

Lectures On Sri Aurobindo's
The Life Divine

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INTRODUCTION

Even though many people regard *The Life Divine* as a book of philosophy, it is actually a book about LIFE. Knowledge is power and the knowledge in this book carries the power to divinize life.

Sri Aurobindo said that India is destined to become the guru of the world. But before the spiritual greatness of India can emerge, the country has to become prosperous. The Mother's Service Society started its activities in the village of Ramapuram, where it had acquired 123 acres of barren land in a place that had barely enough water for drinking. After the Society discovered and developed the ground water potential in this place, agricultural income on the project lands rose more than ten times higher per acre than the level prevalent in the village. At that time the average income in Ramapuram was Rs. 150 per acre per year. Today, the average income in the village is more than 100 times what it was then. On the initiative of the Society, the first village adoption program by a nationalized bank was introduced in Ramapuram in 1969. From 1969 to 1980, more than 100,000 villages throughout India were adopted by nationalized banks for development. Ramapuram was the very first village in the country to be adopted by a commercial bank. This is the result of a work done in service to The Mother. Mother's aspiration and force are there, not just for the prosperity of a particular village or individual but for the whole country and the whole world.

What Sri Aurobindo is talking about in this book is the power to change life, to divinize life. That power liberated India from British rule and that power can make India prosperous. And that is also the power which can create luck for each one of you. It is not a question of Mother creating luck in your life. Rather it is YOU who can create luck in your own life. Each one of you can direct the spiritual power we refer to as Mother's Force for any higher goal that you choose. The Ramapuram achievement

shows that this power is available to us and that the power is real. The only limitations on how that power expresses are our own limitations, the limitations that we impose on it.

Coming from the USA with a Western education, it has not been easy for me to accept the idea that we can command a spiritual power that can change the world. Yet during the past 30 years, I have seen over and over again what that power can do. *The Life Divine* has helped me to understand what I already know from first-hand experience. Sri Aurobindo explains in *The Life Divine* what that power is, what it can do for us, and how we can make that power active in our lives. As you go through the book, you will find a confirmation of everything that you already know.

I have talked to many leading intellectuals in the world who have tried to read *The Life Divine* and quickly put it down as too difficult to understand. I met a world-renowned British biologist who had spent some time living in South India to discuss with him some of Sri Aurobindo's ideas. When I asked him if he had ever read any of Sri Aurobindo's works, he pointed to a copy of *The Life Divine* on his bookshelf. He explained that after reading the first chapter, he fell asleep and could not proceed further in the book. He did not fall asleep because he lacked the intellectual capacity to understand what is written. He fell asleep because the power in the book is so great, that unless there is a receptivity to receive what He is trying to deliver, we cannot read it. Sri Aurobindo is not trying to deliver explanations. He is trying to give us the power to change life. And when the receptivity is not great enough for that, we fall asleep.

This book has been created for the spiritual perfection of life on earth. The first step for that is the full flowering and prosperity of life as we know it now. Mother says that the potential for prosperity is infinite. That is a big word. How can anything be infinite? We grow up thinking about limitations. We want to buy something. Then we look at our bank account,

and find there is not enough money. There is not enough rain sometimes, or enough food. There is not enough clothing for many people. How can anything in the world be infinite? Yet Mother says we have the capacity to create infinitely. That capacity is a divine capacity. That is the process Sri Aurobindo describes in this book.

INFINITE DEVELOPMENT

In some sense, the 20th Century has been a period in which the world has created infinitely. Back in 1900 there were only 8000 cars manufactured each year in the USA, and they were purchased only by the very wealthiest people. Today more than 16 million cars are produced in the USA every year. All the prosperity which we think of as American has been created during the past 90 years. In 1900 there was only one electric power plant in the entire USA. Today every nook and corner of the country enjoys unlimited power supply. Think about what has happened to life expectancy for people all over the world. Even in India the changes have been very dramatic. How has all of this been created? What has happened in the world that in a half a century, the vast majority of human beings have suddenly gained access to such vast material plenty? Today one country can produce the entire world's requirement of cars, steel, or computer chips. In 1900 the biggest industries in the USA were producing horseshoes and hair pins. The same was true in India before 1947. All this prosperity that we take for granted now has only been here for a short time.

What changed in this century that made these miraculous achievements possible? One explanation is that better technology has spread rapidly around the globe. But who created this technology and where does it come from? Is it some kind of limited store which will get depleted? Technology is the creation of human beings. Is there any limit to our capacity to

improve the means we use for our own development? I do not think so.

Another factor that is responsible for this development is education. Back in 1880 there was only one Ph.D. awarded in the entire USA. In 1990, there were 10,000 students studying for post graduate degrees in the USA just from South India, and more than 30,000 Ph.D.'s were awarded in a single year. What has happened? A phenomenal spread of education has taken place all over the world. All the accomplishments of modern life are based on this foundation of education. Is there any limit to the capacity of individuals to educate themselves? Are we capable of exhausting that limit? The quality of education, even in American schools, is still about a hundred years behind the times. What about in India, where a child can go to school in the rural areas for six years and still not be able to read? What will happen when we adopt the most advanced educational methods available, such as the ones that the Raghavans are applying at Arasavanangkadu in Tiruvarur District where children of illiterate parents learn to read Tamil and English by the age of 4? Is there any limit to the prosperity India can create?

Another factor responsible for development is the spread of freedom, of democracy. Political freedom itself is a very new phenomenon that spread to most countries only during the 20th Century. Democracy has been spreading like wildfire over the last 25 years. Even in democratic countries many individuals, racial and religious groups still lack full social freedom. We can foresee a time when freedom extends everywhere. A tremendous amount of energy is released when people have that kind of freedom. Of course, to fully utilize that freedom, people have to be educated. Is there any limit to our capacity to give greater freedom to people?

Development of social organization is another factor that has infinitely multiplied our creative opportunities. Money, banking, insurance, stock exchanges, pension funds, corporations, and the Internet are just a few of the myriad new social organizations

and systems that have extended opportunities and prosperity to the masses. In a similar way, think how much development is the result of enhancing the skills of the population. Today India is graduating 300,000 engineers a year, which is five times more than the total number of engineers produced each year in the USA. Huge numbers of them are now working as software engineers in India and abroad. Is there any limit to the potential for expanding educational programmes that impart employable skills?

When we talk about infinite potential, even for material prosperity, let us try to imagine what has infinitely been created in the last 50 years and what could be created in the next 50 years if technology, education, organization and systems can be fully availed of. If India + Systems + Skills = USA, where will the world be if we fully organize and educate ourselves?

So far I have been speaking of what can be achieved without even referring to the power of Spirit. The idea is that wealth can be created infinitely. Based on the experience of the past century, that seems very plausible. Who has created all this wealth? We are the creators of that wealth. How can we overcome the limits that we place on ourselves, so that we can create anything and everything that we would like to create in our own lives? That is the knowledge contained in *The Life Divine*.

Over the last decade, the Indian Government has been liberalizing its policies to attract foreign investment. The country needs tens of billion dollars for investment in power, roads, telecommunications, etc. Many believe that if the Government could get \$50 billion of additional investment, India could really take off. Today in India, apart from about Rs. 1,200,000 crores or about \$250 billion in the banking system, there is probably another Rs. 600,000 crores or about \$125 billion or more held by the public as savings in the form of gold. In addition the country is holding more than \$120 billion in foreign currency reserves, mostly US dollars. Why should India be preoccupied with attracting foreign investment of \$50

billion, when the country has ten times that amount available for investment? Where is the limitation? It is only a limitation in our minds, a limitation of attitude. Prosperity is a question of attitude.

100 True Devotees

If a hundred people were willing to receive this knowledge that is power, a supramental knowledge which includes power, this power can be used to generate unprecedented prosperity. If we receive what Sri Aurobindo is trying to give us in this book, we will get the knowledge with a power for fulfillment in our own lives. If we receive this knowledge with the right attitude and meet some minimum conditions, these hundred people could create 100 times more prosperity in their lives, whether it is 100 times the money, 100 times the joy, or 100 times the harmony. The minimum condition to be one of those hundred people is that you must be a true devotee; not a sadhak who renounces life, but a true devotee who accepts life and aspires to uplift it. You should be eager to do anything that Mother says is right and unwilling to do anything you know that Mother says is wrong. You should have real faith in Mother. Real faith is to rely on Her power to accomplish, rather than having faith in your own capacities. You should feel a deep trust and happy contentment when you put yourself in Mother's hands. The true devotee is one who never complains, as Mother says in *Psychic Education*. If you have the power to change someone, then change him; but if you do not, then at least keep quiet. The true devotee creates harmony wherever he goes. And the true devotee is one who has no debts, has already accomplished at the highest level in whatever field he works, and has already solved all his personal problems. Imagine what would be the impact of a hundred devotees invoking this power?

Power of Unfailing Success

The Life Divine tells us how we can transform ourselves into Supramental beings. The minimum is that it can eliminate problems of all descriptions, giving us peace and a sense of contentment. Between this lofty spiritual goal and the minimum material goal, there is an intermediate position. This is the power for unfailing success.

The process that the Divine uses to create the universe is the same process that we use to accomplish in life. The difference is that we do it unconsciously, and the Divine does it consciously with perfect execution. So the minimum we can receive is to apply that power for unfailing success. That requires full energy and hard work. It requires vital softness and humility, no matter who we are dealing with. It requires a mental organization, meaning that we organize our thoughts and our work so that we use our time and capacities to the maximum. And it requires spiritual equality, the capacity not to react, to remain unprovoked by what comes to us from life. When we receive things without reaction, we acquire the power to accomplish anything we want in life.

Evolution of the Spirit

Sri Aurobindo has expressed many original ideas in this book. Tradition says that the Spirit is immutable, unchanging. He says the Spirit, the Divine itself, is evolving and is becoming something more than it was before. The evolution of the Spirit is His original conception. That evolution is not happening up there or out there, but rather it is happening within each of us. We are the Divine in the process of evolution.

Then you may be wondering, which part of me is the evolving Spirit? At what point or in what aspect is it evolving? Sri Aurobindo says it is evolving at the tether ends of our personality and temperament. That is the one part of us which

we would least like to discuss with anyone else. The spirit is evolving precisely at the points where we feel challenged and not totally in control of ourselves, points at which somebody says something unpleasant or does not acknowledge us as we would wish. Those are the points where life touches our temperament. We like to think that we are very calm and generous, but somehow there is always one person who knows how to irritate us, how to disturb our calm thoughts. If only you do not meet that person, you think you are master of yourself. You have to understand that it is the Divine coming to you through that person. It is the Divine evolving in us at that point, seeking and acquiring an experience and mastery which we do not possess. All great acts originate in the surface mind. That is the concentrated point at which evolution occurs. That is the place where this power will generate the maximum results. That is the place where we have to apply the knowledge in *The Life Divine* in order to acquire the power of unflinching success. It is not how sweetly we feel in our meditation or how pleasantly we behave when we are in a good mood that matters. It is at these tether ends that the real work on earth is happening. That is Mother's work.

Sri Aurobindo says that our incapacity to receive and express this infinite force is not based on any limitation in the force. It is due to our unwillingness. It is not Mother's limitation. It is the limitation in our attitudes and behavior at the tether ends of personality that imposes the limits. Mother said at one time, "When people come before me, they push all their unwanted things behind them, and they think I do not see them. But I see all those things just behind them, peeping over their shoulders!" That is where the work has to be done.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

On Darshan days, we receive that power unconsciously. Through the knowledge in *The Life Divine*, we can receive the power consciously. There are thousands of key thoughts in *The Life Divine* that can elevate our lives. Encyclopedia Britannica may be considered by many the greatest compendium of human knowledge, summarizing in 30 volumes the cumulative knowledge of humanity from the beginning of recorded history. *The Life Divine* in 1070 pages contains infinitely more, at least in essence, than can be found in the Britannica. If you take any of the ideas in the book and apply that knowledge, its power has the capacity to multiply results many times. It contains everything we need to go further in any field and takes us to the next frontier in any area of life in which we want to apply it.

This is a book many people think is for philosophers or yogis, but every one of us has the capacity to understand everything in the book if we relate to it from the center of our own lives. We all raise families, educate our children, get jobs, and carry out so many tasks. These are all acts of creation. A young man grows up with the aspiration to become an entrepreneur, an engineer, a physician or inventor and realizes that by his actions. A poor teacher has a life-long dream to build a house of his own and returns from his deathbed to achieve it. An American youth seeking emotional fulfillment is drawn to India where he finds it. An Indian youth seeking higher prosperity finds it in Silicon Valley, California. If you relate to the book from that point of view, as creators of your own lives, you will see that everything in the book is understandable. Understanding issues from the centers of action.

The book consists of 56 chapters. In each chapter, typically the first paragraph summarizes the entire chapter. That is the way he writes. In most cases, the last sentence of each paragraph summarizes the entire paragraph. Once he has written and fully

explained something in a chapter, he will refer to that entire thought as one or two sentences in later chapters. He is able to abridge whole chapters into one or two sentences as a key idea later on. Each chapter is so rich that you can take any single one and read it as a book on its own out of context. Each of the parts of this book is a whole in itself. While the truths He expresses are Spiritual, He has addressed them to our intellect.

When reading *The Life Divine*, wherever you look or dwell there opens up an infinite ocean. Anyone who wants to master this book can become a multiple genius. Drawing on the knowledge that is there in this book, we can see beyond what professionals see in their own field, for their field. For anyone who wants to go to the top of their field, in multiple fields, this book will give the power. The leaders in each field know where they have not been able to go. A perceptive devotee excels the professional in his own field. This is so because the devotee sees from many more dimensions than the professional, who sees only from his professional perspective.

This book is also full of humor. It may be understated, but it is humorous nonetheless. One of the points in *The Life Divine* that I enjoyed the most is where he refers to scientists as magicians. The scientist uses his formulas to explain the universe in the same way the magician chants his mantras to get results. Science tells us what things are, but it does not really tell us why things are the way they are. We have a simple magical formula that is called H₂O. The formula explains what water is, but why do you get water from a combination of two invisible gases? When you mix one invisible gas with another invisible gas, you get something you can drink and which freezes at zero degrees centigrade. Science does not tell us why. Science does not tell us why a tree comes from a seed. Every cell divides and the tree grows by a cell dividing into two and then those two cells dividing again, etc. Since we have been brought up in a scientific culture, we accept these formulas and think they are self-evident and self-explanatory. But we really do not know

why they are the way they are. Leading thinkers in science will even tell you they do not know why these things happen. So, science is like the cosmic magician's formula.

And what about us, as devotees? We get into trouble and we call Mother. The problem is solved and we magically get a result. Do we really understand how it happens? When we call Mother and we do not get the result, do we understand why it does not happen? That is the knowledge given in this book. The knowledge He is offering is what we can understand with our minds in our own lives. He wants us to understand from our own experience that all in the book is true. Understanding comes when we are able to take every word of the book as literally true.

It was at one time considered that French would become the universal language of the world. In the late 1890's Sri Aurobindo began writing in English and today English has become the universal language. And it becomes more so every day. English has acquired the character of His personality, which is universal. Everything They took up and touched has that power of spreading. The language He uses in *The Life Divine* carries the stamp of his personality. He has actually grown the language to express his thoughts. For example, He uses the word 'silence', which according to the dictionary means absence of noise. But He uses it in the sense of absence of thought and absence of action. He not only does it with English words, but with Sanskrit as well. He uses the Sanskrit word samadhi, which usually means withdrawing from the physical world and going towards nirvikalpa samadhi, but by samadhi he means a waking samadhi, an experience we have with our eyes open. It is a new conception. To Him new means wider. His wideness is wholeness. Words in His handling have grown in the conceptual dimension.

The book also contains many new and original phrases. One of my favorites is "all-inclusive concentration." What do we mean by concentration? Instead of having a scattered field of

attention, we narrow the field down to focus on one thing. But He talks about having an 'all-inclusive' concentration that does not exclude anything, because that is the character of the Divine consciousness. The book includes other original phrases such as 'memory of the future', 'invasion of the Infinite', and 'logic of the Infinite'. He says the Infinite follows logic, but not our ordinary human logic. What we call rationality, He describes as 'ego'. When we think we are being most rational, we are being highly subjective and self-centered. What we call rationality is to look at everything from the limitations of the human ego.

He writes in the book about the Vedas, Vedanta, Upanishads and the Bhagava Gita. He has tremendous respect for the tradition. He also has tremendous respect for the scientists and the atheists. All are seeking after knowledge. The only place where He differs from others is at the point where those who seek through their own path say their path is the only truth, when they think that they have discovered the whole truth. He appreciates even the atheist, for He sees God expressing a healthy skepticism through the atheist that is necessary for the emergence of still greater truth. When man grows fond of superstition, God assumes the role of the atheist. He tries to give us a glimpse of how we can understand without imposing limitations.

Nuclear energy was discovered more than 50 years ago. Humanity has come to realize during this period that this power is totally unusable for the destructive purposes it was originally intended. But it is still a great power that can be used positively. Mother's power is far greater than the nuclear power, but it only lends itself to be used for positive purposes. We are here to invoke that power and learn how we can apply it. However, there are some essential conditions we need to fulfill in order to accomplish: mental clarity, humility (Mother's force will not act through vital arrogance or a sense of self-importance), hard work (it will certainly not act through physical laziness), honesty and self-giving are essential.

Sri Aurobindo wants to give us the knowledge that faith is a great power, but we need not accept anything on faith. Without faith, knowledge has no power. He says faith is the knowledge of the soul. The soul knows. But just because the soul knows does not mean that the mind knows. You may know things will work out alright, but you may not know how. If you know how they will work out and you have faith that they will work out, then you possess both the essential requirements.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

This book has been written to answer the unanswered questions about life. All those questions humanity has been seeking answers for, He answers in this book. Is our destiny in life a matter of fate or freewill? Do we really have freedom to act, or are our acts determined by some gods looking down on us or by our genes or our parents? That may sound like a very philosophical question, but it is practically relevant to our own lives. How often do we say or hear, "I would do that, but my husband or my boss or my friend will not allow it." We feel that we are determined by our social conditions or personal relationships. When you came to Mother, was that act also an act of fate? Who determined it? Are all the good things you have accomplished in life, accomplishments to your credit or are they someone else's accomplishments? Sri Aurobindo says God invented the sense of sin, so that man could improve himself, but man has outsmarted God by seeing only the sins in other people. How much do you feel you are constrained by the present circumstances of your life that prevent you from accomplishing? This book spells out very clearly the precise role of fate and free will in our lives.

The book addresses a host of other fundamental questions. Is there one God or many gods? How many Purushottamas are up there and who is really in charge? The Vedas are confusing

because each rishi invokes all the other gods through his own favorite god. What is this thing we call 'God'? Is he really the Lord and Creator or is He a silent witness sitting up there having a good time, while we suffer down here? And if he is the Lord, then why has he created the world the way it is? Some people say the world is an expression of the thoughts of God. In response Sri Aurobindo asks, "Couldn't God have had better thoughts?" If God is all-powerful, how can we reconcile the fact that the beings he has created seem to be imperfect. If God is bliss, why is there so much suffering in the world? If God is not in charge and in control, then who or what is?

Sri Aurobindo also answers a question which I do not believe has been seriously answered by anyone before him: "How was the cosmos created?" He says the greatest mystery of life is not that there could be an infinite, all-powerful, omnipresent, all-knowing God. The greatest mystery is that, if there is such a God, how did he create a finite world full of impotent, ignorant mortal beings who do not exhibit the characteristics of God who created them? How has an omnipotent God created a world with so much incapacity? How has a God that all the traditions say is One created a world in which we all seem to be separate and divided? He answers all these questions in a language which we can understand.

He also explains the purpose and goal of the human existence and the reason why God has created the world. Buddha said that man's goal is to escape from this cycle of births, to escape into a liberation in which individuality completely disappears. That means our ultimate goal is to not have existed in the first place! Shankara says all life is an illusion. Then why liberate ourselves, since liberation must be an illusion too? We understand the ego is not our real self, but what is our real Self? He answers that too.

This book could help science progress very far beyond its present boundaries, because it answers the questions which scientists cannot answer. A leading Indian biologist who read my

paper on the future of science said that he found it fascinating. Not realizing that it was based entirely on Indian thought, in the next breath he explained, "You know, we really need much more science in India because there is still so much superstition in our country which has prevented the development of scientific knowledge." How could I tell him at that moment that all I have written in that paper was entirely drawn from Indian spiritual knowledge, not from the Western scientific tradition? Mother and Sri Aurobindo said that the answers scientists are searching for are just on the borders of spiritual discovery, but like the biologist, with a vengeance they say, "We do not want to hear anything about that."

The same biologist later said to me that in explaining the origin of life, there is a very difficult question that biologists have not been able to answer. The question is, in simple terms, "How has life been created?" The growth of the organism is governed by the DNA in its cells. The DNA determines which building materials are synthesized by the cell. But science does not know how all of these elements assembled to constitute the first living cell. It is like knowing how all the parts of an automobile are created, but not knowing how they are assembled to make a car. Current theory in biology is based on the premise that if you build all the parts of a car, mix them up together and go away for two million years, the chances are that when you come back a car would have assembled itself. The biologist said, "How likely is it that if you leave the parts of a car or the components of a cell together long enough, they will assemble themselves? Perhaps it could have happened once in the history of the universe!"

Any theory that requires as its hypothesis that something could have happened once in the history of the universe sounds sufficiently implausible to justify a search for alternative possibilities. Is it not better that we at least look for an alternative theory that can explain how that cell became a living cell? These are the kind of questions that scientists refuse to ask, because

then they have to answer the embarrassing question, WHO is that someone who assembled the cell? These are the kinds of questions that Sri Aurobindo answers in *The Life Divine*.

