about a spiritual change in its conscious life.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the soul may attempt to achieve this contact through the thinking mind as its instrument. It may also put a psychic impression on the intellect and higher mind and intuitional intelligence and turn them in that direction. As this transformation will become more and more perfect, the spiritualized mind will move beyond all forms and figures, beyond all ideas of good and evil or true of false. Such a spiritual consciousness will tend towards the apprehension of that which transcends all dualities.

Supramental Transformation: Spiritual transformation leads the soul to the apprehension of spiritual unity. But this transformation does not give us the integral transformation. The psychic transformation is replaced by a spiritual change on the high summits, but it is not the complete divine dynamism of nature. For this purpose supramental transformation is necessary. According to Sri Aurobindo, psychic transformation and spiritual transformation uplift man to higher reaches of consciousness. Nevertheless if the soul is left only with these, there will only be a vision of unity above us, not a realization of it. And as it happens with every vision of it will tend to grow fainter and weaker. This happens with all cases of intuitional experiences. So the vision must be transformed into a realization. So a descent of higher consciousness is necessary.

Aurobindo says, "The Truth consciousness or Supermind finding evolutionary Nature ready has to descend into her and enable her to liberate the Supramental principle within her". The Supramental presence in matter, life and mind will change entirely the nature of the material, the vital and the mental.



7.6 LET US SUM UP

- The philosophy of Aurobindo is the meeting point of both Indian and Western thought.
- In his philosophy the concept of Supermind is a very imperative concept.
- It is the principle of active will and knowledge superior to Mind and creation of the world. It is the intermediary power and state of being between that self-possession of the One and this flux of the Many.
- Supermind is the mediator between mind or ordinary consciousness and Absolute or Supreme consciousness. Through Supermind Mind can ascend to the Absolute and Absolute descends to the mind.
- Supermind is exhibited by Aurobindo as Truth Consciousness through which the reality of Saccidananda is understood. But Mind and Supermind are not the same.
- The basic concept found in the philosophy Aurobindo is the evolution of the world and of man, through different stages, points to the divine destiny of man.
- A harmonious and integral culture of his physical, vital and mental potentialities alone enables and divinizing his total being. Man can thus become a superman, thinking, feeling and acting in unison with the Divine.



7.7 FURTHER READING

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7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: Sri Aurobindo Ghose

Ans to Q No 2: Brahman or Absolute

Ans to Q No 3: The life Divine, The Human Cycle, Lights on Yoga, Synthesis of Yoga, The Ideal of Human Unity and Savitri

Ans to Q No 4: It has the knowledge of the one but is able to draw out of the one its hidden multitude.

2) It manifests the many, but does not lose itself in its differentiation.

3) It contains and upholds the diffusion of the one into the Many and prevents it from being a real disintegration.

Ans to Q No 5: 1) A power of revelatory truth seeing

2) A power of inspiration and truth hearing

3) A power of truth-touch

4) A power of true and automatie discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth



7.9 MODEL QUESTIONS

A) Very Short Questions

Q.1. What is the original name of Sri Aurobindo?

Q.2. His philosophy is known as___idealism. (Fill in the Blanks)

Q.3. Is his conception of Reality a combination of matter and spirit?

Q.4. Name one of Aurobindo's famous book.

Q.5. What are the three basic principles of Ultimate Reality?

B. Short questions (Answer in about 100-150 words)

Q.1. Write short notes on

a) Supermind as Truth-Consciousness

b) Integral Idealism

c) Explain the role of triple status in Supermind.

d) Write the name of eight principles of Reality or Saccidananada.

C. Long Questions (Answer in about 300-500 words)

Q.1. Explain triple transformation of Supermind.

Q.2. Elaborate the concept of Supermind.

Q.3. Describe the movement of Mind to Supermind.

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