What is the origin of mind and consciousness? There are leading thinkers today who try to convince us that all of our emotions, feelings and affections, our attachments, our patriotism and everything else are just chemical reactions taking place in our nerves. They go so far as to conclude that the creations of Shakespeare, Plato and Kalidasa are all simply chemical reactions as well.

Why is there pain? This is one of the most difficult questions for anyone to answer. If there really is a Divine, or if the Divine is Sachchidananda, where is this bliss? Why does pain come, what causes it? If we go further and say, as the Upanishads says, that 'All is Brahman', then how can there be a place for pain at all?

Why is there evil? If there is only One who has created everything, how can there be evil or falsehood in the world? He has written a wonderful chapter on the origins of falsehood and evil.

What is Karma? The tradition says karma is a result of our past actions, a force set in motion, and it has to work itself out. But devotees know from experience that Mother eradicates karma. What is that power of Mother? If you want to see that Mother can eradicate karma, you have to understand what karma is.

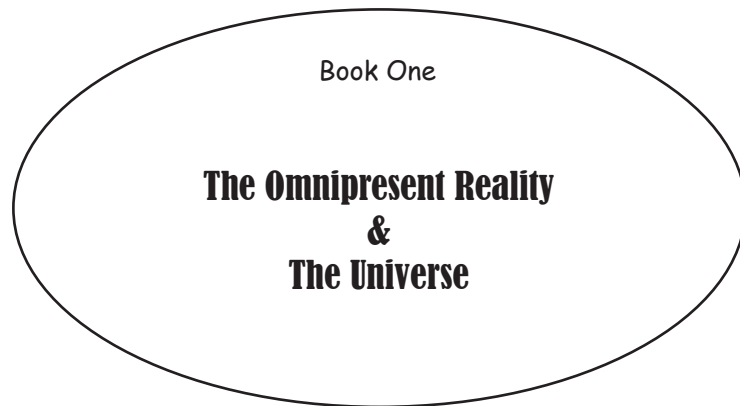
Who or what is God? According to spiritual tradition, God means different things to different people. In the Vedas they call God satyam, truth. We know God as light and as love. The Jews talked about God as a just power. God is also said to be bliss, ananda. Buddha talked about God as the ultimate reality. What is the true nature of God? How can we reconcile the fact that people have profound spiritual experiences of so many different types?

STRUCTURE OF *THE LIFE DIVINE*

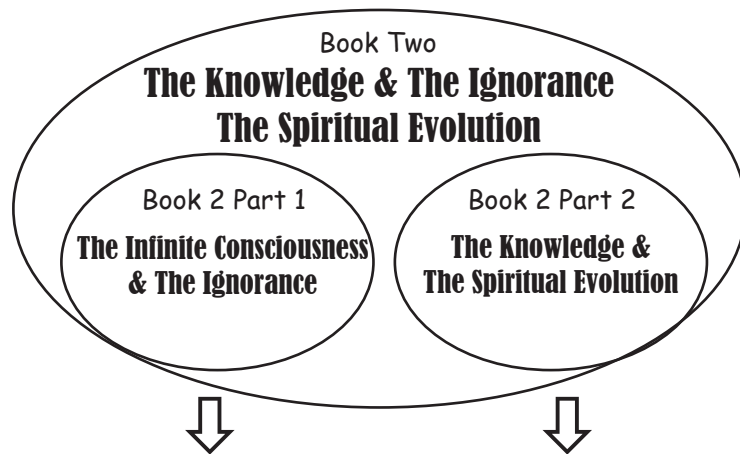
The Life Divine consists of two books and the second book consists of two parts. Book One, which constitutes the first 28 chapters, is entitled *The Omnipresent Reality and The Universe*. Here Sri Aurobindo presents to the world for the first time a comprehensive and integral knowledge of the true nature of the Spiritual Reality or Existence referred to variously as God, Brahman, Sachchidananda, Divine, the Unmanifest, the Transcendent, the Infinite and Eternal Spirit, or the Absolute. He also explains the true nature, origin and characteristics of the manifest universe we live in, which includes mind, life, matter, the individual, the soul, the ego, the dualities, and other fundamental aspects of the world. This book shows how all of these planes and structures are expressions and manifestations of the One Divine Reality.

Then, you might ask, what could possibly be left over to fill the second book? What the first book does not tell us and, in fact, no book has ever told before, is the process by which the One, Infinite and Eternal Spirit creates or rather becomes a finite, temporal universe populated by many individual forms and the process by which the finite universe of the Many is evolving spiritually back to the One so that it can manifest the true spiritual nature of Existence in this world, in life and in the physical body. These constitute the subject matter of Book Two, *The Knowledge and The Ignorance: The Spiritual Evolution*. In Part One of Book Two, which is entitled *The Infinite Consciousness and The Ignorance*, he explains the process by which the One created the Many, how an Infinite Knowledge has manifested as a world of Ignorance. In Part Two, which is entitled *The Knowledge and the Spiritual Evolution*, he explains the process by which the Ignorance evolves back to the Knowledge so that it can manifest Spirit in the world. This in a nutshell summarizes the contents of *The Life Divine*.

OVERVIEW OF *THE LIFE DIVINE*



The essential character of the spiritual reality and the stages of its progressive manifestation as conscious life in the universe



The Origin of the Knowledge & the Ignorance & the process of Spirit evolving in the Ignorance

The process of spiritual evolution from Ignorance to Knowledge

THE HUMAN ASPIRATION

Sri Aurobindo starts the book from where all of us are and asks what it is that all of us are seeking. If you look back through history, apart from all of the mundane things we pursue on a day-to-day basis, there is a fundamental longing, a seeking in humanity, for something Divine, whether we call it light or god or freedom or immortality: like the atheist who pursues the light of Truth or the anarchist who yearns for total freedom or the scientist who searches for total knowledge of the world or the religious seeker who aspires for eternal bliss. All express the fundamental longing of humanity for perfection beyond what presently exists on earth. This seeking is actually the aspiration of the Divine itself expressing through us. It is the seeking of the Divine to manifest itself in life as perfect form. So when He says that Divine Life is the goal, it is the Divine evolving in our lives at the tether ends of our personalities to manifest something more perfect here on earth.

Many Indians have gone off to the USA in search of prosperity, education or social status. It does not matter how long they have been there, always when you scratch the surface, they say, "Something is missing there. We want to come back home without giving up what we have acquired overseas." It is like the longing of the Divine within us seeking to regain the original bliss of the spirit as delight here on earth without giving up the world in order to do it.

Contradictions are Complements

The Life Divine is replete with principles. One of the central principles is that contradictions are complements. Our life is filled with contradictions, things opposing us, people disagreeing with us, our emotions coming into conflict with those around us. We want to go to a fine university, but our marks are too low. We want to marry our daughter well, but

our social status prevents it. Constantly we are faced with contradictions. He says all of those contradictions in life can be seen from a higher point of view as complements to what we are, as opportunities to make us more than what we are today, as the exact conditions needed to help us discover and bring forth hidden potentials within ourselves.

What we call opposition is the method, the process, by which the Divine creates the world. It is the opposition of the power of water rushing through the land that forms valleys. Everything is shaped by a conflict of forces with each other. That is the way life has been created. Darwin spoke of it as 'survival of the fittest'. In human life, we are capable of converting that opposition into a complementarity in which conflict is no longer necessary. When we understand the purpose for which any force comes and impacts on us, then we know what progress we have to make. In this manner, Mother says, we can convert difficulties into opportunities. We convert the force that presses against us into a force for progress.

What are the oppositions He refers to? When God wanted to manifest himself in the world, the first opposition he created was a world of unconscious, unthinking, inanimate, unsensing matter. Out of that stone or rock, life had to emerge. Out of stone nothing can come, we may suppose. Stones do not think or move. Yet all life responds when the sun shines down. The roots of the plant know where to go for water. So the great opposition that the Divine started with was creating a world of inanimate matter in which it wanted to manifest animate life. Even this stark opposition between lifeless stone and animate life has been overcome in the course of evolution. Compared to that, everything we want to accomplish looks very easy. The creation of apparently contradictory opposing forces that interact with each other to evolve into complements is one of the fundamental principles of creation.

Sri Aurobindo goes even further. He says that the very fact that things appear to be contradictory and impossible to

reconcile is the clearest proof that it is going to happen. Think about what looks impossible to you. When Sri Aurobindo started talking about India's freedom at the beginning of the 20th century, He was the first leader to proclaim that the goal of the freedom struggle should be complete independence from Britain. The idea that India could be totally free was something unimaginable to people at the time. How many of you can imagine today that India can one day be as prosperous as the USA?

In 1989 when I met Professor Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate in economics, he was not a very famous man. Today he is a world figure. Can we not become famous like that? When Sri Aurobindo says that contradictions can become complements, he means that contradictions are really a sanction for accomplishment. Nobody has attempted more impossible things than the Divine. What, then, is impossible for us?

Experiment

Try this experiment. Choose one area of your life in which you would like to accomplish. Take a period of 30 days. Choose your impossible dream, that is, what you believe would be extraordinarily lucky for you. Apply yourself for 30 days, meet the essential conditions listed earlier, and see the result.

First you have to conceive of what it is you want to accomplish. When the Divine conceives of what it wants to accomplish, Sri Aurobindo calls it a 'Real-Idea'. We have ideas also, but most of them do not become real. What is the idea that you want to accomplish in your life? When the Divine wants to accomplish something, it concentrates its energies on that. We have a force of consciousness too. For 30 days, concentrate the force of your consciousness, your will, on making your dream a reality. If we rely on our human force, we may succeed or fail. When the Divine concentrates its force, there is only one possibility: it accomplishes. Having concentrated your force,

shift your faith and reliance to Mother's Force. For three days, pray nonstop. Do not pray for the fulfillment of your idea. Pray for the realization of Mother in your life. Mother is greater than any idea in your life, She includes that. This is a formula for bringing unfailing success into your life. This is exactly the process of creation described in *The Life Divine*.

So we start from an aspiration. The first thing we notice is everything that contradicts our aspiration. That is the method of creation. Normally we would think how to get rid of those contradictions, but the more we try to get rid of them, the less we accomplish. What we have to understand is, those oppositions have come as essential conditions for our accomplishment. The greater those oppositions are, the greater the sign and sanction for our achievement. We should not try to avoid them. The purpose is not to run away from the field of life, but to perfect the field of life.

What does this mean practically? Five hundred years ago a man named Martin Luther felt that the Catholic Church in Europe was so dogmatic and authoritarian that when he read the Bible and listened to the priest, it did not seem to have anything to do with God anymore. So he tried to change the whole structure of the Christian religion, which led to a whole new religious movement called Protestantism. I do not think any of us could have a contradiction as great as that in our lives. What about Gorbachev? What was the courage he needed to tell the Russian people that democracy was better than communism? Look at your oppositions and ask, "What progress do I need to make to convert those oppositions into opportunities?" That is the formula for unfailing success.

Challenges

Twenty-five years ago, we entered into a long term business agreement with an Indian exporter. But after some time the exporter broke his promises and sold the same products to our

own customers and spoiled the market for us. In the process, he all but ruined the business we had created. When that happened I felt very disillusioned, angry and self-righteous, because this man had done so many wrong things to us. It took me a long time before I could even think of the idea that the oppositions that come to me from life come to help me make a progress. Finally we went to court for a long time, and four years passed. I had not done any of those wrong things that were done to me and everyone who heard my story felt an outrageous anger at the wrong that had been done to me. But I should have looked inside and seen whether under any circumstance I was not capable of doing the things the other man had done to me. It was only after feeling the pressure of life for long time that I could ask myself why these things come to me. I felt that I had not broken my promises, or told lies, but still these things came to me.

Eventually, I came to understand that while I had not done any of the things this exporter did to me, there is something in my consciousness capable of similar things, otherwise this trouble could not come to me. I thought, "Oh, this is not fair! We should be judged by our actions not by some subconscious propensity!" But life does not judge us by our actions. It responds to our consciousness. Life judges us by our impulses and our capacities. The progress that we are here for is not to change our behavior, but to change our consciousness. And if life only responded to our behavior, then we might all behave very nicely and remain what we are. That was a very painful, humiliating and humbling lesson for me. Once I saw the truth of it, I could look back at my own family and on my own earlier life, and find instances where I had broken my promises. I also looked at the way my father was running his own business and saw where he had also done things like that. I finally realized that the same capacity must be there in me. Then instead of complaining against this man who has done these horrible things to me, shouldn't I be thanking him for making me conscious?

Should I go even further and be grateful to him for helping me discover my own imperfections?

It took me a long time before I was willing to entertain that possibility. Finally I came to the point of really believing and seeing the reality. One day after four long, bitter years of struggle, I finally decided that no matter what else, I must make the progress so that such a thing will never come to me again in life. I must make that progress in my consciousness. I am no longer going to be fighting a court case against anybody. I was sitting in the High Court, where the exporter had filed an appeal. I just forgot the case and stopped listening to the lawyers. I was concentrating in my vital and calling Mother: "Mother, please change me, so that nothing like this should come to me again in life." And within a half an hour the case that had been going on for four years was suddenly ended by the judge.

But the best part came afterwards. That night I had to take a train to Hyderabad for a meeting. After getting on the train, the whole night I couldn't sleep. I was filled with such a sweet bliss that I had never felt before, even when I was physically with Mother and She was holding my hand. I felt my whole body had become honey. I did not feel like a human being. I understood that finally I have let Mother touch me where I should be touched. Now when I look back, should I be angry with that man for breaking the contract? Should I abuse him or criticize him? What he needs for his progress is up to Mother. I feel I have become a better person as a result of the whole experience. If Life needs the pressure of opposition to awaken the stone and make it conscious, should the stone complain?

The free market economic system is a pretty terrible system. It generates lots of wasteful duplication, destructive competition and disproportionate distribution of benefits. It provides enormous wealth for a few and less than the minimum to many others. But compared to other systems that the world has had in the past, the market system has created more wealth for more people than any other. How does the market system

work? It works in a very illogical way. If you want to produce more for everybody, you get a lot of people doing the same work and competing with each other.

The Communists figured out that this is a very foolish system with so much waste, so they decided to streamline and rationalize it. They set up only one company to produce each type of commodity, with no competition and no wasteful expenditure on marketing. But what was the result? The companies became much less efficient. It is only when we have a lot of people doing the same thing and there is the force of competition that each company feels compelled to function in the most efficient manner and constantly strives to improve its products and processes. If a company's competitor is selling for a cheaper price, it is forced to be more dynamic, efficient and innovative. So this opposition brings out the best in each company. I do not say that this is the ultimate system. Humanity can evolve from competition to cooperation. In fact, that is happening all around us. The European Union and World Trade Organization are good examples.

In life we should understand that opposition comes to us because we need it. The same principle is true in education. Competition is a very low motivation for learning, but in the absence of competition to achieve the best marks, most students would perform at a far lower level. If no one else is studying and there is no competition for high marks, few students would study. This fact makes competition a necessary mechanism to compel people to do what they should do for their own benefit anyway.

In life people have these same experiences hundreds of times. In fact, Mother says in a single lifetime, each man and woman learns only one thing and then goes on to another life. Why should we take a lifetime to learn a single lesson? Why go through a hundred repetitions in order to make each progress? We can be making a progress at every minute by learning each lesson that comes to us from life the first time it comes.

Usually we go about thinking about the lessons that everybody else should learn, and we even enjoy explaining to them what lessons they should learn. But knowledge does not work that way. This is to function like a one-way mirror which sees in one direction and reflects back our own thoughts in the other. We become conscious of how life is urging others to improve, but we fail to see how we ourselves should change.

Sri Aurobindo says that one of the greatest mysteries of life is that out of evil or unpleasant things good can come. It is one of the basic characteristics of life. I recently read a novel by Arthur Conan Doyle in which he describes the Black Death, the monstrous plague that spread throughout Europe in the early Middle Ages and killed about one-third of the total population. Conan Doyle remarks that much good came out of the plague. The good was that feudalism, which had kept 90% of the population in virtually slavery under the system of serfdom, was broken down by this plague. Labor became so scarce that people were willing to pay cash to workers instead of paying them a meager quantity of food for their mere subsistence. The plague liberated the individual from slavery and facilitated the birth of democracy in the Europe. Do you think you could convince an Englishman today that it would have been good not to have the plague and a free society? Which free man would be willing to sacrifice his present freedom? That does not mean the plague was good or even necessary. If people had been more enlightened, they could have given up feudalism without being wiped out by a plague. At least 500 years later the British showed a little more common sense when they voluntarily gave up their empire without fighting to retain it. That shows they had learned something in 500 years.

If we have something that we consider a plague in our lives, it does not mean it is inevitable or that it is the only way we can make a progress. That is not what Mother says. If we understand that that difficulty, whether debt or physical illness or a harassing boss, comes to make us progress, and if we call

Mother's Force to make the necessary progress, we can quickly overcome the difficulty. If some problem threatens to descend on us and out of understanding and willingness to make progress we call Mother's Force, the threat will disappear, because we no longer need that experience in order to make progress. Sri Aurobindo gives the essence of this profound knowledge in the very first chapter of the book.

Power of Harmony

The third important principle in the first chapter is that we can convert oppositions and disharmonies into harmonies. In one sense this may be considered the most central principle of the entire book, for in each chapter he presents one of the great apparent contradictions of life and shows how they can be reconciled at a higher level. Spirit and Matter, Being and Non-Being, the Individual and the Collective, Knowledge and Ignorance, ego and Self are all oppositions created by our mental consciousness that are harmonized in the Supramental Consciousness.

What he writes is not truth of philosophy, but Truth of Life. He says, without any qualification, all problems of life are problems of harmony. We understand harmony to be smooth relations within our family or at our work place. But the disharmonies of life go deeper than that. There are disharmonies between what we know we should do and what we want to do. Our mind wants one thing, but our vital wants another. The disharmony is within ourselves. There are disharmonies also between our mind and spirit. Our ego wants one thing and our soul may want us to go in another direction. There is disharmony between the desires of our ego and the egos of those around us with whom we constantly compete to prove who is more important, more knowledgeable, more skilled, or more cultured. Our lives are filled with disharmonies. If we want to overcome the oppositions coming to us from outside, to bring

things into harmony, we must become humble and pleasant in all circumstances. This can be done if you attune your mind to be in harmony with the higher consciousness.

In the last chapter of the book, Sri Aurobindo tells us how to solve all these problems of disharmony. Regard every enemy as a friend. Regard every challenge as an opportunity. Regard every impossibility as a possibility that you should rise to make real. If you do that, you come upon the ultimate secret of life, the secret that Spirit can move Matter. If you do what you should do and can do, you can make money, accomplishment, social recognition and even matter comes under your control. He ends the book by saying Spirit has total power over life and matter. When we have that power, matter is transformed and life becomes Divine.

We do not need to transform matter in order to bring unflinching success into our lives. We need only to be true devotees to call that power down into life. We are talking today about moving life, making life respond. *The Life Divine* says that we have the power to move life. All of you must have seen in your lives that when you move towards Mother, life moves towards you.

This chapter urges us to discover that all the oppositions and contradictions which we face in life are really representations of a greater truth prompting us to widen and elevate our consciousness to achieve a higher reconciling harmony. In the next two chapters he deals with the grand opposition between materialism, which insists that matter is the only reality, and asceticism, which proclaims that the only reality is the transcendent Spirit. He reveals that both are aspects of a greater truth, the Omnipresent Reality.

OMNIPRESENT REALITY

According to the tradition, the ultimate reality goes by different names – God, Brahman, Krishna, Siva, Nirvana, Love, etc. Which one of these aspects of God or Divinity is the true Reality? He says all of them are true, but none of them is the whole Truth. Why does it matter to us whether we have the whole truth or not? Even a little bit of the Divine would be better for us than what we have now. It depends on what it is that we really want from the Divine. Are we relating to that aspect which can give us what we want? If we want to escape life, we can seek Nirvana. If we are in search of the ultimate truth; we can, like the Jnani, pursue ultimate knowledge for its own sake. But if we want success in life, happiness in life, fulfillment here on earth in the body, then we have to be sure that we are relating to a power that can deliver those results. Certainly Nirvana cannot do that. It can only lead us to the featureless void beyond manifestation and help us shed desire and attachment in the process.

The realization of the Transcendent Self can bring us peace, freedom and incalculable bliss, but it too is not a power that can uplift and perfect life.

People have experienced the Divine as formless, featureless Silence or as a witness Purusha or as the Lord of Creation. What is it that determines how we experience the Divine? It depends on our conception of the Divine and what we aspire for, as well as on the method we employ to reach it.

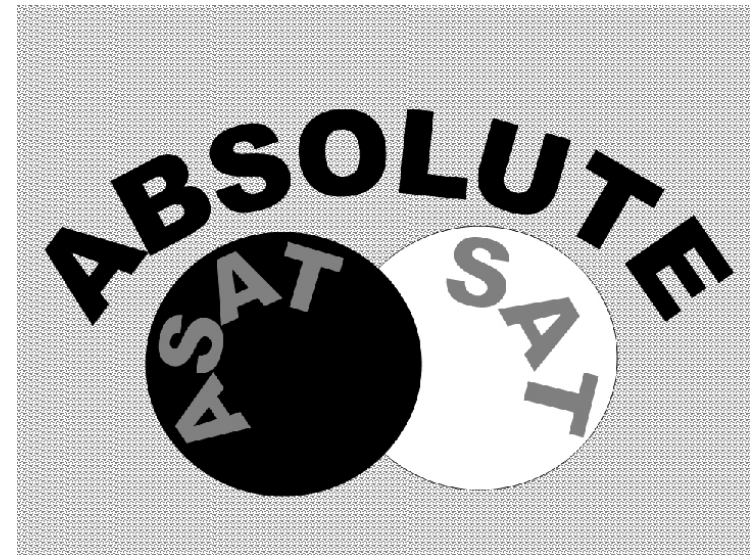
One of the traditional descriptions of That is as a formless Unmanifest out of which everything comes. Sri Aurobindo, in a humorous vein, discusses the theories which state that the world manifests out of a formless Void. He asks, how can something real come out of something unreal? The words 'void' and 'vacuum' suggest an uninteresting empty space. But to the modern physicist, the word 'vacuum' has turned out to be something quite complex and exhibiting unexpected

behavior.* The physicists are not able to explain where matter comes from adequately. Physics is coming in contact with what Sri Aurobindo calls the Unmanifest. Because it is unmanifest, it is beyond form and even if we experience it, we experience it as being empty, as if it does not exist. The unmanifest is not an empty void; it is an infinite possibility beyond form and manifestation.

Some yogis, who have gone out of the manifestation and found a contentless, featureless emptiness beyond, have come to the conclusion, like the scientists, that there is really nothing beyond the manifestation. But Sri Aurobindo says that the error in both cases is that they have not gone far enough. They take each experience they have as the ultimate truth. He says if you go beyond the unmanifest, if you hold onto reality but go beyond it in your experience, you can ultimately come to something which includes both the manifest and unmanifest. That is what he calls the Absolute or Omnipresent Reality. It encompasses both Being (Sat) and Non-Being (Asat) and yet it is not limited even to these two. It is the ultimate Reality, because it includes all realities. It is something more than all, out of which all emerges.

Tradition says that this ultimate reality is unknowable and indescribable. The Gita says that the Parabrahman cannot be known by mind. Sri Aurobindo says the key word here is 'mind'. That Unknowable is unknowable to mind, but that does not mean it is unknowable to our experience. What is unknowable

* "It is a truism that one cannot get something for nothing. The interesting question is whether one can get everything for nothing. Clearly, this is a very speculative topic for scientific investigation, and the ultimate answer depends on a sophisticated interpretation of what 'nothing' means. The words 'nothing', 'void', and 'vacuum' usually suggest uninteresting empty space. To modern quantum physicists, however, the vacuum has turned out to be rich with complex and unexpected behavior." Excerpt from Encyclopedia Britannica 1998 CD-Rom article on Space-Time and the Origin of Universe.



depends on the instrument or plane of consciousness from which we relate to it. Sri Aurobindo is the first one who says that the Absolute can be known. The Absolute can be known from Supermind. He is the first one who has ever known the Absolute.

The term Asat or Non-Being is regarded by many as a negation of all that exists, a void or emptiness of non-existence. But Sri Aurobindo explains that in fact Asat is simply the status of the unmanifest that cannot be limited or qualified by any specific characteristics. It is not a non-existence but rather a state of complete freedom from all limitation, a more than everything, which means it is indescribable. So for him, the Absolute consists of all that is manifested in the infinite and eternal cosmos as well as all that remains unmanifest as infinite potential. Being and Non-Being are complementary aspects of the Absolute.

Manifestation is a constant process of change. The physicists know that the atom is in constant motion. The whole manifestation is energy in motion. Those who have experienced

what lies beyond manifestation have felt no movement, a void. But Sri Aurobindo says that this void is actually energy at rest. The energy is there in potential, like the potential energy of the stone resting at the top of a mountain which is released as kinetic energy when it rolls down the cliff. The Absolute contains both of these, the manifest realm of constant change or energy in motion and the unmanifest realm of energy at rest. These two sides are not contradictory. They are two sides of the one reality, the reality manifesting as movement and as energy at rest. The Absolute is both Being and Becoming.

From the plane of Becoming in which we live and move, the plane of unmanifest Being appears insubstantial and unreal. So also, when you move to the plane of unmanifest Being, as in the experience of the immutable Self or Nirvana, the plane of Becoming appears equally insubstantial and unreal. But Sri Aurobindo tells us that when you go far enough, you can discover that both of them are real. Both Being and Becoming, Self and Universe, are the Divine, real aspects of one indivisible Omnipresent Reality. We need not say one is real and the other is unreal. It is the One that has become and manifests as the Many at every moment. The universe recreates itself at every moment.

This knowledge has great practical relevance to us. What we are today is a result of the process of the One becoming the Many. We have the power to be different the next second, if we want to be. Just as the Divine in its manifestation manifests itself differently in every second, we can also do so. When we look at ourselves, we are much more aware of our finiteness than our infinity. But if you divide infinity by any number, each of the parts is still infinite. He says the whole of the Divine is there in each of its forms. It is there in terms of quality and also in terms of quantity. The power of the smallest form and the power of the greatest form are both infinite. The only difference is how much they manifest it. The quality that the Divine has put into the ant is as great as that put into the mountain or the

solar system.

Finally he says the Omnipresent Reality is both Time and Eternity. That eternal Time exists at every moment. The whole of the future and the whole of the past exist simultaneously. That has great relevance to us also. The past is not over. We can consecrate the past and change it even now. The past lives within us in the moment. If you look back to the first time you



heard the name 'Mother', all that has happened to you since then was there in potential for one who could see it. Our whole future is there in potential right now. Because the whole future is here now, we can work on it and make that future what we want it to be.

There is a lovely story about a king in Satprem's book, *The Adventure of Consciousness*. The king wants to be flattered by his poets and keeps asking them to create more and more poems praising his greatness. Finally one wise man comes and the King wants to push things to the limit, so he asks the wise man "Who is greater, me or God?" The wise man thinks for

a minute, and then replies, "Undoubtedly you are greater, O King, because you can banish anyone from your kingdom, but God cannot banish anyone from his kingdom!" Sri Aurobindo would go further and say, it is not only true that God cannot banish anyone; it is also true that you cannot banish yourself, because you are God.

Sri Aurobindo says that even Mother's punishments are Grace. The Divine Mother only has one thing that She can do. She has only one weapon in her arsenal: Grace. She does not give Grace to some and punishment to others. She does not have that capacity to punish. The only thing She has is a creative power. Even what we take to be a punishment is Her power coming to us. Why it appears as a punishment is the secret we have to discover in the next few days.

Discover the Spirit in Life

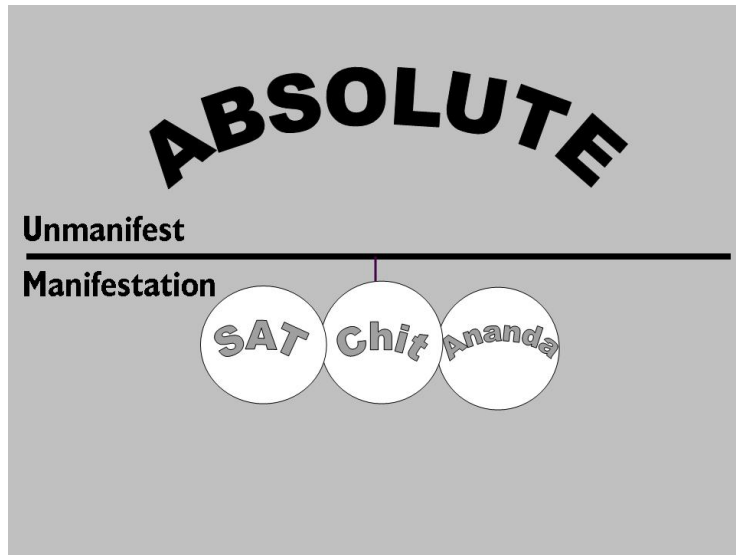
He says in the second chapter that the materialists and the sannyasis have both made the same mistake. They both discovered a portion of the truth and took it for the whole Reality. Both matter and spirit are the Divine and therefore, if we want Divine Life, we cannot afford to make the mistake made by either of them. We have to find where life and spirit meet. We have to discover the spirit in life, the Being within the Becoming.

The most serious question anyone can ask in life is, "Why is the world like it is? Do we really mean to say that everything here is the way that Absolute wants it to be?" He answers this in the book. There is only one determinant, only one boss, it is the Absolute. Nothing can happen without the sanction of that Absolute. There is no division between God and the Devil. Does that mean that everything is fate? No, it means that at every moment we have the freedom to make things happen as we want them to happen, because we are the power of that Absolute. If there is fate, it is the fate that we accept by believing

in our own helplessness, by contending that we are not the Divine but rather separate, limited beings. By pretending that Mother does not like us or listen to us, we create our own 'fate'. He advises us in *The Life Divine* not to make the mistake of thinking that we are unimportant to the Absolute. The truth is just the opposite. The Absolute is unimportant to us. We do not think about the Divine, it is the Divine who is always thinking of us and reaching out to us all the time.

We are created Divine. We may not be the form of the Divine that is there in Sachchidananda, but we are forms of the Divine. It is true that we seem to lack the characteristics associated with the Divine. But we have to understand that the Divine is trying to evolve something new. If the Divine wants to manifest itself in form and realize Sachchidananda in form, to manifest the beauty, joy, knowledge and power of that Existence in forms, then it has to become something more than the unmanifest. It has chosen to do that in such a way that the becoming is progressive. The boy child is a miniature edition of his father, but an improved edition that tries to fit into the new generation and circumstances in which he is born, not just to repeat what his father was or did in the past. The father often resents the change and wishes the boy to conform rigorously according to a standard that is no longer appropriate. The Divine is a father who is fulfilled by his child exceeding his own accomplishments, blossoming as a flower of finer fragrance as an expression of the evolutionary progress.

Why would the Divine go through this long drawn out process of millions of years to create a Supramental Being? He answers this question in a number of ways. He says, why not? The Divine enjoys this process. For the first time, Sri Aurobindo makes a clear distinction between the words, bliss and delight. The unmanifest Ananda of Being is bliss; the manifest enjoyment of Becoming is delight. The Divine has hidden itself from itself and is in the process of rediscovering itself. The delight of existence is there in every act. This is what



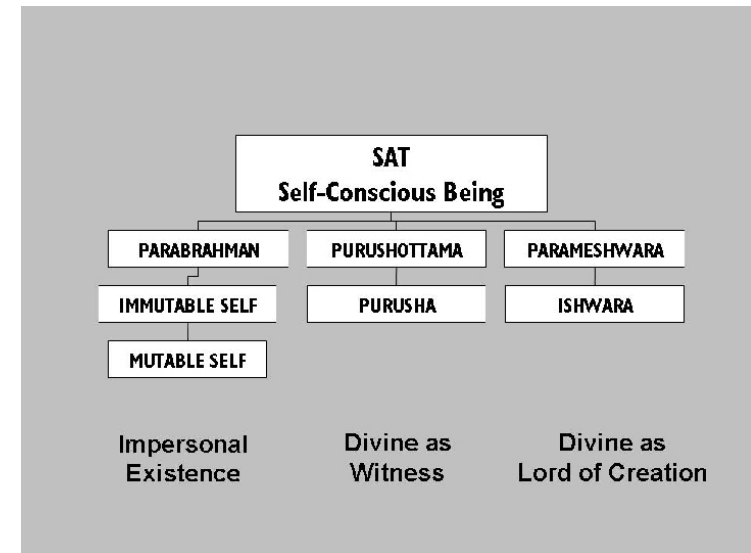
is known as Lila in the tradition.

Sachchidananda, its Extensions and Aspects

When the unmanifest Absolute expresses itself in form, the first step it takes is to become Existence. This does not mean that before that, the Divine does not exist. Rather the Absolute makes itself manifest as existence. It becomes Pure Existence. We call this 'Sat'. Self-conscious Existence manifests itself to its own experience. The first way in which we experience Sat is as Brahman, as pure Existence. Rishis who have experienced Brahman have talked about it as the Kshara Purusha, the mutable one. They discovered the ancient formula of the Upanishads: 'All this is the Brahman.' They saw that the whole world and everything in it is only form of That. Other rishis went beyond and experienced the Akshara Purusha, the immutable One beyond the changeable world. They discovered the other ancient formula, "One without a second." They experienced Sat as a real existence, something true. It is so concrete to the

experience of consciousness that everything else seems less true or even unreal by comparison. The rishis experienced the positive and negative aspects of the Brahman, but Sri Aurobindo is the first to reconcile these two experiences are aspects of a single ultimate reality, the Absolute, which at once transcends and includes the mutable and the immutable.

This Sat is an impersonal existence. When you experience it, what has it to do with the world? You feel that this Brahman is behind the world but it has no relationship with the world. It does not respond to our prayers, it simply is. It is a true experience, but it is not a complete experience. There is another possibility. We can also experience the Existence as an Existent. Sat reveals itself as Self-conscious Being. Brahman manifests both as the impersonal existence and as the divine person. When we so experience Sat, we say, 'It is God, the Divine Being, behind and upholding the creation.' Depending on the level of our realization, we realize that as the Purusha, we experience God as the Divine Soul. Or, it is possible for us



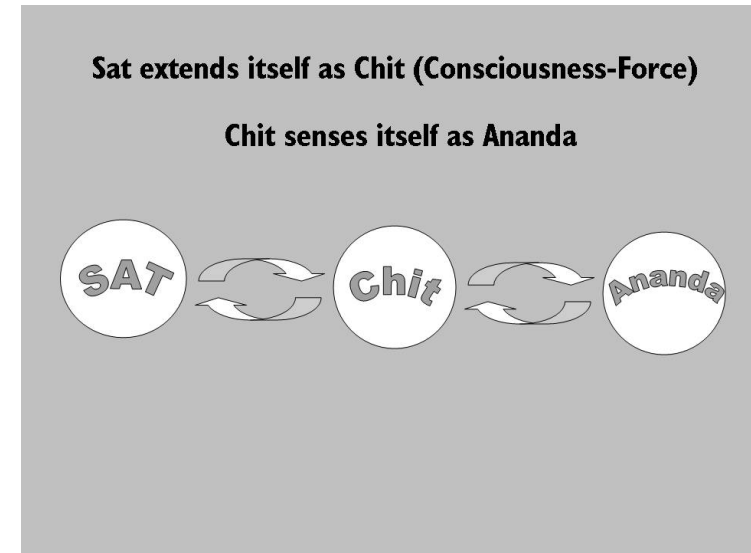
to have a higher realization of the Purushottama. Here we not only see God as a divine being, but also see that that Sat is the real existence. Purushottama includes the personal side of the divinity as well as the impersonal.

But if Sat were only Parabrahman or Purushottama, it would still leave unanswered the questions regarding who created the world and why the world was created. The God who has created the world is also the Lord of Creation, the Ishwara. It is possible for us to experience God as the creator, but here too, it can be a lower or higher realization. By the lower realization we see the Lord of Creation, but we do not see God as the Divine Soul or Parabrahman. By the higher realization, we experience Parameshwara, which includes the realization of the Parabrahman and Purushottama. When we realize the supreme Lord of Creation, we also know that that same Lord is the real Existence.

During the Upanishadic period, the instrument which the Rishis used to know the ultimate reality was mind. They concentrated from mind to go to the Manomaya Purusha behind the mind, and from there to know the Parabrahman. Mind was the highest faculty available to them at that time. The Manomaya Purusha in the mind is capable of seeing the Parabrahman. In the Gita, Krishna said that mind does not have the capacity to experience the Purushottama. One has to go behind the heart to the Chaitya Purusha from where you can know the Purushottama. Through the heart to the spirit behind the heart, one goes and realizes the Divine as a divine personality.

We can experience Sat as Impersonal Existence, Divine Witness or as the Lord of Creation. Parabrahman, Purushottama and Parameshwara are three different ways in which we can know the Divine. One does not negate the other. In Sri Aurobindo's yoga we have to have the realization of the Parameshwara as well as Parabrahman and Purushottama. Our purpose is not to discover God, but to become God. In order to

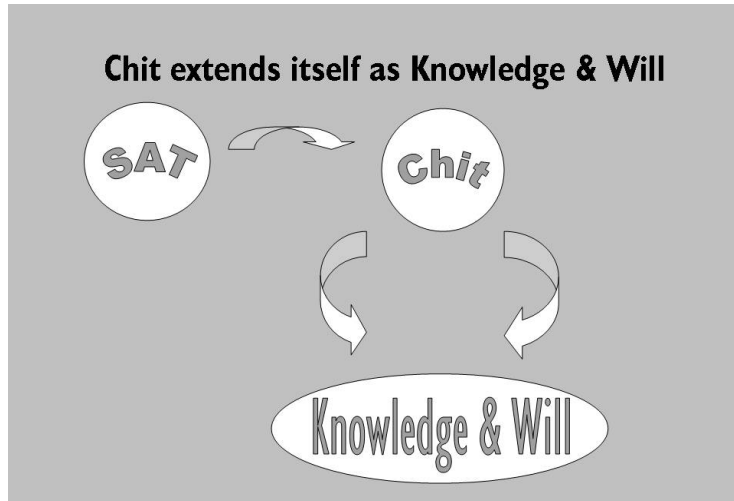
do that, we have to have the realization of God as the Lord of Creation, the Parameshwara. For that, we relate to God through another center, the vital center. From there we go to the psychic which relates to the Divine Being above, Sat, and experiences the Parameshwara.



When Sat manifests, it manifests as Sachchidananda. What are the Chit and the Ananda? Chit is the Consciousness-Force of Sat. It is not something separate from Sat. Self-Conscious Being extends itself as Consciousness, chit. It turns itself outward by choice. A man is born brahmacharya – celibate youth. He is under no compulsion to get married, but he can if he chooses. He is under no external compulsion to have a child. He acts under an inner compulsion that is a choice. The consciousness of Chit has two aspects, which are very important when we come down into life. Chit expresses in life as Knowledge and Will. Knowledge is what is true. Will is the force to do what we know. These two are inseparable aspects of Chit. When we go down into the creation, these two get separated from each other.

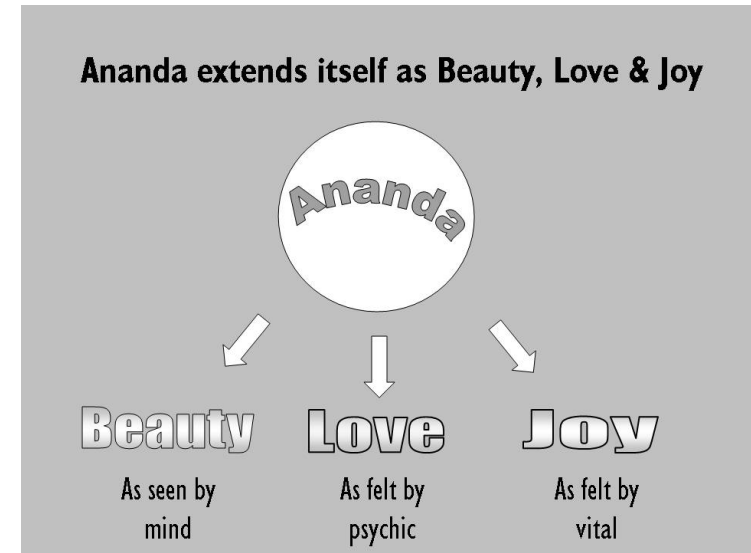
Then the mind wants one thing and the vital another.

Ananda is the sensation of Sat experiencing itself as pure Bliss. That is the sensation of the Divine Consciousness in



Sachchidananda. In the creation, we experience Ananda as Delight. All beauty in the universe is the expression of Ananda in form. The mind experiences Ananda as beauty. We feel ananda in the vital as joy. When we experience the same ananda through the psychic, we feel it as love. Mother describes how she felt in her body, for hours, the universe as a wave of Love. The physical cells of her body felt the ultimate reality of Matter as Love. Mother had this experience when the Supramental came down into the physical, which is the last stage.

In this manner the triune reality of Sachchidananda gives rise to eight original fundamental determinants: three aspects of Sat (Parabrahman, Purushottama, Parameshwara), two aspects of Chit (Knowledge, Will), and three aspects of Ananda (Beauty, Love, Joy). These eight are the original building blocks of the universe and the entire creation is derived from them. To know the creation, we have to be able to understand and explain the world, ourselves, evil and karma in terms of these eight

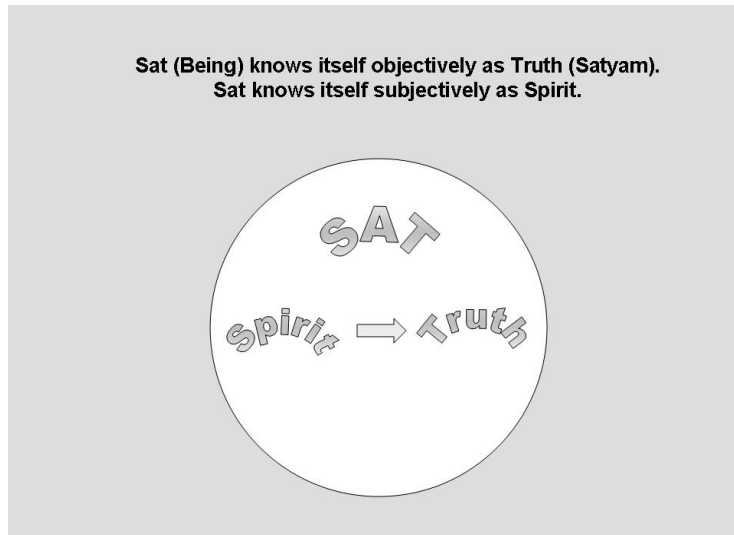


determinants.

Manifestation is a process of objectification, of the One becoming an object to its own subjective experience. The process of objectification also creates a subject that experiences the object. When your mind is silent, it is difficult to distinguish subject and object. But when a thought occurs in your mind, there is a part of the mind that takes the form of the thought (becomes an object to its own experience) and a part that experiences the thought as different than itself (becomes the subject experiencing the object). You can think thoughts about yourself. In those thoughts you become an object to your own mental experience. You can also try to think of yourself as others think of you, which is known as objectivity. Sat knows itself subjectively as Spirit and objectively as Truth. A great soul may be known to the outer world as a poet. Inwardly he knows himself, subjectively, as a Rishi. He can also know himself as others know him objectively as a Poet. What is potential within is given expression as an object, as a form of force, outside. The artist sees a vision of reality in his creative

imagination and gives expression to it as an object of art. His vision is subjective, his picture is objective.

The objective reflection of Sat is Truth, satyam. That which expresses the Existence is true. The objective reflection of Chit is jnanam, Knowledge. Chit is both knowledge and will. Sat also objectivizes itself as Goodness, which is Truth of Will. Goodness means we not only know what is right, but we want what is right. It has that element of both knowledge and will. Finally, the Ananda objectivizes or reflects itself as anantam, infinity. Sri Aurobindo uses the word 'endlessness'. The Infinite Being, Sat, is unlimited. Its nature is bliss or delight,



because bliss is the absence of all limitation. When there is a complete absence of any limitation, the experience is an ecstatic bliss. For Sat there are no limits, it does not know any end. That limitlessness is its bliss. When Sat manifests itself, it manifests as absence of any limits, as infinity, of creation, of time, forms, etc. It enjoys the bliss of endlessness. Pain comes from limitation, the limitation created by the ego. Moving

out of that limitation, converts pain into Ananda. Anantam also means total freedom, absence of constraint of any type. Endlessness in space is Infinity. Endlessness in time is Eternity or Immortality. Thus, infinity, eternity, freedom and bliss are objective reflections of Ananda.

Reflections of Sachchidananda

- Sat = Satyam = Truth
- Chit = Jnanam = Knowledge & Goodness
- Ananda = Anantam = Infinity

FIVE ELEMENTS OF CREATION

The first vibration of creation from the Brahman is OM. That is why they call it 'The Word'. By chanting OM, we are put in harmony with the Brahman. For devotees of the Integral Yoga, you can chant it as long as it is useful. But there is a more powerful mantra, 'Mother', because Mother will take you directly to the Parameshwara, which includes the Parabrahman.

In the chapter on Conscious Force, Sri Aurobindo uses an analogy drawn from the tradition to explain how formlessness becomes form. The tradition says that everything is created from five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. The Western mystical tradition speaks of the same five elements. He explains their symbolic significance.

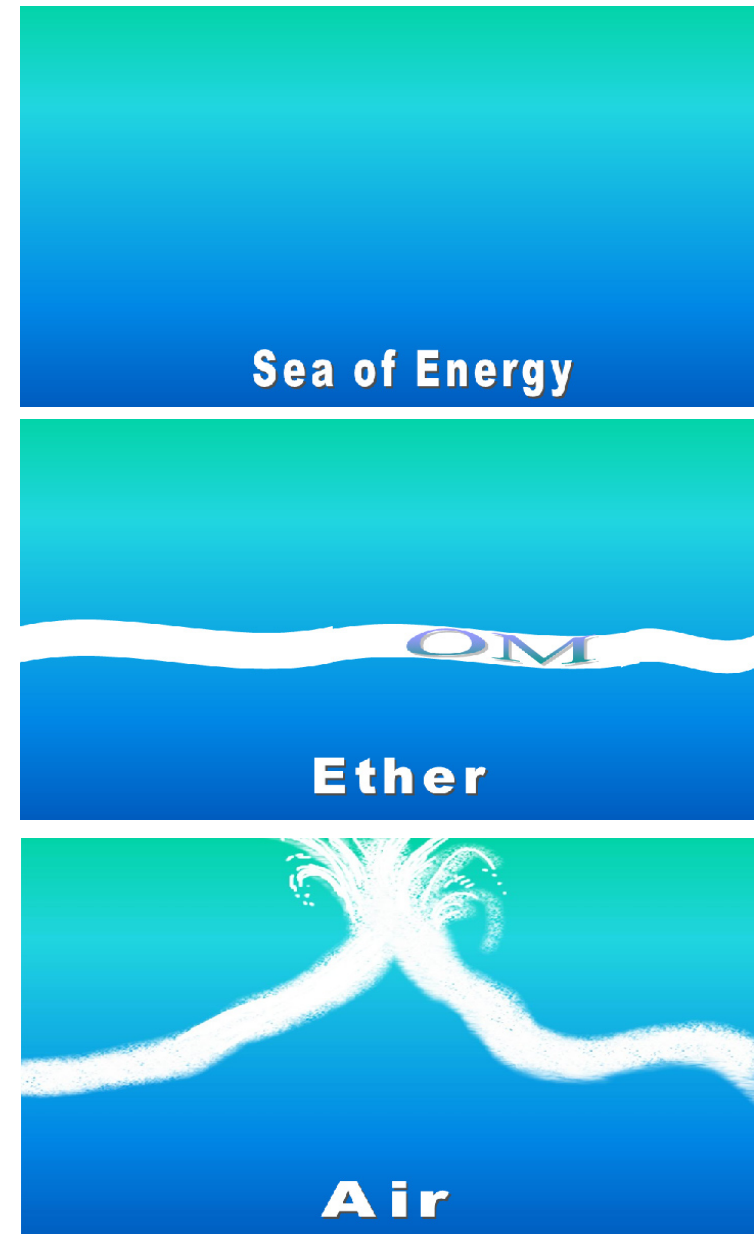
Think of the unmanifest as a sea of energy, an ocean of energy at rest. Sat in the beginning is an ocean of energy at rest. The first sign of manifestation is a ripple of energy on the

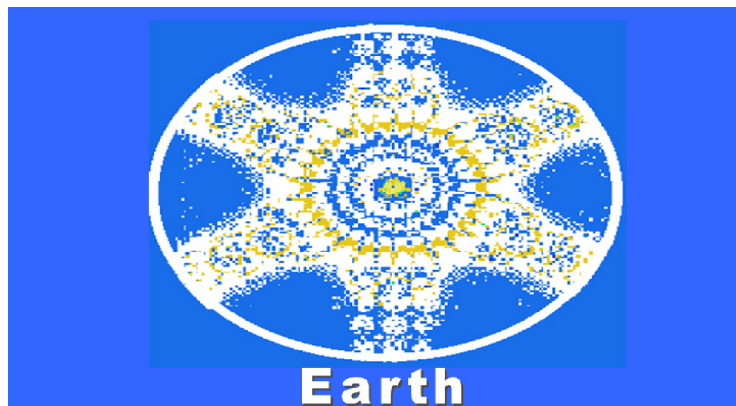
surface of the sea, which is OM. This vibration through the still ocean of energy is what the rishis called 'ether.' When you drop a stone in the water, you see a ripple moving out rhythmically from the centre.

These vibrations may move in rhythmic succession one after the other. They may also collide with one another. When these vibrations make contact with each other, the ripple takes on a momentary shape caused by the force of one vibrating wave hitting against the force of another wave. This contact of force with force is symbolized by the ancients as the element of 'air'. All forms are forms of force. Forms are created by contact between forces. That is what we mean when we say a child's character was molded by his early life experiences. Character is the form, life experiences bring forces to impinge on that form and give it shape. Every life experience we undergo is a force acting on the form of our personality.

These temporary forms last for only a split second before they dissolve. They have no sustaining character or life of their own. There needs to be something to hold the forms together, to sustain them. This is the element of 'fire', the sustaining principle. Fire, light and heat are all used to describe it. When vibrations emerge from the infinite ocean of energy at rest, the vibrating waves collide to create a form, and something arises from within that form to give it a sustenance or life, which is referred to as fire. The sustaining principle does not come from outside. It is there inherent within each form and gets released by contact. The same thing happens when through training or life experience the innate talents or character traits of a child are given shape or expression. The response we give to the impact of life events depends on the sustaining principle within us, our aspiration, character or nature. Events only help to bring it to the surface. In times of crisis, a person's capacity for courage, loyalty, generosity or faith may be called forth.

Forms created in this manner are attracted to each other and also repelled by each other. This principle of attraction





and repulsion which can be observed in all the phenomenon of nature from the electrically charged subatomic particles to the polarity between the sexes is referred to as 'water', the movement of forms towards and away from each other in the ocean of energy. The direction of that movement depends on the sustaining principle which lies within each form.

The fifth element is the principle of cohesion, 'earth'. This principle binds together the forms which have been attracted to each other, resulting in the sense of solidity and permanency associated with the material world, like the snowflake depicted here.

This process of the creation of forms out of the formless is of great relevance to practical life as well as to science. The same process helps us understand how new ideas become well-defined mature conceptions or theories, how new social movements arise as ripples in the ocean of society, how new inventions and new social organizations evolve. We can trace these five phases in events such as the Internet boom that started in the late 1990s and set in motion many new forces in society. The emergence of the Internet unleashed new vibrations of energy. Business people explored countless new ways to conduct trade and make money. These emerging vibrations of energy interacted and often clashed with one another. When young people exchanged music on the Internet, music companies protested that they were losing business. Many new companies were started to carry out these new activities. Some based on half-baked ideas were washed away in the first flush. Other companies such as Amazon Books that were started by people with vision, drive and perseverance were able to ride the storm, attract the right people and the resources they required, and solidify into successful businesses.

Modern physics, which has pierced the atom and delved deep into the subatomic world, has come to the borders of the material world where it observes the spontaneous emergence of material particles out of apparent nothingness. The ancient

wisdom resolves this mystery by explaining that the apparent nothingness is not a vacuum of emptiness but rather an infinite energy at rest from which the entire universe emerges. Sri Aurobindo starts from the ultimate reality of the Infinite and shows how it becomes the finite universe. Scientists start from the other end, from the finite and try to divide and subdivide it in order to reach the ultimate reality. They know the snowflake's parts. They have looked within the atom and discovered the forces that hold together its components. But they are not able to imagine where the original forces have come from. Physicists have been able to conduct experiments that reveal matter suddenly appearing in a vacuum where there was nothing. This matter is infinitesimally microscopic and it disappears immediately. Scientists are unable to understand where the matter comes from or where it goes. They are unable to take the last step back to discover the formless reality that contains infinite potential.

What does that have to do with us? We are the product of this same process of creation. We are infinite energy that has been converted into fixed forms. If we know how Sat has converted that infinite energy into this form we call ourselves, we have the power to change the form. We have attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and character. If asked to change our character, we will say it is not possible. Our character is a form which is fixed. But character is only a form of the infinite energy that has been locked into a fixed psychological form. We feel even our mental opinions cannot be changed. It is very difficult to change someone else's opinion, but it is enough if we change our own. Each of our opinions is a form of energy, like the snowflake, and if we know how the opinion has been formed, we can change it. We can change our attitudes, our feelings and our character. Everything follows the same rule. Mother's Force comes from that plane where that infinite energy is being molded into these forms. If we rely on Her force, we can remold any form into any other form. He even says we can supramentalize our body

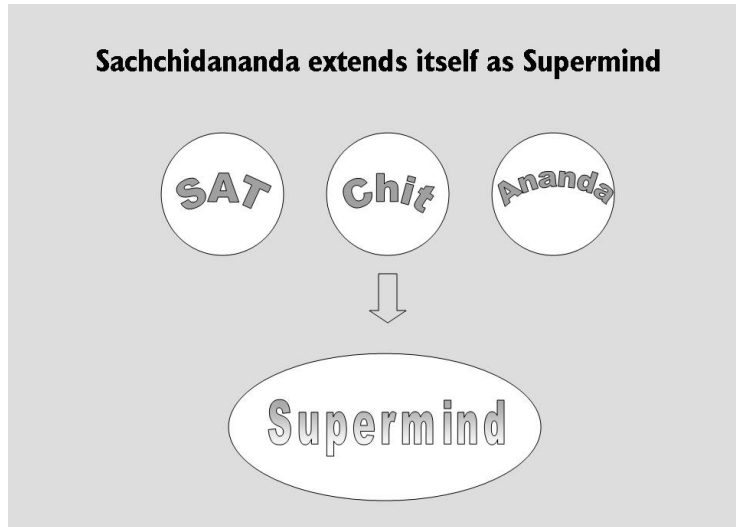
with that same force.

THE PROCESS OF CREATION

Sachchidananda represents the first stage of manifestation of the Absolute, but Sachchidananda itself remains changeless. Out of that, the world of change comes. How does Sachchidananda manifest? It manifests as Spirit, which has 12 aspects. Though we can know it as pure Existence or conscious Soul, we can also know it as any of these 12 aspects. The Spirit can be described in terms of its twelve aspects that manifest in creation – Infinity, Eternity, Silence, Peace, Unity, Truth, Goodness, Knowledge, Will, Beauty, Love and Joy. Everything we experience in the world that has any of these aspects has them because they come from Sachchidananda.

Twelve Aspects of Spirit	
▪ Silence	▪ Knowledge
▪ Peace	▪ Will
▪ Infinity	▪ Power
▪ Eternity	▪ Beauty
▪ Truth	▪ Love
▪ Goodness	▪ Joy

Existence, Consciousness and Bliss extend themselves as a fourth creative principle, Supermind or Truth Consciousness. Supermind is the objective status of Sachchidananda. It is the Nature, the creative power, of Sachchidananda. Mother is the



force that creates the universe. Her power is the power of the Supermind. Calling that which is beyond Mother, you call that which is changeless. When you call Mother, you call the creative force of the universe.

Eightfold Chord of Being		
Existence	→	Matter
Consciousness	→	Life
Bliss	→	Psychic
Supermind	→	Mind

Thus, the superconscient has four aspects or attributes – Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Supermind. These four attributes are reflected in the world below as four counterparts

of worldly existence. Existence which is Sat expresses as Matter, material substance. Consciousness expresses as Life, as active energy. Ananda is reflected in the world as the psychic, the evolving spirit in life. Supermind is reflected down below as Mind.

The process of creation by which the divine manifests as the universe and all that is in it is the same process by which human beings create as well. We are all using this process all the time. About 30 years ago, a young man in the USA wrote a thesis for his MBA in which he described a new business concept, the overnight parcel delivery business. It was a novel idea at that time. It used to take about five days for a parcel to move from one end of the USA to the other. So he wrote a paper describing how to create a new industry that would deliver parcels overnight to any place in the country. He got only a B grade on his paper. The professor said it was a very good idea but it was not practical. The student's name was Fred Smith. Fred Smith went on to create a company based on this concept called Federal Express, which is now worth more than \$25 billion or Rs.100,000 crores. He not only created a business worth that much, he created an entirely new industry which started in the USA and then spread around the world. It was only in about 1980 that courier businesses started in India. Within ten years it had covered the whole world.

How did Fred Smith create what may be today a Rs.300,000 crores global industry? Where did it come from? It looks like it came out of nothing. It started with an idea in his mind. Who created that idea? Smith chose one possibility out of the infinite possibilities and made it happen. How? He used the process of creation, the same process of creation which the Divine uses to create the universe. We are all using this same process of creation all the time. Every businessman who has created a business, every artist who has written a story or a song, everyone who has conceived of a plan and implemented it, is using the same process. It is a process of self-conception.

If we really understand this process, we will see it is something we already know. The difference between us and Parabrahman is that we do it without really knowing how we do it. Because we do not really understand the process, sometimes we succeed and sometimes we fail. If we fully understand the process, we can never fail.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Spirit manifests the world out of its own Being and that world is its Becoming in time. But if the world is a manifestation of Being, which is Truth, then the world must be real. How then can we explain the unreal character of the world described by Shankara who says that the world is an illusion created by Maya? Sri Aurobindo says that it is true the world was created by Maya, but the Maya which has created this world is not a power of illusion as described by Shankara. Maya is the real creative power of the Divine, the power to measure out finite forms from the formless infinite. There is a lower power of maya which like our minds can imagine and create unreal things. Shankara mistook that lower maya to be the creator of the world.

As human beings we know that there is much in the world that is not truly as it appears to our experience. Yogis also have told us that our view of the world is not the reality. We need to understand this apparent contradiction that the world which is a real manifestation of Truth can appear to us to be other than that truth. We all have dreams, which we act in and which are real to our dream experience, but when we wake up, we find they are not fully real in the physical world. We cannot say that the dreams did not happen or were not real, but they are not real in the physical world. Our consciousness has the capacity to experience multiple planes of reality, each of which is 'true' from its own perspective. We know that when we stand on the ground, we are standing vertically. But science tells us we are not standing vertically, the earth we are standing on is a ball and we may be standing upside down. We have the experience that we are standing vertically, but that experience

is not the whole reality. We know that if you take a glass of water and put a pencil in it, the pencil looks bent and broken. But we pull it out and the pencil is whole. It is possible for us to experience something in our consciousness which from another perspective is different from this. We see a film or read a story where we feel happy when the hero is about to succeed. We know it is only a story, but it is real to our consciousness. Our consciousness is capable of experiencing something which to another consciousness is not true or looks illusory.

The Illusionists made the mistake of saying that because the world is not really the way we experience it, perhaps it does not really exist at all. Sri Aurobindo says the way we see it now is not its true appearance, but that does not mean it is not real. When He talks about Maya as the creative force, He is talking about a force of the Supramental consciousness that makes us experience things which are real in different ways than they would be experienced by that supramental consciousness. Without this power of Maya to represent the One Reality as finite forms, there could be no creation.

For the materialist who believes only in what his senses tell him is real, the idea of an infinite spirit as creator of the world seems unreal, inexplicable and non-existent. But for those who have personally experienced the Spirit, the material world seems equally unreal, inexplicable and non-existent. In fact, Sri Aurobindo says that the real enigma is not that an Infinite divine being could exist beyond the material world. The real mystery that we need to unravel is how an infinite divine being, which is everywhere and everything, imperishable, omniscient, omnipotent, one and undivided, could create a world of finite, mortal, temporary forms that live separate and divided existences in Ignorance. It is not so difficult to explain the existence of an all-knowing and all-powerful God as to explain how an infinite all-knowing God could create a world of ignorance, suffering and evil. If you were everywhere and everything all the time, how would you create anything different from yourself? If you

were Sachchidananda, which is all-knowing, omniscient and omnipotent, how would you create a world of Ignorance and impotence? There is nothing but Sachchidananda. A world of separate forms has to be created, but there is only One. The divine performs this miracle by the process of creation.

Why, we may ask, does the divine create a world of Ignorance? Sachchidananda manifests itself as finite forms so that it can give creative expression to the infinite potentials of being which are latent in its unmanifest status. It involves and hides itself within its creation so that it can enjoy the play, the drama, of its own being and the process of rediscovering its true nature. How can the Spirit hide from itself or discover itself when all is One? Maya creates the illusion of separateness when actually there is only the reality of Oneness. The process of creation that Sri Aurobindo describes is the process of explaining how Maya creates the illusion of separation among things that remain real and one. For the Divine, which is omniscient, to create forms that are ignorant is a very great accomplishment. The creation of Ignorance out of Knowledge is essential for the One to manifest itself as the Many.

To understand this process, think about the puppeteer who stands behind the stage and manipulates the puppets. He looks down on the puppets and speaks from the point of view of each of the characters. The viewpoint of the characters is limited, but the puppeteer sees everything. We are like the puppets, God is the puppeteer. We are the eyes and voice of the puppeteer. The eyes that look out through our eyes are his eyes. The voice that speaks through us is his voice. The puppeteer knows us but we have forgotten him.

Sri Aurobindo illustrates this process by comparing the process by which the Divine has created the world with the process by which a great writer creates a literary work. He uses the example of Shakespeare to illustrate what Sachchidananda is doing in creating the world. Shakespeare created 37 plays with hundreds of characters and thousands of actions. Where

did all these life-like stories, characters and actions come from? We say it emerged from the poet's creative imagination. Every creative artist knows that for every character they put in writing, they consider many others that they see in imagination but never put into a story. Each of the characters is depicted expressing certain words and actions, which represent a selection of countless possibilities which the author considers in the formulation of his story. Where do all those infinite possibilities come from? Is there any limit? If we look back to that source of the creative inspiration from which all these characters, word and events pour forth, can we say that there is any limit to its creative potential? Because the plane of creative imagination from which Shakespeare created is not subject to any limits, there can be no limit to the number of characters he could have created.

Sri Aurobindo says that this infinite plane of possibility is like Sachchidananda, like the unmanifest. It is an infinite vacuum containing all possibilities in potential, out of which the artist chooses to create and manifest certain things. In the spiritual tradition, that plane is referred to as the causal plane. It is not a plane of form, but all forms are there in potential. Shakespeare could pull any number of forms out of that plane into his own mind. He could modify their appearance, dress, words and actions in any manner he chose and he could watch the story play over and over again in his mind. This plane in which the infinite possibilities assume a form in his mind is the subtle plane. The forms exist in his mental imagination, but they do not yet have any material reality in the physical plane. Note that in the subtle plane, as in the causal, the past, present and future of the characters and events depicted all exist simultaneous with one another, rather than in succession.

Once the play has been formed in the subtle plane, Shakespeare writes down his story, thereby fixing the details of each character and action a specific set of limitations. This is what happens when any possibility is given material

expression. Then Shakespeare gives the play to be performed in the theatre. The actors learn their parts and act out the story as he has written it. Perhaps, very dramatic points arise during the performance in which an actor becomes so identified with the character and so carried away by the emotional intensity of the situation depicted that he starts acting on his own according to his own inspiration, forgetting the words written for his part by the playwright. Shakespeare throws down the script and asks him, "What are doing? That speech is not in the script!" To which the actor replies, "What do you know? You are only the writer!" The part becomes real to the actor. Shakespeare has created the story so realistically that the actor begins to feel that his character is real and that it is part of himself, that he really feels that way. When we watch the play, even though we know it is a play, we feel so inspired or electrified by it that our emotions are moved. By this process, vague formless potentials from the causal plane have acquired subtle form and been projected into the physical plane, acquiring a reality to the actors as well as the audience. Like the actor who forgets that he is only playing a part in a play and that the character he is depicting is not his real or whole self, we too identify with our surface personalities and forget that in our inmost self we are the Divine and the thoughts, feelings and actions we express in life are not our real or whole self. The same process is at work.

The process that Shakespeare uses to create this effect is the same process that Sachchidananda uses, or rather that Supermind uses to create the world. The only difference is that what Shakespeare creates can become real to our minds and emotions, but it cannot fully materialize as a reality in life. His characters and their actions do not actually exist, except within the play. Whereas, when Supermind creates, it manifests unseen potentials pre-existent in the Unmanifest and is able to project them as real forms, real beings, and real events in the mental, vital and physical planes. This is the same process that

Fred Smith used to create Federal Express. He did not actually create people or airplanes or parcels, but he was able to combine these things to create a successful business organization and a new public service. In all three cases, the essential stages of the process are the same.

What are those essential stages? It begins with an infinite possibility. For Supermind it is the Unmanifest. For Shakespeare it was the creative plane, out of which the creative force conceives of an idea it wants to manifest. For Fred Smith it was the untapped commercial potential in society which he saw and shaped into a new business. The formulation of a form or intention in the Supermind is called a Real-Idea. The formulation of a story and character are called the creative ideas of the writer. Shakespeare creates words and characters and actions in a story form. Fred Smith did the same thing with his courier service, creating an organization to give expression to his business vision. When Shakespeare put his stories on paper, they became fixed. He started with something unfixed in his imagination, but ended with something fixed. Matter gives durability to forms in life. Fred Smith formulated an idea and transformed it into a real business. Shakespeare felt an inspiration and converted it into a play. Supermind gives form to a Real-Idea and creates something in the universe, a form, a person, an institution. Shakespeare creates with words; his characters are made of words. The Supermind creates the universe out of Sachchidananda as its raw material. There is no limit to the creative possibilities of the Supermind. Its material is Existence-Consciousness-Force-Delight. It is creating infinite forms of conscious existence. It is seeking an experience of Delight in different ways.

We follow the same process whenever we formulate a new intention, aspire for a new or greater goal. That aspiration generates a force that acts in our lives to create the conditions and circumstances necessary for its fulfillment. Of course, like the artist, not all of our conceptions acquire the full force of

inspiration needed to manifest themselves. But the process is the same. Every individual possesses a power to manifest his aspiration. In the case of devotees, the force he possesses is the Mother's Force, which carries the creative power of the Supermind.

Sri Aurobindo says that Ignorance is a greater power than Knowledge. He means that ignorance is a creative power. The potter who can make a pot out of clay has a creative power. He does not change the nature of the clay. He gives it a form. When the Omnipresent Reality creates forms out of itself which are ignorant or forgetful of their true nature, it requires a very great creative power. How else than by some miraculous or mystical process could the omniscient create forms of itself which are ignorant of their origin and true nature? It is the power of Ignorance or rather the capacity to create Ignorance that has made the world possible. Without that, the Divine could not have manifested in the world. The goal of the Divine is to manifest the Divine Consciousness in individual forms. But the reality is, there is only One. How can you have individual forms each taking initiative to discover the world, if all of them know everything to begin with? What we call Ignorance is the Divine's capacity for self-limitation.

Purpose of the Divine Manifestation

It is not rational for us to suppose that the Divine must have a purpose for creating the universe. Why should the Divine have a purpose? When the child plays, does he always have a purpose? The best we can do is understand that the artist who creates does it for the joy of the creation. Sri Aurobindo says the act of self-creation through Ignorance is generating an infinite delight of self-expression and self-experience for the Divine. We can best understand that by analogy with the child who builds something and breaks it and builds it again. Today we are trying to understand how Knowledge becomes

Ignorance. God's job was to create the Ignorance, and our job is to rediscover the Knowledge.

The intention of the Divine is not some long journey that leads us back to the starting place of non-manifestation in some blank nirvana beyond. The divine intention is to arrive at something that has never existed before. This is a divine creation. It is a process of spiritual evolution. It is a process of Self-expression through manifestation. Even when the world is transformed into a supramental manifestation, the process need not stop. At that point the rules of evolution may change, because it will become an evolution in Knowledge and with full power and capacity, no longer an evolution in Ignorance, impotence and incapacity as now.

Sri Aurobindo says that the creation did not necessarily have to be an evolution through Ignorance. The Divine could have started with the Supermind and begun with an evolution through full power and knowledge. Why did he start with Ignorance? The Divine wants to have the joy of both the creations. Since it is the Infinite, how can we limit it and say the Divine should do things only in one way? If there is one inherent characteristic of the Divine, it is that it is infinite. It cannot be limited. It explores everything. It creates dinosaurs and then allows them to become extinct.

SUPERMIND AS THE CREATOR

Mind formulates ideas, but lacks the capacity to convert all of its ideas into realities because knowledge and will are separate and distinct faculties in mind. Mind may know something but lack the will to realize it or it may will something and lack the knowledge of how to accomplish it. Supermind creates by the Real-Idea that possesses the inherent power to realize itself in manifestation. By Real-Idea, Sri Aurobindo means an idea which has the full power to realize itself. Chit

is both knowledge and will. In Supermind, knowledge and will are one and united. Whatever Supermind knows, it has the power to effectuate. Whatever it wills, it possesses the complete knowledge necessary for effectuation. The Real-Idea is a power for accomplishment. That is the force you invoke when you call Mother. Hers is a power that has an inherent capacity to fulfill itself. The Real-Idea is a vibration of Being, Sat, that becomes whatever it wants. When the Self-conscious Being has the Real-Idea of OM, it becomes the vibration of sound in the universe, and then the whole universe emerges out of it.

Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind the Truth-Consciousness. For us, when something is true, we mean it is not a lie. But by Truth, He means much more than that. Once a messenger, Nandini Satpathi, came to Mother with a message from Indira Gandhi, and told Mother the message. Indira had said what she thought was true about a certain political situation. And Mother said, "What is true for Indira and for Nandini is not truth." For most of us truth is a very relative thing. Most of what we call true is very much bound by culture and values. What one country considers beautiful or desirable is not necessarily so in another country. So also, our standards of truth are relative.

There is a marvelous story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle about a brave and honest army captain during the Napoleonic wars. He was a wonderful man who would do absolutely anything that was asked of him by his superior officers. Once Napoleon summoned him and asked him to carry a very important message back to the army post in Paris following a particular route. The captain asked, "If I encounter the enemy, should I choose another route?" Napoleon said he should not disobey instructions under any circumstances. He must only follow this particular route. So the Captain left and found out that the route he was told to follow went right through the middle of enemy territory. The enemy could never imagine one of Napoleon's soldiers trying to ride right into their midst, so they

were unprepared. This man was so brave and so bold that he rode right through the enemy camps. He moved so quickly that before the enemy could do anything about it, he had already gone by. He reached Paris, delivered the message and rode back again to meet Napoleon in the South. When the Emperor saw him, he said, "What are you doing here?" The captain replied, "Your Majesty, I have followed your instructions, I have gone through the route, reached Paris and delivered your message." Napoleon said, "You fool! I wanted you to be captured! Do you think I would send you right into the midst of the enemy like that if I wanted that message to safely reach Paris? That was a message I wanted the enemy to intercept!" The captain replied, "Your Highness, if you had wanted me to be captured, you should have told me to get captured." The man was so loyal that he never thought of questioning the Emperor's motives. And he was so brave that he could not be caught. His blind obedience, unshakeable courage and self-sacrifice carried a power of truth.

Unquestioning obedience is often not a trait that we appreciate today. In World War II if a Japanese pilot was told to go crash his plane into an enemy ship, he did it as an act of heroism. Today we would say it is an inhuman act. Our values have changed. Most of the things that we consider true or valuable today, were not considered so a little while ago, and will not be considered that way a while later. During the 1970s if a young man after passing out of college in India said he wanted to start an industry, his parents would weep. They would want him to take a government job. Truth then meant being a government employee. Today any mother would be proud to say her son is an industrialist. These are all relative truths. The truth we are looking for is something universal that applies to all cultures and to all times. Sri Aurobindo calls that Truth the Supramental Consciousness.

Comprehending & Apprehending Supermind

The Supermind is described in *The Life Divine* in very simple terms. Try this exercise. Close your eyes and think of yourself as a single person. Now think of yourself in different roles that you play: son or daughter, husband or wife, mother or father, friend, brother or sister, employer or employee, etc. Now imagine successively all of these different aspects of yourself at the same time. You could add that you are a citizen, a devotee, from a certain caste, or city. Try to see yourself as all these roles simultaneously in your imagination. You can also think of yourself when you were much younger than you are now. You can imagine yourself when you are older. You can do all of these without ceasing to be who you are. You are something more than all of these images. You can even imagine yourself as a baby and old man or old woman at the very same time. Your past and future selves can exist simultaneously in your mind outside the flow of time.

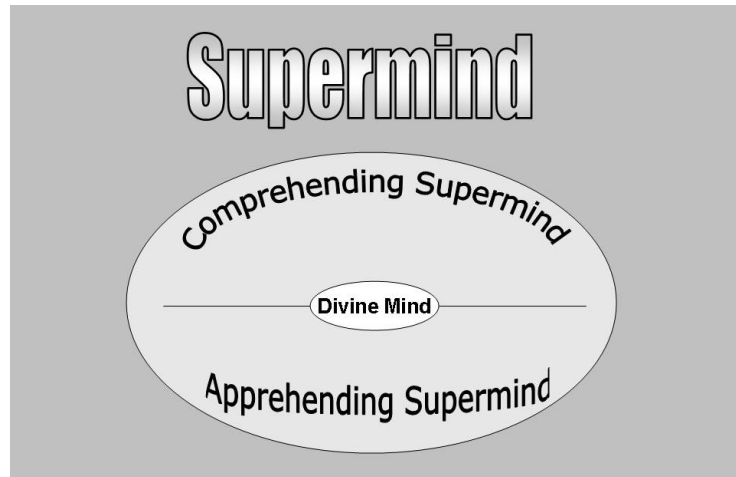
This power of imagination is similar to the power the Divine uses to create forms and personalities out of itself. As mind formulates images and ideas, things that are real to the mind, in Supermind the Divine formulates Real-Ideas that become manifest realities in the universe. Real-Ideas express real Truths and Powers of Sat. All manifest realities are actually different forms of the Divine, expressions of truths and potentialities latent within the unmanifest. No matter what the Divine creates, the Divine still remains what it is and it never exhausts its possibilities since they are infinite. This plane or creative capacity is what Sri Aurobindo calls the Comprehending Supermind, the power of the Divine to create real images, forms of itself. In this plane there is no space or time. All things past, present and future exist simultaneously in consciousness. Supermind is a plane of Knowledge and Truth-Consciousness. Each of the forms created in Supermind is fully conscious that it is an expression of the Divine Consciousness. There is no

loss of consciousness or self-forgetfulness. There is no division or Ignorance.

Let us take the experience one step further to see how these forms separate and become individual centers of consciousness. Choose any one of those forms of yourself which you are imagining and look out from its eyes on the other forms of yourself. Think of yourself as a baby, and look out at yourself when you were ten or twenty or getting married. The moment you concentrate through the eyes of one of your personalities, you can get a sense of distance or space between one form and the others. Until you assume the specific viewpoint of one of your forms, there is no sense of space. The moment you concentrate in one of them and look out from that vantage point, the others move to some imaginary distance from it in your mind. This is how the Divine creates the sense of space. Of course, all the time each of the forms is the One, the space between them is the One and the experience of their interrelationship is that One too. He says *space is Sachchidananda's objective self-extension of itself*.

Imagine you are yourself as a baby with all your different selves surrounding you. Now have the baby turn around and look at one after the other of your other selves making a full circle. You have just created time, because you have created the perception of change, a change in the experience of your consciousness. One moment you are conscious of one thing and the next moment you are conscious of something else. As long as you are always conscious of everything simultaneously, there is no sense of time because there is no change. Sachchidananda cannot know time because it is the consciousness of the changeless One. But the moment you concentrate through the eyes of one form and watch the changing experience around you, through those eyes you get a sense of past, present and future.

Shakespeare could see in his mind all the characters of his creation at the same time. But that is not enough. He has



to identify with each of these characters and feel from their individual point of view in order to give them life. He has to take the individual perspective of each limited form. They are all forms of Shakespeare and all exist only in his mind. When he concentrates on one of the characters and looks out at the world through its eyes, he creates the sense of action and events occurring in time and space. Shakespeare does this by the power of his creative imagination and what he creates are mental images. The Divine does this by the power of what Sri Aurobindo calls the Apprehending Supermind and what the Divine creates are real forms of itself manifest in the universe.

Differentiation of the One into Subject, Object & Experience

When Sachchidananda wants to manifest itself in the world as we know it, this process has to be taken further. For in Supermind, each form of the divine knows itself and all other forms to be divine, whereas in the world we live in each separate form feels itself to be separate and divided from all other forms and the world around it. Now when the Divine wants

to experience itself as separate, it first divides itself into three parts or aspects. Earlier we said that Sachchidananda gives rise to eight fundamental determinants. In Supermind, these eight determinants each give rise to three aspects or expressions of itself – subjective, objective and the experience or interaction between the two. In the Comprehending Supermind the object of knowledge and subject of knowledge are the same, but the apprehending Supermind creates time and space by splitting it into three so the One as subject can experience itself as object. We have said that Knowledge is the reflection of Chit. In Apprehending Supermind, Knowledge splits into three aspects -- the knower, the object of knowledge, and the act of knowing. Similarly, Will becomes the subject that wills, the object of the will and the act of willing. Beauty becomes the perceiver of beauty, the object of beauty, and the experience of beauty, and so on.

How One Becomes Many

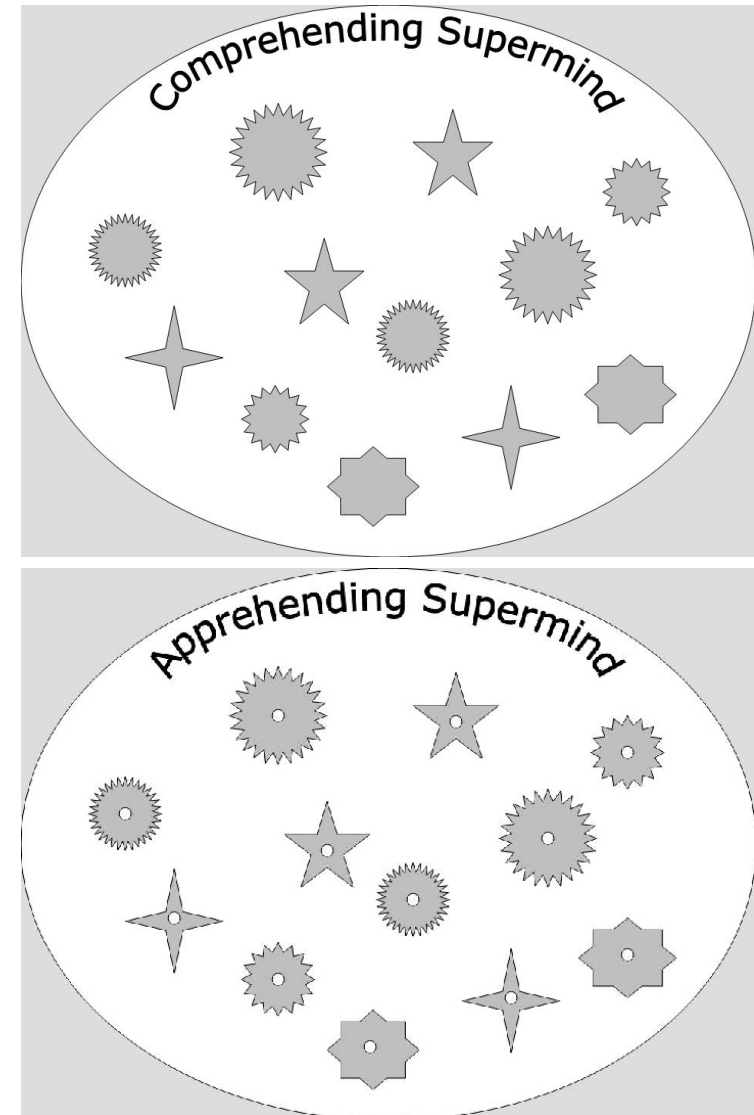
- **Comprehending Supermind**
 - Differentiation as subject, object & experience
- **Apprehending Supermind**
 - Time & Space
 - Purusha & Prakriti
 - Three Poises

Now, perhaps, you can more fully understand the problem the Divine had in manifesting itself as universe. Love becomes

the Lover, the Beloved and the act of Love. We come to the point of loving someone else and thinking they are separate from us. That is in the Ignorance. In reality all are one. How could the Divine create love when there was only Himself? First he had to create the perception of separate things to love and an experience of loving them, all of which are really himself. So love splits up, existence splits up, knowledge splits up. All eight fundamental determinants split up into subject, object and the subject's experience of the object.

Sat's very act of Being is an act of Creation. He creates out of himself. In the Parabrahman, there is the Self as subject, the self as object, and the act or experience of self-awareness. This differentiation of one into three for the purposes of manifestation and experience takes place in Supermind. Shakespeare knows that when he looks out through the eyes of Juliet at her lover, Romeo, as the author he does not cease to be Romeo and all the other characters. They are all parts or expressions of his creative imagination, expressions of himself. In identifying with one of his characters, he does not cease to be the others. So too, in Apprehending Supermind the Divine identifies itself with each of the forms created by Real-Idea and imparts its full consciousness to each form. Each is not only part of itself but is in essence inclusive of all the others and the whole Divine. Thus, the Upanishads say that each is in all and all is in each.

The diagrams on the next page illustrate one of the differences between Comprehending and Apprehending Supermind. The diagram on the top depicts forms or Real-Ideas in the Comprehending Supermind, where the consciousness is spread universally and pervades the entire field, including all the forms within it, and holds them all within itself as aspects of itself. This is akin to Shakespeare holding all the characters within his own mental consciousness. The diagram below depicts the same forms, but now individual centers of consciousness appear within each of the forms from which the One looks out on all the other forms and the field around it. This is akin to



Shakespeare imagining how life looks through the eyes of each of his characters, while still remaining conscious that they are all forms of his imagination and all essentially belong to one

single reality.

In reality, there is only one Being and it can never be divided. It can only appear to be divided. So too, there is only one Consciousness in the universe, the Divine Consciousness. It is only at the level of Force that real division can take place. In Sachchidananda, Consciousness and Force are one, they are Chit. But below that level they begin to separate. The tradition says that in the Ignorance Prakriti runs and does what it wishes unconnected with what the Purusha wants. In Supermind the force of Prakriti is the force of the Purusha. That is Mother, the Shakti of the Ishwara. Mother expresses the conscious intention of the Ishwara in Supermind. She is the force for the creation. That is why we pray to Her. That is why She has the power.

Soul, God & Ego

In Sachchidananda, there is only one Being, the Divine Being. But in the world we live in, when we think of "being", we think of being in different ways. Each of us thinks of himself as an ego, a separate individual, and of all other people as beings separate from ourselves. We even experience God as something separate from us, a different being. If we withdraw from our ego, we can experience our soul, our true spiritual individuality, as a third being. Where do all these separate beings come from? How does this sense of three different types of being come into existence? We started with only the One, so they must all be expressions of the One.

Sri Aurobindo explains that the Supermind can manifest as these three poises – soul, God and ego. The soul represents the divine's capacity to stand back from the creation. The ego represents its capacity to be fully involved in the creation. God represents its capacity to be lord of creation, both standing above it and directing it. As the Divine Soul (Jivatma), the real individuality behind the surface, it knows itself as one with all other expressions of itself. But when Being assumes

the poise of the ego, it experiences itself as a separate person. In Apprehending Supermind, the Divine concentrates on these three different poises of itself and gives reality to all of them. It looks out through all of their eyes, while all the time never ceasing to be or to know that it encompasses and exceeds all three. It is only at the next lower step when Supermind gives rise to Mind that the distinct forms of the One lose the consciousness of their Oneness and begin to experience themselves as separate and different beings. The Ishwara manifests as many different Gods, each conscious that it is the One. The ego loses contact with the soul in its depth and feels itself cut off from the Divine above, from other egos and from the world around it. The soul looks at the ego as something different from itself. The Sankhyas experienced the truth of the Jivatma, but they saw multiple souls. They saw that each of us has a soul, and they stopped there. He says, if you go further you find that in Supermind there is only one soul, the Divine Soul. The experience of multiple souls by the Sankhyas is a true experience, but when you go back to what is behind these souls and their source, you always come to the same thing, the One. They are all one. But each gets isolated and forgets that all are expressions of the same one Divine experiencing itself from three different vantage points.

THREE POWERS OF CREATION

The Divine creates and manifests itself through three powers – the power of self-conception, self-limitation and self-absorption. By self-conception, the Divine puts forth Real-Ideas or intentions that it wants to manifest. By self-limitation, the Divine concentrates on certain aspects of its infinite potential in order to project them forward, while holding back other of its powers and potentialities so as to assume the appearance of a limited formation. While the Divine is all the time Infinite and

All, it projects finite aspects of itself and holds all the rest of its infinite being behind. By self-absorption, the Divine conceals its infinite consciousness within each of the limited forms of itself that it has created, so that little or no consciousness expresses on the surface of that form. By these three powers, the Infinite Consciousness manifests itself as Mind, Life and Matter.

The process of self-limitation and self-absorption can be likened to what occurs in a situation when somebody provokes me and I get very angry. At that moment I 'forget' that as a devotee of Mother I am supposed to always act like a civilized human being. I identify with my anger—we may even say, I become anger—and I blow up. I identify with one aspect of myself and push aside other aspects. Another time, when I am writing an essay or reading something interesting, I forget that my family is waiting for me or that I have made promises to friends. At another time when I am in a difficult situation and need some money, I think that without that money I am helpless and cannot survive. I forget all my capacities. I forget that I am a devotee of Mother. I concentrate on that one tiny thing and ignore all my other capacities.

This is similar to the process of creation that the Divine uses to limit Itself. This Infinite omniscient Being gives reality to one particular aspect and 'forgets' that it is all the others. Every time we concentrate on one of our limited capacities and forget all the others, we are creating the way the Divine creates. We are creating Ignorance by concentrating on a limited portion of ourselves and pushing awareness of all the rest into the background. We are burying our heads in the sand.

It may have been necessary for the Infinite to create Ignorance in order to become finite, but we are supposed to be trying to go in the other direction! If we reverse the process and concentrate on the Divine, we can rediscover the greater whole that we secretly are. That is what you do when you call Mother. You are creating through the same process, but instead of limiting yourself further, you are trying to widen yourself.

You are trying to remember the Truth of what we all are, the Supramental Creator.

Without this process of separation, the world could not exist. How can the poet create an interesting drama with only one character? You cannot have someone telling jokes to themselves and laughing. Even if we want to be devotees relating to God, we must first be devotees with egos to overcome in order to discover the psychic. That is why He says that rather than trying to relate to God, it is better to become God. Our mission is not to escape from life, but to discover and manifest the divine truth here on earth in the body, the truth that All is Brahman.

The Overmind

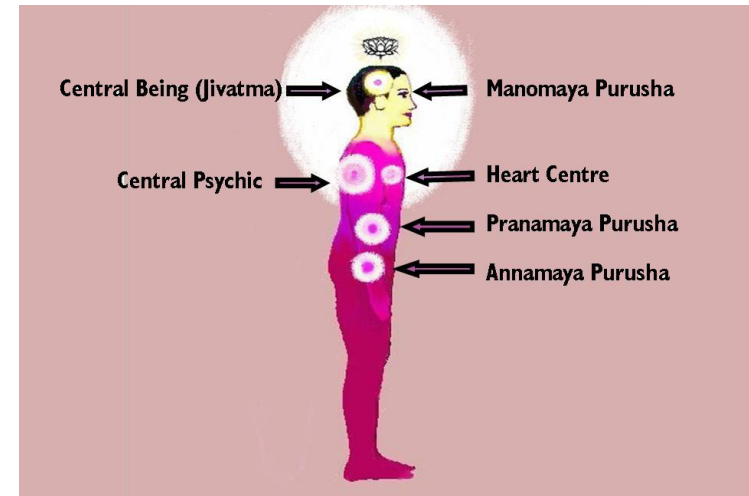
The next step in the process of creation is the emergence of the Overmind. This is the first step into the Ignorance. What Sri Aurobindo means by Overmind can be imagined this way: I identify with one aspect of my personality, but I do not identify with all the other aspects. I think of myself as an adult. I look back and see myself behind that adulthood, but I say the child-self or my other-selves are not me. What I see of myself is true, but it is no longer the whole truth. I still know myself, but I do not know every other manifestation of myself. Overmind is the plane of the Gods. Each God is a manifestation of the Divine. Each is a true manifestation of the Divine, one aspect. Each of them can look back and find the Supramental Divine behind or within them, but none of them recognizes that all the other Gods are equally aspects of the Divine. Each expresses a Truth of the Divine, but limits itself to one aspect or portion of the whole Truth. It is the beginning of division and of separative knowledge.

In Overmind, the conscious soul, the Purushottama, takes different poises in Nature and becomes the Purusha behind the heart, the Purusha behind the vital, the Purusha behind the physical and the Purusha behind the mind. The Purushottama

splits up into separate centers of consciousness behind and gives rise to four different Purushas. This is necessary for the creation of mind, life, body and psychic. In Overmind, Purusha and Prakriti, Conscious Being and Force of Nature, split apart. Prakriti also splits up and takes on different forms. It takes the form of the cosmos, the universal life. All force, all action is only the Divine. It becomes the force of our ego, which makes us call ourselves separate and different. It becomes our physical, vital and mental energy.

Overmind	
Purusha becomes	Prakriti becomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manomaya ▪ Pranamaya ▪ Annamaya ▪ Chaitya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cosmos ▪ Ego ▪ Mental ▪ Vital ▪ Physical ▪ Psychic

Prakriti also becomes the energy and force of the psychic. There is a psychic element behind the mind, the heart, the vital and the physical centre. The soul is part of the Spirit. It is not part of evolving nature like the psychic. The psychic is the evolutionary part of our being, changing as it goes forward. The psychic is a projection or extension of Ananda in the lower hemisphere of creation.



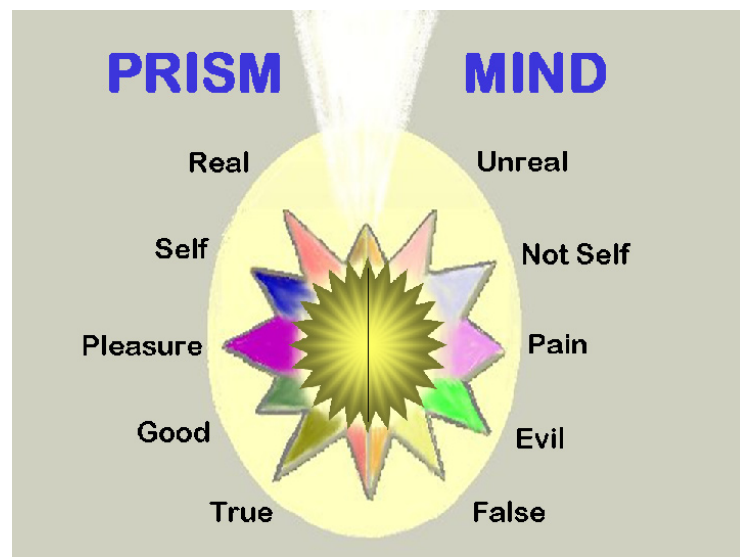
ORIGIN AND NATURE OF MIND

The process of division continues as we descend from Overmind to Mind. Overmind is a universal consciousness, a cosmic consciousness that embraces and includes the whole cosmos. The individual centre is still linked back to its origin, so it is not truly separate from the rest of creation. In Overmind and the other higher planes above the thinking mind, one knows the world directly without needing the instrumentation of the senses.

In mind, awareness of one's origin and oneness with all other beings is concealed deep within. Consciousness becomes limited to the individual ego and to the surface of our being. Mind is a derivative power of Supermind and an instrument through which Supermind creates the universe. Mind is a power to divide the one indivisible reality and make it appear as separate and independent things. Carrying forward our analogy, in Supermind we know that all of our personalities are aspects of one being and that our being is also one with the Divine Being. Mind is the capacity to look at each of ourselves separately

and regard it as an independent existence, a separate person. In Supermind we can distinguish separate forms but we know all the time that they are all forms of the One. In mind we lose that sense of connectedness and view each form as independent of all the others and independent from the Divine and the soul. When we talk about our soul, we talk about it as something different from our ego. It is mind that gives us the experience of that division. In mind, the power of self-limitation enables the Divine to identify with individual expressions of itself and forget or lose contact in consciousness with the fact that they are all one.

In Supermind all is white light, but that white light contains all the other colors within itself. Mind acts like a prism, splitting all of the colors and viewing them separately from one another. It splits everything and divides everything up into smaller and smaller pieces. It tries to know reality by splitting it up into opposites and affirming one side or the other. For every truth of mind there is an opposite which is also true. Mind views each



thing as a whole in itself and breaks it down into parts, then views each part as a whole consisting of even smaller parts. It also aggregates parts into wholes and sees these wholes as parts of greater wholes. By this process of division, mind divides all reality into opposite and contradictory pairs. It says, "This is real, that is unreal; this is true and that is false." It divides everything into opposites. But what is it dividing? It is dividing the One, something which cannot be truly divided. What mind regards as opposites are only aspects of a greater whole. What mind regards as contradictions are actually complementary elements when viewed from Supermind.

Mind looks at the One through its prism glass and views that One as consisting of an infinite number of individual atoms. Then it goes further and discovers that each of these atoms is made up of electrons and nuclei. It goes further and splits the nuclei, seeing that it consists of neutrons and protons. It splits those too infinitely. Why does it split like this? Because the nature of mind is that it can only know things by contrast with other things. The only way mind can know anything is by distinguishing it from something else. When we see a form, such as a circle, we see the outline of the circle and distinguish what is inside it from what lies outside it. Everything the mind sees is by contrast; whereas the Supramental Consciousness sees each thing as an aspect of a greater whole and sees its right relationship to every other component of the whole.

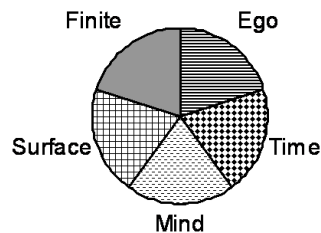
FIVE ATTRIBUTES OF HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

The transition from Supermind to Mind takes place in five dimensions. As a result there are five attributes that distinguish the human consciousness from the Divine Consciousness. First of all, we think we are the separative ego rather than knowing ourselves as the Divine Being. We are not

aware of our oneness with all beings and things. Secondly, we live on the surface, ignorant of the depths of our consciousness. We are not aware of our subconscious, subliminal or psychic. We live right on the surface of our being lost in whatever action we are doing at the moment. Thirdly, we live in time. We do not remember very well what happened in the past. The past lives only in memory. We live in the moment. We do not know the future, but only try to imagine its possibilities. If we want to think about tomorrow, we stop thinking about this moment. We cannot experience past, present and future simultaneously, whereas in Supermind all three coexist. Past, present and future all exist eternally like the perennial movement of water in a flowing river. Fourth, we are finite. We identify with the finite form of ourselves, oblivious of the Infinity behind which is our true Being. Consequently, we are limited in energy, power, joy, knowledge and everything else. Finally, we live in the mind that divides everything. This is Sri Aurobindo's description of human consciousness.

Once we know the attributes that have transformed the Divine

Five Attributes Of Human Consciousness



Consciousness into human consciousness, we also know how that human consciousness can transform itself back again. All that we need to do is to reverse the process that the Divine has gone through to create limited egos. The Divine has not been forced to undergo this process of self-limitation. There was no compulsion to create an ego or divided mind. It was done as a means to permit a full development and expression of the infinite potentials of the Infinite. That required giving freedom to each vibration or power of the Divine to fully express itself without limitation or reference to the rest. It required the creation of separate individual centers of consciousness that were unconscious of the whole of which they are each a part. Having reached the stage of mind in the evolution, we now have the option of exercising in reverse the same powers that have made us what we are.

How do we reverse what we are in practical terms? First, I can reverse my identification with ego by becoming unselfish and regarding all other persons as I regard myself. When I hear you got a promotion, I should feel happy for you instead of feeling jealous. Instead of giving supreme importance to my needs, my priorities, my preferences, my skills, my accomplishments, I can recognize that other people are as important as I am in the scheme of things. All of the normal movements of the ego that make me more and more separated and isolated can be reversed. I can become selfless, generous, a source of endless goodwill for others. Second, I live on the surface, I identify fully with its partial movements such as anger. What can I do about it? I know there is a psychic inside me, so I can consecrate my surface thoughts, emotions, desires, preferences, etc. to the psychic and try to recover more of myself. I do not have to be totally lost on the surface, feeling that this superficial existence is all of myself. Third, I can consciously go back and consecrate the past, and I can consciously go forward and create tomorrow by consecrating my future actions. In the measure I do that, I reverse the division of time and come out of my limitations.

The mind that we are talking about, the mind that is on the surface, is what Sri Aurobindo calls the physical mind. It only knows what is there in front of it at the moment. It does not know what is going to happen a day from now or a year from now. It is always willing to believe the worst. It sees one side of any situation, one aspect of the whole and takes that for truth, right, reality. By some unfortunate condition that happens to be the mind we are all living in. How can we overcome mind? We can compensate for the divisive character of mind by consciously moving away from its limited, self-centered viewpoint. He gives a simple technique: Take the other person's point of view. The one thing mind can never do is think that there is another point of view. The very character of mind is, "I am right, why don't you listen to me?" He says the first step in reversing the process is to think from the other person's point of view. In that manner we come out of the limitation of the ego-centered mind and look at reality from a wider perspective. By doing this we are reversing the process by which mind created the sense of division and separation. This is something that we can practice at every moment.

We can utilize this same process of creation to become conscious creators of our lives. Try this experiment. Take thirty days, choose what you would consider very lucky, and put your full concentration on that idea. Commit yourself to do everything necessary from your side to exhaust your capacities to achieve it. Instead of relying on your limited, finite capacities on the surface, shift your faith to Mother. Shift your faith to the supramental Shakti who creates the universe and ask Her to come and realize your ideal.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE UNIVERSAL

In one chapter Sri Aurobindo answers an age-old question about the reality of the individual. Some traditions say the individual does not really exist, that the soul is really an illusion or temporary phenomenon. According to this view, the Purushottama is eternal, but the individual Purusha is only a temporary expression. According to another view put forth by Sankhya, both the one Purushottama and the many Purushas are real, but they are separate realities. Sri Aurobindo says very clearly that the individual is eternal. The Individual is the Eternal. By saying that He does not mean we exist independently from the Divine Being. We exist as real manifestations of that One. We are expressions and embodiments of different aspects of the One, not separate and independent existences. This is like saying I am a father to my children, a husband to my wife and a son to my parents. I am all three of these things in reality and each is a real, distinct existence, but all are also aspects of my greater, truer self. Each individual soul is a real, distinct, eternal spiritual entity, but all are aspects of the One Divine Being.

He goes on to explain the precise role and relationship between the individual and the universal. The universal represents the infinite sum of all divine aspects that are pressing for manifestation and development. The individual represents the specific points through which each of these aspects is given a field for expression and development. The universe fulfills itself in and through countless individuals. The universe fulfills itself only through the differentiation of different individuals, each with unique qualities. Each of these qualities expresses one aspect of the universal all. Among human beings, there are an infinite number of individual types. Human beings represent a billion different combinations of characteristics expressing as unique individuals. That is why each individual can have

a unique set of fingerprints and each human face can be distinguished from so many thousands of other faces, all with the same general features.

At the same time, the individual can fulfil itself only by becoming universal. As individuals we fulfil ourselves only when we overcome the limitations of being separate and discover our common universality and our essential Oneness with all other human beings and all things. The universe is all the time working to help the individual distinguish itself, i.e. to develop its latent capacities in a unique manner the way a sculptor carves a figurine out of stone. The universe comes to us as Life, presenting to us the exact conditions needed to realize our inherent potentials. At the same time, the universe constantly presents us with the reality of our similarity and oneness with all other beings. It reminds us in a million ways that we cannot exist for ourselves alone, but must depend on our relationship with countless others and with our environment for our survival, growth and enjoyment. Man is a social being and cannot fully develop in isolation from other people. To fulfil ourselves as individuals, we need to be working all the time to rediscover our oneness with others and the universe around us. We have to do that because as separate people we have nothing. We have no knowledge, no power, no life, no enjoyment. We exist when we are individually poised, but we are fulfilled only when we see our oneness and relate to everyone else as aspects of ourselves. Even when we feel our oneness with others, we do not lose our individuality. We still retain the sense of being a unique person. We look out at ourselves and see our oneness in everyone else. We dwell within them. We find out that our Self is much greater than we thought it was. It is one with the universal and cosmic Self.

Later on, after we have been universalised, if we keep going, we discover not only that we are an individual soul and universal soul too, but we are also one with the Parameshwara, the Transcendental One. Because there was a belief that the

individual was inferior, traditional yoga was meant to abandon or dissolve that individuality and merge it back into the transcendent. But for a divine life, that will never work. We cannot take this exit route. We have to take the route of realizing our full potential by becoming the Divine here on earth, in the body and in harmonious relationship with all our other selves who are also equally manifestations of the One.

MATTER

Sri Aurobindo is the first to explain the mystery of Matter. He says that Matter is Sat. Sat becomes Matter. Matter is as real and as divine as anything else, manifest or unmanifest. Matter is Sachchidananda. The difference is that Sachchidananda is self-conscious, but in matter the spirit is involved and self-absorbed so that it is not conscious on the surface. Self-absorption is one of the great powers of the Divine, the capacity to turn in upon itself, to lose itself in self-absorption. Sachchidananda is the self-absorption of the divine in its unmanifest superconscious splendor. Matter is the self-absorption of the divine as inconscient self-oblivion. The Divine directs its infinite force and turns it in upon itself and concentrates away from the surface, plunging within itself into self-oblivion, like a stork burying its head in the sand. That is Matter. We say that matter is inconscient because we do not see any sign of conscious awareness on the surface. It does not move. It does not respond to stimulation. But the consciousness is there nevertheless, because the consciousness of the One can never be destroyed, it can only be concealed.

What is that consciousness, which is also force, doing? It is revolving around itself, focused on itself, entirely turned inward, like the eternal serpent that has swallowed its own tail. There is no sign of consciousness or force on the surface. When we look at a stone, we see only solid, immobile, unresponsive

form. However, science has discovered that the apparently solid stone actually consists of millions of atoms whirling about at high speed in all directions. Each of these atoms in turn appears to be a solid object from a distance, but on closer examination it is found to consist of elementary particles spinning around the atomic nucleus at high speed. The sense of solidity and immobility is only an illusion. The atom is laden with enormous energy. Consciousness is concealed in the Inconscient, but it expresses first as Energy rather than as Consciousness. The properties of minerals and plants, including their curative powers, are expressions of that buried consciousness.

Matter is laden with consciousness that is unable to communicate and not observable by mind, which can know only the surface of things. But when we reach Supermind, we discover that matter is only form of Sachchidananda. Matter is the way in which we experience Sachchidananda, or Sachchidananda experiences itself, when it presents itself to the mind through the senses. In Supermind we are able to perceive the consciousness and force of Sachchidananda expressing in and as the form of matter. In reality, there is nothing but Spirit. Spirit presenting itself to its own self-experience through the instrumentation of the mind and senses appears to itself as Matter.

HABITS, ATTITUDES AND OPINIONS

One of the fundamental characteristics of matter is repetition. It wants to continue doing what it has done in the past. We experience that as our physical habits, which are so very difficult to change because they are lodged in our physical consciousness. As mentioned earlier, the atom consists of a nucleus with electrons circling around it. If you asked an atom of nitrogen to become an atom of helium or oxygen, it would refuse. And if you tried to change it by removing some

of its electrons, it would explode, releasing atomic energy. The atom says, "Do not tamper with my electrons." Sri Aurobindo says that the force of the atom trying to maintain its identity as oxygen or hydrogen is the same ego principle present in mind and life. It is the force that seeks to maintain the separate and distinct individuality of each form. The atom is the physical representation of the ego principle. Every atom has its own identity and does not want to be disturbed, just like every human being. How does one create an identity? You create an identity for yourself by being predictable. When somebody says, "I met that man and he was very pleasant." You respond, "Yes, yes, he is always like that." That is the predictable characteristic in our behavior. All that has the sense of repetition over and over again is the physical in us which we have inherited from the nature of matter. The physical makes us predictable. That is why our physical bodies behave so predictably, maintaining the same temperature in all circumstances, breathing in and out rhythmically, circulating blood without a moment's pause.

Repetition and predictability are the basis for creating stable forms and that is the essential function of matter. The Divine's purpose for creating matter was to create a stable basis, a solid foundation in which stable forms could be created and interact. The only thing that is reliable is the thing that remains the same. Since everything is only energy in constant motion, the only way it can remain the same is by continuing to repeat the same movement over and over again. Matter consists of energy that continues to behave predictably in the same fashion. Unfortunately, since we have evolved out of matter, we continue to behave very much like the atoms. We insist on our predictable habits. We get up at the same time, we eat the same things, we talk in the same way and think the same things. Apart from our physical habits, we also have vital habits, which we call attitudes. Attitudes are the fixed ways in which we respond to things. If someone comes and asks for a book, I say, "I am sorry, I do not lend my books out." My

attitude is that people who borrow will never return things. We all have characteristic ways in which we respond to things around us. We also have fixed opinions of the mind. "Oh, he's an American, all Americans are like this." "He is from that community, so he's like that." We have fixed and inflexible opinions on everything and we insist on all of them.

Our physical habits, vital attitudes and mental opinions are expressions of the forces of physicality and ego in us striving to create and maintain a separate existence. So long as they are prevalent, we are cut off from other people, from the world around us and from the transcendent divine. Until we overcome these limiting expressions of the ego, we are locked within a finite, fixed, predictable form, like the atom, and can never discover or give expression to our true self that is infinite.

How do I come out of my habits, vital attitudes and mental opinions? The first thing I have to do is recognize that that is not me. These things are not what make me unique. I am something other than my habits, attitudes and opinions. Actually in practice, when someone comes and asks us to change our attitude, we feel it is not possible. We are totally identified with our attitudes. We can change our behavior, but inside we remain the same. Mother says that in the tradition, and even in Western psychology, the normal belief is that character cannot change. Attitudes can change when the vital has an experience that contradicts its attitude. It does not often do that, but it can change. First of all, we have to stop saying 'my opinions and attitudes are right.' As long as we feel we are right, we are fully identified with our ego. There are no right or wrong attitudes, there are only attitudes that help or hinder our growth. Positive attitudes help our lives expand. Negative attitudes make it contract. But positive or negative, ultimately all attitudes place limits on our accomplishments, growth and development. So for endless expansion in life or for yoga, all attitudes are to be given up. None are to be justified.

Once we have given up justifying an opinion, we have to

decide that the opinion is something we want to change. And then we have to say, "It's not me." My opinion is not my whole mind; it is only a thought in my mind. It certainly does not include my life, my heart, or body. It is only one small point. Let me push it away like an object. I decide it is not me, I realize it is not me and I push it away from me. Then I call Mother's power to dissolve the opinion.

In the same way, I can pray that my attitude should change. The attitudes we have created are one of the ways by which the Infinite has become finite. Our job now is to reverse the direction and make the finite Infinite. The way we do that is to reverse our attitudes, of which we have thousands. There is a method that can work for all of us. Wherever we feel a strong reaction, without trying to justify it in any way, let us say "I offer this attitude to you, Mother. Let me give it up. Let me make a progress." Call Mother at that point to reverse it, to dissolve that attitude. There is infinite prosperity behind each of our opinions, attitudes and habits. Each time we come forward to give one of them up, we release an enormous energy that translates in our lives as the disappearance of a problem or the sudden appearance of a great opportunity. Surrendering these aspects of our ego is the surest way to invite infinite prosperity into our lives. A young man who consecrated his resentful attitude toward a co-worker was offered a huge business opportunity by the very same person the following day and in subsequent years that person became a continuous source of prosperity for him. If you study your own life or the lives of great achievers, you will see that enormous opportunities have emerged when small attitudes are rejected. Unfortunately, for most of us the opposite is more commonly true.

Beyond our habits, attitudes and opinions, there is something even more fixed in our nature. It is our character. Sri Aurobindo says the character is actually inherited physically. He gives a very interesting insight for the psychologists in this book. He says that character is inherited as a subtle part of the genes.

How can we change what it is part of our physical inheritance? Our body is formed of physical substance. Our character is formed of physical consciousness. Substance is much more solid and difficult. Consciousness is more aware. Mother says categorically that if a man wants to change his character and calls Her, he can change it. The supramental force has the power to transform the physical consciousness. This is pure yoga for those who seek transformation. It is not necessary for devotees who are just seeking prosperity.

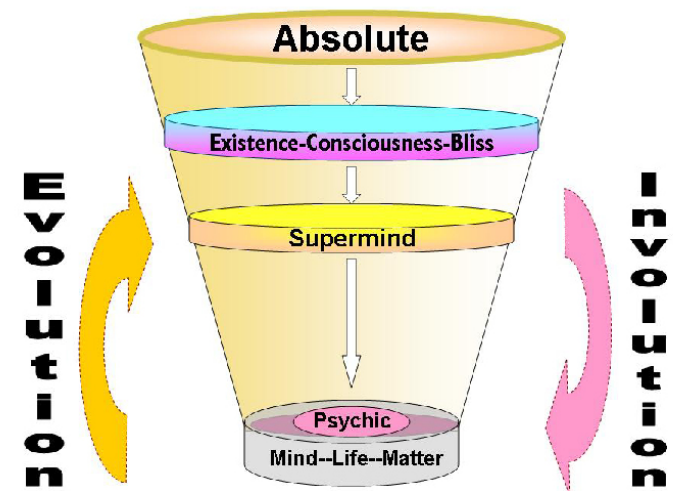
Our objective here is to discover and experience in our own lives the truths that Sri Aurobindo writes about in *The Life Divine*. By this knowledge, we can raise our lives ten times higher. If the income of people in Ramapuram could rise in prosperity a hundred times, then how much more is possible for true devotees who rely on Mother? We are talking here of spiritual methods to achieve results in life, not about a system of beliefs or religion. Sri Aurobindo's greatest discovery is not the ultimate reality of the Absolute, but the ultimate Reality of Life, its divine nature and its divine destiny. If we call this knowledge which is power into our lives, it will uplift us. We must understand ourselves, where we have come from, what our essential nature is, the problems we have. This is a knowledge which purifies and uplifts.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS OF INVOLUTION

Sri Aurobindo has described for us how the One appears as Many. The Absolute becomes Conscious Being, and later differentiates itself into Brahman, Purushottama and Parameshwara, the creator of the world which includes that Self-Conscious Existence, but also embraces the world. The world is an extension of his force, the Mahashakti. Finally the One has become eight, the extension of Parameshwara's power

for creation. The nature of Sachchidananda is Supermind, its force for manifestation. At each level we have a being and a force. This eight has a nature or force for self-expression which we call Supermind. The four above become in the process of involution the four below—matter, life, mind and psychic.

Supermind envisions the universe and everything created in it as Real-Ideas. In the comprehending Supermind, the first thing it does is to split each of the eight aspects into three. Love becomes the lover, the beloved and the act of loving. Beauty becomes the seer of beauty, the object of beauty and the experience of beauty. All that manifests below is the further and further differentiation of the powers of the One, which are all there in infinite potential in the unmanifest. In the Supermind, through the Real-Idea, the Divine conceptualizes everything that it wants to create in the world. Whatever it creates as a Real-Idea is a truth or power of the Divine Being that has the full power to manifest itself. How does it possess that power? Because there is nothing to oppose it. There is nothing but Sachchidananda which is infinite.



The entire manifestation is a manifestation of the infinite in terms of finite space and moments of time. To the observant eye, the infinite power concealed behind small finite appearances shines through. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, the evil Iago plots the downfall of Othello, the general. At one point Desdemona, Othello's wife, drops her handkerchief. Iago bends down and picks it up. At that moment you know Iago will use this handkerchief to do evil to them both by making Othello believe she has given it to a lover. A great literary critic once wrote that the sense of horror which another great writer might try to create by burning a whole village, Shakespeare creates in us by the drop of a single handkerchief. Thus, a small insignificant event can lead to great, and in this case, tragic consequences.

The same is true in a positive sense. When a writer communicates to us something of the sweetness of life, it is through small events that it comes out. Two utter strangers reach simultaneously for the last pair of gloves for sale on a department store counter. Each offers to withdraw in favor of the other. That insignificant interaction sows the seed of a romance that matures into love. The Divine is here not writing a tragedy, but a comedy in the highest sense, a story of unending fulfillment. We can have that wonder of the glory of the artist, of the Supramental creator at every moment, when we discover that the Divine in each small act is trying to reveal to us the wonder of life. He is trying to show us the Spirit in life which is just there behind the surface. He is trying to reveal and manifest the Infinite in the finite.

Sri Aurobindo is the first to ever explain how the Divine gives to its creation a sense of separate life and force, so that we can experience this great drama, this wonderful intensity of life. It does so by assuming three different poises of itself – God, soul and ego. As we discussed earlier, in the apprehending Supermind the Ishwara takes the perspective of each of the forms or ideas it has created and looks out at the world through that different perspective. The Divine takes the poise of the soul within each

of these forms. It also takes the poise of the ego, of each of us living on the surface of the form, unconscious of our true inner and higher self. At the same time, the Divine lives above and beyond as the Creator. The Divine can simultaneously assume all three poises without at any time forgetting who he is. It is only the ego on the surface that forgets it is really Sat who is looking out. Sat allows itself as ego to become lost in the form.

Why does the Divine do this? If you were the conscious Infinite and one of us came and asked you why you are doing all this, you might reply, "Why shouldn't I assume finite limited forms? I seek the infinite delight of self-experience and self-discovery. How else can I have the delight of experiencing myself as different things and events, unless I first am able to conceal parts of myself from myself and experience them as separate and different from each other and myself? You cannot clap with one hand. You cannot have a play with only one player. Romance requires a lover and a beloved. The charm of a sporting contest is to have someone to compete against to test your capacities. I seek infinite experience by forgetting who I am. Don't you do the same thing when you reread your favorite novel or watch again your favorite movie? You put away your knowledge of the ending so you can enjoy the wonder and intensity all over again. I try to forget the whole that I am by putting forth parts of myself that are ignorant of their true nature. Why should I not have the joy of experiencing an infinite number of beings who are all myself? Why should I not experience the delight of progressively awakening to self-discovery in each of these beings?"

Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* begins with the tale of a drunkard lying unconscious on the forest path. He is a poor, almost homeless drunkard, who passed out on the road. A hunting party comes along led by a Lord, and they see this man lying unconscious on the road. The Lord asks who it is, and someone identifies him as one of the local drunks. The Lord

says, "Let's have some amusement. Take him home, bathe him, dress him up in my finest silk gown, put him in my bed, and when he wakes up, we will all surround him and tell him that he is the Lord of this realm, who has been in delirium for ten years, during which time he has imagined himself as a poor drunkard. We will all pretend to be so happy to see him revived from his delirium of ten years." And so they did it. They all gather around the bed. And when the drunkard slowly wakes up in the Lord's bed with a terrible headache, he is very frightened seeing all these people surrounding his bed. One of them says, "Your Majesty, we are so delighted to see you back." One of the teenage boys has been dressed up as a woman and given a wig with long hair, and they tell the drunkard that this is his loving wife who has been waiting ten years for him to wake up. The drunkard says, "What are you talking about?" They tell him he has been dreaming for ten years, and after listening to them for about five minutes unbelievably, he says, "Oh yes, now it's coming back to me. Yes, well, what about my breakfast! What are you all doing here? You can go now! Bring my breakfast!" When I think of that story, it reminds me of us in reverse. We are all like Lords who wake up thinking that we are drunkards. We do not remember that we are really the Lord! We accept that we are poor separate individual egos as readily as the drunkard accepted that he was a Lord. But it is no more true for us than it was for him.

Consciousness and Force, though they remain one, differentiate themselves into two sides of the coin, one side which is awareness and the other side which is will for accomplishment. Then, in Overmind, there is a separation into Purusha and Prakriti, consciousness and force. Instead of looking out through one eye of the Purushottama, the being looks out from four different vantage points, the four Purushas behind the four parts of the being – the mental Purusha, vital Purusha, physical Purusha and psychic Purusha. The Prakriti becomes the force of the ego which takes a separate mental

position and tries to continuously fortify itself. Prakriti also divides itself into three planes of lower existence, mind, life and physical. Finally we come to mind, which acts like a prism. The mind takes all the pieces of cake and divides them infinitely into atoms, so that this One Existence has become infinitely divided.

How to understand what life is? Suppose there is a village with only collective ownership, in a very prosperous area. For 300 years all the families have been collectively cultivating the land very happily. Then someone suggests dividing it up into plots of three acres for each family. All the families rush to claim their portion. They build fences around their lands, they start quarreling over which portion is theirs. They begin to defend their divided portion. Each family begins thinking that all the other families are out to cheat them. All the energy of the family which used to go to the whole village gets isolated. That is the infinite life force being divided by the ego and that same force being turned to defend the small, limited form which the ego has given us. What we feel is our life, is really a part of the infinite life force which we are claiming as our own. When we meet someone like Mother, we feel full of life, because more of that infinite life fills us up. We are identified with this very narrow plot of land which we call ourselves. We do not realize that there is only one Life. When the vital ego dissolves, we discover there is only one force of life, which never dies and is never born. We become one with that and we have that infinite Cosmic Force available to us for creation.

The characteristics of our divided existence are: we feel the sense of separation in our divided ego; we live on the surface, we are not aware of the Purushas behind; we live lost in the moment, ignorant of past and future; we are identified only with our finite circumstances; and we live in the mind that sees oneness as infinite division. As the result of the Involution, Sachchidananda has assumed the form of a mindless, lifeless universe. There the wonder begins.

Ego's Double Prison

- Cut off from the infinity of self within
- Cut off from the infinity of the cosmos

The goal of this yoga is fulfillment in the body. The goal is to make the body conscious of Sachchidananda. All of the traditions have found that it is much easier to concentrate away from the body and contact the Spirit. The psychic is the secret of transformation. Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic, "the less negative door to the Divine." What does he mean by "less negative"? In the traditional yogas, you try to go out of the manifestation to reach the unmanifest Divine, which he calls negative. It is not negative in the sense of bad, but it is contrary to the Divine's ultimate goal. Or you realize the Manomaya Purusha which is behind and not connected with all of this. Compared to those two, the psychic, which is part of Nature, is less negative.

He says the Spirit is evolving on the surface of our personality, in the body. The ultimate realization and the right way for us to make the progress are to relate to the Divine from the physical consciousness, meaning to call Mother from the tether ends of our personality. When the goal is transformation, at some time or other, there may be a need for going inside, but ultimately we have to do what Mother was doing: identify with the body consciousness and release the aspiration of Sachchidananda in the cells of the body. She was ultimately making the body the field of Her yoga.

Psychic – less negative door

- Nirvana leads to extinction in non-being
- Manomaya purusha leads to moksha in Parabrahman
- Psychic leads to Ishwara-Shakti in Supermind

KNOT OF MATTER

We have been talking about Involution, but now we are going to trace the process back. There is a divine intention, to realize Sachchidananda in life, in the world. The Evolution starts with matter and its awakening. The main instrument for awakening is Ananda. The expression of Ananda in the world as sensation and physical attraction is the original force which begins the upward movement of evolution. Sri Aurobindo says that evolution is inevitable. There is a force hidden in it that is compelling matter to evolve and reveal what is inside. The Divine hidden in matter is an inevitable force that springs forth as Life. The starting point for that is matter. He describes for us the rules of the game in which this evolution began. He calls it the "knot of matter." Everything seems to be loaded against the Divine in this game.

Evolution begins in conditions that are the very opposite of the status of Sachchidananda. It starts in the Ignorance. Matter is Sachchidananda that has forgotten itself. Matter is the Divine involved in itself. He uses the word "inconscient." It is not self-

aware. The plant does have some sensation. It is able to seek out light and water. The stone does not seem to be conscious of anything. The stone is totally oblivious of what it is and what its destiny is. A basic characteristic of Matter is Inertia. The Divine gives itself the challenge of trying to create animate, living, moving beings in a material that is inert and has no power for self-propulsion. Division is another characteristic of the material world. The stone has the appearance of being totally divided from everything else.

Knot of Matter

- **Ignorance**
- **Inertia**
- **Division**

ASCENT OF LIFE

This is the knot from which we start. Out of this knot of matter, life emerges. This inert matter starts to move. This inconscient matter starts to sense. Out of this we do see a force emerging. Sri Aurobindo says that Life is the final operation of Chit. That same conscious force is the force of Mother, because Mother's force is the supramental power. That is the same life force that we experience in greatly diminished intensity within the limited boundaries of our egos. We think that we each possess a certain quantum of energy, a separate and independent source of power, which we call our life. But that is no more true for us than for each of the light bulbs in this room. A certain amount of electricity is needed to light each

bulb. We understand that all of the bulbs in this room are really lit up by the same force, because we know how electricity works. But if you did not know how electricity worked, you might think that each of these bulbs is a separate flame. When we go into the other rooms and see an elevator and other lights, the lights and the elevator are also being energized by the same force. My computer is being run by the same force. When we ask where the force is coming from, we find out it is from the Neyveli Power Station. The whole state is being driven by the energy that emanates for this power plant. Now imagine that there is a Mother of all power plants from which all the power plants derive their energy. If this light goes out, we think of looking at the connection or the fuse box; if the lights go out all over Pondicherry, we trace it to some sub-station of Neyveli. As you trace it back from the light bulb to the fuse box to the sub station, the power increases tremendously. Mother is the mother of all the power stations. Her force is the force of life that animates everything in the universe. That includes every living thing as well as every physical force of nature. The life of Mother is at the Mother power plant. When we call Her, we are calling the force of life that animates everything. That is why it is so powerful.

Life presents us with a few problems. The first is the problem of division. Life is a universal, cosmic force. But the life we know is the life of the tiny individual light bulb which seems to be separate from everything else. It is separated from the universe. It is not only divided from everything else, but it sees other lives as a threat to it. There is limited food and I have to be sure I get my share. There are limited seats in the college and I have to be sure I get my seat. There are limited customers in the market who want my product, so I have to compete with other companies for their business.

The second major problem of life is ignorance. We live on the surface of the ego and we are ignorant; ignorant not only of the Divine, but also of our own parts of being, our subconscious,

superconscious, and subliminal being. Consciousness and force are really one and indivisible. Therefore, this ignorance means that we are also impotent, because you can only have real power over that part of existence of which you are conscious.

Causes of Life's Problem

- **Separation of individual from universal**
 - **division**
- **Separation of surface from subliminal**
 - **ignorance**
- **Separation of consciousness from force**
 - **incapacity**

Another problem is that the life force has become separate from consciousness. The life we know does not know where its power comes from. The mental consciousness and the force have become separate. In supermind, knowledge and will, consciousness and force are two inseparable aspects of a single reality. Whatever we know, we have the power to accomplish. Whatever we will to accomplish, we have the knowledge required to realize. But at the human level, knowledge and will are separated and act independently and often at odds with each other. We are at war with ourselves. Our mind wants one thing, our vital another and our body something else. As good devotees who have read all of Mother's works, we know with our minds what we should do, but we do not always find it easy to compel our vital to lend its energy to do what the mind knows. Our mind and our will can be at variance.

All of the problems of life that we encounter come to us

because of these three characteristics. Ignorance leads to error. Division from others leads us to opposition and conflict. Separation of knowledge and force leads to impotence and incapacity. These problems come because life is emerging out of matter. Life is not coming out of mind. Life is awakening in matter, which has divided itself from everything else. The ascent of Life is a movement from division to rediscover our oneness with the whole universe, from ignorance to right knowledge, will and action, from impotence to infinite capacity for self-fulfillment.

Biologists are seeking to discover the source and mechanism of life in the structure and functioning of the cell, a material form. When a scientist studies life, he tries to figure out what is the force in the cell which gives it life and how it loses this life when the cell dies. He cuts open the cell to find the source of this life and, of course, the cell dies. He thinks that the force is in the object, just as a primitive man might think that the man he sees on a TV screen is actually inside the box. In the chapter entitled "Conscious Force", Sri Aurobindo explains that "the force is anterior to the instrument." Life is not a property of matter but a force that expresses in and through material forms. The force of life is no more produced by the cell than the man on the screen is produced by the TV. The force that is expressing through us is a universal force; it is the force of Chit. That force expresses through the instrument but is not generated by it. As the instrumentation of the TV picks up invisible radio waves in the atmosphere and converts them into sound and images, so also cells and living bodies act as instruments to channel and give form to the force of Life. To understand what death is, we have to understand this point. The force is not limited to the box. This truth is known to the Indian tradition. People worship an idol, but they know that there is a force behind the idol. Yet, very often we mistake the instrument for the force.

Mother has said that if a leading person in any field of life or knowledge comes to Her and is open to acquire the next level of

knowledge, they can rise to the top of their field internationally. That is the power of the knowledge offered in *The Life Divine*. It can be applied to every field of life to extend the boundaries of theoretical knowledge and to enhance the effectiveness of our practical capabilities.

Later in the book, Sri Aurobindo explains how the consciousness of Chit dormant and concealed in material forms awakens and emerges as living and conscious beings. Each form in the universe is a formation of energy, a form of force maintaining a fixed pattern of orbit. The hidden consciousness contained within the form emerges by contact between the force of that form with the force of other forms. All evolution is the result of contact of force with force, which awakens a secret consciousness buried inside the form.

This is exactly how we progress in life. We are constantly brought into contact with other lives which are different from our own. Some of the contacts are pleasant, some are unpleasant. Unusual circumstances challenge us and force us to adapt or adopt new behaviors. Each new experience, positive or negative, touches some latent capacity within us and helps to bring it to the surface. In our own lives we are constantly coming in contact with forces from outside that disturb us. Every force that comes to us comes to awaken the consciousness in us so that that consciousness can come to the surface. When we understand this truth, we acquire a profound insight into the meaning of the events in our lives and into the evolutionary process of life in the universe.

We begin to discover opportunities where earlier we encountered only difficulties. The most unwanted influence and the most stressful challenge represent evolutionary opportunities as great in significance as our rare moments of peak enjoyment. We have a secure job and somebody says we should quit our job to earn a hundred times more running an industry, but when we hear this proposal it sounds frightening. The mind may feel it sounds nice, but the force in the vital feels

that "I am too small a person for this." If we refuse, we lose the opportunity. Or if we are very 'lucky', we are fired from our present job, thrown back on our own resources, and find that the apparent catastrophe was actually a great boon leading us to higher achievement. That is why Sri Aurobindo says in the first chapter, when we are able to receive positively the challenging contacts of life, the pressure of life comes and releases a greater consciousness in us. This is the way in which life is evolving consciousness on earth. Review your own life and you will discover the progress you have made by responding to the impact of external forces coming from life.

Thirty years ago I spent some time at Mother Estates, the Society's agricultural project near Cuddalore. We had a cook who used to sleep in a thatched shed with a mud floor. One morning when I wanted a cup of tea, I called the cook, but he did not come. I went into his shed and found him lying on the ground fast asleep. I shouted at him but he did not move. So I called one of the managers of the project and asked him to wake up the cook. To my surprise, the manager went in and gave the cook a hard kick. It was a kick I would have found very painful, but the cook barely moved, groaned a little and slowly opened his eyes. So deep and unconscious was his sleep that he could be stirred only by a forceful blow. This is what Sri Aurobindo calls the incontinent waking up, the process of the evolution. With respect to the force that Mother is constantly offering us, we are all like the cook. She is 'shouting' at us, calling us, maybe She is even kicking us, but we go on sleeping the sleep of ignorance and remain what we are. We are lost in the oblivion of our mentally-conscious sleep. The more lost we are in it, the more intense must be the pressure that comes from outside life in order to wake us up and release the greater potential within us.

There is a nice quote from the Buddha: "Life sleeps in the mineral, moves in the vegetable, walks in the animal and thinks in the human." This is what Sri Aurobindo says in the

book. What we call life is there in the stone. Even though the stone does not move or breathe, the consciousness is there nevertheless, involved. Jagadish Chandra Bose, the famous Indian scientist, found out at the beginning of the 20th Century that plants respond to physical stimulation as well as to human thoughts and emotions. Plants have life. Bose said he was even able to detect consciousness in the stone. All matter is alive with consciousness. It is brought out by the impact of external forces which challenge us to be better, as the threat of the lion helps the deer learn to run faster in order to survive. In our society, we are constantly challenged by external forces to gain more mastery. As parents we try to train our children to acquire greater control over their bodies and mastery over their thoughts and emotions.

All our progress is the result of external pressure, until the magical moment when we say, "Why should I need the pressure of life for my progress? Why don't I do it on my own? Why should I wait for someone to abuse me before I think of improving my conduct? Why don't I look at my thoughts and try to have purer thoughts, look at my motives and try to become a better person?" This is still the force of nature acting on our own life to awaken its consciousness, but it is now the authority of our minds which applies the pressure from inside. At this point we really become human. When we are willing to consciously accept an idea, an ideal, a higher value and live by it, and consciously impose that on our vital, then we really become human beings. Mother says, at that point, we can accomplish anything. If we turn to the Mother of power plants and rely on Her force, we can create anything we want, because we are asking our vital, our life, to submit to what it knows to be true. When we decide to do whatever Mother says is right for us to do, we are allowing the consciousness to drive the force, rather than the opposite.

DEATH

This process is the process by which all life is awakening. It is the process by which we human beings are evolving. Now let us see how it expresses in crucial aspects of our life. We have, first of all, to understand the existence and role of death, desire, pain and evil. If we really understand what he says in this book, we will understand the origin and nature of these problems. Somebody asked if everything comes from Sachchidananda, how can there be evil in the world? As far as we know, no one has ever before really explained evil rationally, except by saying all life is an illusion. Or else they say there is a devil who gives the bad and God gives the good. We cannot accept that explanation when we know that everything originates from the One.

Let us see what Sri Aurobindo says about death. He says death is a process of life. We understand death as the opposite of life. If we accept that life is a universal force, as the electricity flowing from a power plant to illumine the light bulb is a universal source of energy, then what happens when the light bulb burns out? We now know that the force that is illuminating the light does not disappear when the light goes out. The light bulb goes out and the force flows somewhere else. Only it can no longer express through that particular light bulb, since the form of the bulb has been damaged. The force is not lost, because it is a universal force. He says that what we call life is the force that builds up each individual form, such as each of us, so that we can have the experience of life and make a progress. When the soul decides to withdraw because it has had enough of that experience or as much as our present form of character permits, the force withdraws from the physical form and goes elsewhere. But the force is never lost. What is lost is the physical form that we thought was us. Once the force that was holding the form together withdraws, the form disintegrates and returns to its elements. The soul that came for

an experience and the force that animated that form are never lost. They cannot be lost. The law of conservation of energy applies to subtle life as well as physical matter.

Sri Aurobindo goes even further and says that death is absolutely essential for the progress of life. Death is not an error or aberration or unwanted attribute of life. Without death, all progress and evolution would cease sooner or later. Supposing today that you found out that through a miracle of medicine you could live for 5000 years. Then when we say make an experiment and take a very serious effort to improve your position tomorrow, immediately the thought will come, "What's the hurry? I am going to be around for 5000 years. I have plenty of time." It is very real to us because from our early age we know that our life is limited and hear about other people dying. That knowledge creates a certain intensity in us and an eagerness for progress. There are many stories of people who find out that they have only a month or a year to live, and suddenly they realize all the things they haven't done or become. They change very dramatically because they realize this precious thing we call life is short-lived and they must make the maximum out of it. Steve Jobs, the highly creative founder of Apple Computers and the highly popular iPod portable music system, described just such a life changing experience when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. How much more true that is for all of us. Having come to Mother and having this infinite privilege of a direct pipeline to Mother, can we afford to waste a single moment being what we were? Since most of us are unconscious and resistant to change, death creates that intensity of life.

Consider the story of Romeo and Juliet. In two families that have been quarreling for generations, a teenage son from one family falls in love with the daughter of the other family. Because the families are enemies, the youth cannot reveal their love to anyone and so they secretly marry. Through a process of misfortune arising from the feud between the families, both

the boy and girl die by committing suicide. When the parents of the children see the two of them lying there dead, suddenly they wake up to the fact that they have killed their children by their feuding. The parents repent and give up their feud. Each of them decides to create a statue for the child of the other family to show that they have learned their lesson. It is a great story of the power of death to change life.

In Mother we do not have to lose what is precious to us in order to make a progress. We have the conscious power to make that progress, because of the knowledge we have of how life will be better. But if we look at how human society has emerged, constantly this threat of death and the event of death have led to great progress of humanity. We value life, but we value life much more because we know it is limited. Ultimately we should value life because it's divine, and we are here to make life divine.

In Shakespeare's play *Henry V*, the young English king leads a very weary army of soldiers fighting in France. A huge French army five times greater in size comes to conquer them. The English King Henry stands before his weary soldiers and says, "Now you have an opportunity to really achieve glory, to really live. Whatever happens today, every Englishman who is at home on the island while we are here, every Englishman who hears about the glory of your accomplishment will say 'I would have done anything to be a part of it'." Soldiers know about that glory which only comes out in the face of death. When the face of death is there, we discover there is something more valuable than our precious little life: honor, higher values, the glory of humanity, truth, liberty, love. The ultimate truth is, of course, that there is something more valuable than our life. It is the universal life. Death plays this role and constantly reminds us that this life is very precious and also that there is something more valuable. Without that, life won't change.

There is another reason why Sri Aurobindo calls death a process of life. All forms of force try to maintain and

perpetuate themselves. In doing so, they tend to become rigid and unchangeable. This is true of physical forms of matter, the organizational forms of society we call institutions, and psychological forms such as our opinions, attitudes and character traits. When a form becomes rigid, it no longer responds and adapts to the impact of external forces, so eventually it breaks under that impact or gets petrified. After some time, all forms that are created tend to become ossified and rigid.

You build an organization to express a new ideal and after some time the organization becomes bureaucratic. It no longer remembers and serves the ideal. It even comes to behave in a manner directly opposed to the idea it was founded to serve. It is hard for us to remember today that the Congress party was the party for Indian freedom. Whatever our political persuasions, none of the parties seem to remember the ideals of the Freedom Movement today. This is the nature of human and life organizations. Sri Aurobindo says that in its origin even the caste system had its value which has become lost and ossified.

A company started by a visionary entrepreneur loses its original idealism, dynamism and missionary zeal after the passing of the founder when his now-rich descendants become satisfied by the status and wealth they have inherited and no longer care for the original inspiration. The company begins to lose money and soon goes out of business. To some it looks like a great loss, but if you examine closely you will see that nothing essential is lost by the society. Companies are born in order to meet the changing needs of the society. It is the society that contributes the knowledge, skill and energy to form the company. After a time, the company may fail. The knowledge, skill and energy are not lost. The employees join other companies and carry with them what they have learned. Whatever products or services the company offered are taken up and offered by other companies. Even the plant and machinery may continue to operate under a new name. Maybe at the time it was founded, this company was so efficient or

innovative that it led to the disappearance of other companies that had come before it. It learned from their experiences, hired their employees, improved on their products and processes. The same thing happens when this company closes. The form changes, the life of society remains and continues to grow.

A similar process takes place in all fields of life. What we call death is the force that comes and breaks the form. It is the same force of life that created the form in the first place and has bound it together. It is the same force that energized the party to fight for liberation or the company to grow or our bodies to live. And when our soul or the entrepreneur's inspiration or the patriotic ideals leave the form, that force withdraws and the form breaks down. The political party disappears, the company closes, that body is no more. The soul and spirit have been liberated to take on new forms. Death is there to uplift life and enrich it. Because of the nature of life, it needs this breaking up of forms in order for progress to be continuous.

Sri Aurobindo goes on to explain that in death the only thing which ceases to exist is the form. The consciousness and the force that animated the form do not die. If the Congress Party had been dissolved on the day of Indian Independence, the consciousness and force that were the inspiration of the Indian nationalists would not have died with it. They would have gone on to enter and express in many different fields of activity. As long as India was under the domination of the British, only a political activity could liberate the country. But once India gained freedom, politics was no longer the central need. What India needs today is prosperity. The way to serve India today is to go and create new educational institutions, training institutions, commercial institutions, etc. The spirit and energy of the country that was focused on the fight for freedom now get expressed in many other activities and through many other types of institutions. What dies is the form, but the spirit behind the form does not cease with the death of the form.

Very clearly He says death is necessary for the soul's

evolution. The soul takes birth not only in a body, but it assumes a human character. That character is inherited genetically, but it is also partly a product of our upbringing. When we come into the world, the soul chooses certain circumstances that build up the character in a certain way. Character is also a form, not a physical form but a psychological form. If you doubt that, just try acting out of character and see how rigidly that form preserves itself. It is very difficult for us not to think, feel and act like ourselves. If we see that we have been born with a certain character that is not very brave, unselfish or true, the soul has sought that experience so that we could consciously discover the value of courage, self-giving or truth. Once the soul has acquired that experience, if the body remains, we have no further progress to make in that form. The form dies and the character dissolves, so that the soul can choose a new field and a new form for further experience. Thus, death is absolutely necessary for the soul's evolution.

Death

- **Process of life**
- **No cessation of consciousness, only of form**
- **Necessary for soul's evolution**

All the forms that we cling to, all the beliefs and rituals, have to be overcome. Now in the USA people are seeking out the old tribal habits of the American Indians and trying to discover some great truths and virtues in those old forms, as if all the forms of the past have to be preserved. People still insist on the right to carry guns because the right to bear arms was enshrined in the Bill of Rights 200 years ago at a time when American

settlers were fighting for freedom from British rule. In England people still cling to the form of monarchy, which has nothing to do with the essence of English democratic government today, just out of sentimental attachment to the form.

There is a wonderful tale about a man who was appointed as a new manager of housekeeping at Buckingham Palace. When he accepted the job he was taken on a tour of the palace so that he could understand how everything functioned. Inside the palace there were ceremonial guards standing at all the doorways. As he was walking down a long hallway, he saw a green bench. Next to that bench a guard was standing. The new manager stopped the man who was giving him the tour and asked why a guard was standing next to the bench in the middle of the hallway far from any doorway. The tour guide said, "I do not know." He asked the guard, "Why are you standing there?" The guard replied, "There has always been a guard here." Later when they had finished the tour, they asked the manager who was retiring why that guard was standing next to the bench. He also did not know. Then they became curious and thought of asking the oldest staff member at the palace for an explanation. One man had been there for more than 30 years. So they called him and asked him about that guard. He thought for a few moments, his eyes lit up in recognition, and then he explained, "About 20 years ago they painted that bench green, and they were afraid somebody might sit down on it before the paint dried. Afterwards, I guess they forgot to remove the guard!" That is the way we create forms, and how with a vengeance we cling to all the forms and habits of the past. And if someone asks us why we do it, we have no idea any more than the man keeping guard over the bench did. Mother has come here to discard all the old forms. All of these forms have consciousness and life buried in them. She wants to liberate the force of life pent up within the forms so that life can evolve faster and farther than before. She wants each of us to consciously dissolve the limiting formations of our attitudes, opinions and motives, so

that the energy and consciousness buried within them can be released and soar forth in greater intensities of knowledge, power, accomplishment and enjoyment.

CONSECRATION

Sri Aurobindo tells us that all forms are forms of energy and we are a physical embodiment of an infinite universal force. Yet often we feel that we have no more energy left in us and we need to rest or sleep or retire. How can that be? We are the universal life. We are Sachchidananda. What has happened to that universal force? The explanation is that we have taken the infinite energy of the universal and locked it up in so many forms that are no longer alive. All our opinions, attitudes, habits and character traits are like so many atoms of matter, packed with infinite energy that is bound tightly into a fixed form, so it cannot escape or express. When Mother asks us to consecrate our acts, our past, our attitudes, She is saying that we should take all of these forms, put them into the bonfire of our aspiration, and liberate the conscious energy that is locked up within them. Our sense of superiority, self-importance, status, prestige, self-satisfaction, pride and competence are so many locks we have placed on the doors of our being to prevent the life energy from emerging. As much energy is locked up in all of those forms as in all the atoms of matter. For the devotee, the aim of this yoga is to release the spirit in life which is locked up in our attitudes and opinions. We really are infinite energy but it is concealed within our habits and forms. The same thing is true of our negative attitudes—what Sri Aurobindo calls negative egoism—of self-doubt, inferiority, worthlessness and incompetence. Each is a form that conceals infinite energy. Consecration helps us break all the locks. Because in life we are not able to break the forms, life constantly comes and knocks against us to help us break them. The greater the potential within

us, the greater the force that comes to challenge us. The greater the opposition from life, the greater the accomplishment that is sanctioned and possible for you.

The Count of Monte Cristo is a novel by Alexander Dumas about a young, good, honest merchant sailor named Edmund who falls in love with a beautiful young woman named Mercedes. On the day of their engagement, a man who wants Edmund's job on the ship, another man who also wants to marry Mercedes, and a third man who has an evil temper plot to falsely accuse Edmund of treason. They get him arrested and imprisoned on an island. For 14 years he is locked up in a dungeon in isolation. After a year he feels so miserable that he tries to starve himself to death. But just at the moment when he is on the verge of dying of starvation, Edmund hears a scratching sound in the wall and he discovers that another prisoner is digging a tunnel through the wall from an adjacent cell. He responds to the sound and they open a tunnel between their two cells. The other prisoner is a priest named Abbe Faria who has been in prison for many, many years. Faria is considered a madman by the guards because he often speaks of a fantastic, imaginary treasure. The two prisoners become friends and begin to secretly spend time together. Edmund finds that the old man has even fashioned tools for himself. The priest educates him for many years and imparts to him a rich knowledge of life.

One day the old priest becomes gravely ill and calls Edmund to his side, saying he will not live much longer. Before he dies Faria tells Edmund about a huge treasure which he discovered before his imprisonment. Edmund has come to love this priest over the years as a father and a guru, and found him very wise. But now when the Abbe speaks about a fantastic treasure, Edmund remembers the old rumor told to him on entering the prison that this priest is a madman talking about some imaginary treasure. At that moment Edmund wonders, even after knowing the priest all these years, "Perhaps in truth Abbe

Faria is mad.” The priest then pulls out a map and gives it to Edmund, telling him to go to a certain island when he escapes and find the treasure. The priest dies, and Edmund manages to escape from the prison during his burial. After some time he makes his way to the island and discovers a huge treasure that makes him one of the richest men in the world. Now he has an education, the knowledge acquired from Faria, and a treasure which few men in the world possess.

As the story goes on, Edmund meets a noble-minded, beautiful princess whom he saves from slavery and who falls in love with him. Having saved her life, Edmund offers her protection almost like a father. After his imprisonment and on hearing false rumors of his death, Mercedes has married Ferdinand, the very man who plotted Edmund’s arrest. She has borne a son to Ferdinand named Albert. At one point Edmund is challenged by Albert to fight a duel because Edmund has raised doubts in public about Ferdinand’s integrity. Mercedes, who has recognized that the Count is really Edmund, comes to beg him not to kill her son. Edmund decides that he will allow himself to be killed that day. Before he leaves for the duel, he goes to the Princess and says, “In case I do not come back, here is my will in which I give you everything that I have.” The Princess takes the paper from his hands and without a moment’s hesitation she tears it into little pieces. Then she says, “Do you think I want anything in the world except you?” Edmund survives the duel and ultimately marries the Princess.

Why did this man have to go through the most horrible experience of betrayal and 14 years in prison in order to acquire this knowledge, this experience, this fantastic wealth and an idealistic love of the most wonderful dimensions? We could say that the potential was there in him for the highest level of achievement in life, but that it required a powerful force to call it forth. That potential for love, knowledge and wealth was all there in him. He was a good man. But in normal life, the potential is brought out only through the most agonizing effort

and suffering. He wanted to marry a woman who was incapable of the true love and loyalty of which his nature was capable. His inner being rebelled against what his outer nature sought and he landed in prison. After he is permanently separated from Mercedes, unimaginable knowledge, wealth and a pure idealistic love come to him.

In Mother’s life, that same potential can be brought out without the years in prison, without any of the agony, simply if we open ourselves to Her, trust Her, and follow Her rules: sincerity, no lies, hard work, pure thoughts, soft behavior, humility. In life, those pressures and oppositions come to bring out the greatness hidden within each of us. The greater the opposition, the greater the treasure it is trying to bring out. That is one way. We have an alternative way in Mother to bring out the same treasure— call Her.

IGNORANCE, FALSEHOOD AND EVIL

If we want to accomplish the way Edmund accomplished through long trials and great suffering, then lying is ok. That is life’s method. But if you want to accomplish at the highest level in any field, without the imprisonment, without suffering, lying won’t work. In Mother’s life, lying won’t create anything good or new. Why is life so filled with ignorance, falsehood and evil? This is one of the great secrets of the book.

We do not know ourselves. Our consciousness is limited and not just limited, but wrong. When we look out at everybody else, we see potential rivals and enemies. Because we think of everyone else as different from ourselves, we have wrong ideas about them. When something bad happens to them, sometimes we feel happy. When the boss shouts at someone else who is working in our office, that person’s status falls. Then the boss calls us to do the job and our star rises. We constantly judge ourselves and see other people’s misfortune as our good

fortune. We sometimes even abuse ourselves for having these negative feelings.

Who put the devil in our vitals which makes us have these wrong feelings? It is the result of the basic constitution of our consciousness. We identify only with our own life and ego and think that everybody else is not us. We feel we have to compete with them. The higher they rise, the smaller and lower we feel by comparison. This is the nature of the vital ego, because it sees and feels itself as separate from everyone else. We are evolving back from a state of division in matter, ignorant of our oneness with all other beings and things. We do not identify with the Oneness. We identify ourselves with the selfishness of the ego.

Not only do we have an ignorant and wrong consciousness, but we are also attached to it. Not only do we have a wrong impulse, but we believe in it and cling to it. So if someone points out to me that by mistake I have said something that is false or reported something that is not true, I deny it and say that I have been wrongly heard or misunderstood. I defend myself. I defend my wrong consciousness rather than trying to correct it. My attempts at self-justification easily deteriorate into attempts to deceive others about my true intentions and, still worse, efforts to deceive myself, self-deception.

It is understandable that I have wrong consciousness, because all our consciousness is wrong. That is not the problem. It is our attachment to the wrong which makes it false. Sometimes we even take pride in it: "That man came and I told him a story and he went away. It worked so well," said a farm manager. He observed that the people who worked on the farm were so false that unless you told them a lie they would not be satisfied. If they came and asked for money and you said you had none, they would keep demanding. If you lied and said you would give them the next day, they would go away happily, knowing very well that you had no intention of giving any money to them. That is attachment to falsehood.

Ignorance arises from the fact that we live in a state of divided, partial consciousness. We have evolved from matter, a condition in which the Truth is completely involved and concealed and only gradually emerging. Falsehood arises from the fact that we live in the ego and are attached to our ignorant, divided consciousness. We strive by any means to preserve and aggrandize the limited surface being which is not our true self. Limited knowledge leads to false consciousness and false will.

What then of evil? Not only are we ignorant of the fact that our colleagues in the office are also ourselves, not only are we wrong in thinking that if they are abused by the boss that we will be better off, not only are we attached to that, but we also have the impulse to go to the boss and tell him about the other person's mistake or even make up a story to discredit the other person. Our false consciousness leads to wrong will and wrong action intended to harm another person so that we can gain at their expense. It becomes evil. Evil arises directly from these other two characteristics of our consciousness: ignorance in the widest sense and attachment to the ignorant view of the ego.

The first instinct of life is to preserve itself. When I have the ignorant attitude that someone else's misfortune is my good fortune, I want to preserve and raise myself at their expense. If the other man in the office comes up, I will go down. In order to preserve myself, I have to eliminate him. My ignorant, wrong, false attitude becomes an evil intention. Without dissolving the ego and the ignorance, we cannot fully dissolve the evil in human nature, because they are both a product of the evolution from the inconscient. That is why we need to start from the beginning and understand where the problem comes from.

What then can we do about it? We may not be able to entirely eliminate any of these deficiencies from our consciousness. Sometimes things come out involuntarily. What we can do is, first, whenever we speak, be sure to speak only what we know is true. We can do more than that. We can be sure to never speak anything we know to be untrue. We can do much more than

that. We can decide to never do or even allow ourselves to think and feel something intended to hurt another person. We can vow never to have ill will towards another person. If we feel any such thing rise up in us, we can immediately call Mother to eliminate it. If you cannot help telling lies, then immediately go to the person to whom you lied and tell him, "I am sorry I lied to you." If it keeps happening, then go around to everyone and confess that you lie and tell them all the lies you have told. If that does not work, you can even stick a little label on your forehead saying "I am a liar." This method is very effective. When the false vital consciousness is publicly exposed, it will quickly become purified.

Ignorance – Falsehood – Evil

- **Limited & wrong surface consciousness**
= Ignorance
- **Attachment to wrong consciousness**
= Falsehood
- **Wrong egoistic will & action**
= Evil

We know that the ego is ignorant and wrong. We understand that it is like that because of our origins. If it is so unpardonable, how do we rid ourselves of this character? We cannot cure ourselves by pretending either with ourselves or with others that there is no problem. We can cure ourselves by bringing the deficiencies of our nature out on the surface and shining the light of consciousness on them. We cannot cure them by feeling sorry, depressed and impure. There is no use telling

Mother, "Oh, Mother, I am so unworthy of you." You should not feel sorry when you discover something bad about yourself. If you feel sorry for something it means you are still attached to it. Nor should you feel proud when you discover something good about yourself. Both are only movements of the ego trying to boost itself up or pull itself down. Do not feel sorry or happy, but rather shine the light of Mother's consciousness on the impurity and pray for it to go away. The first thing you should do is detach yourself from it. See it objectively. Do not condemn it. Do not make excuses for it. Do not rationalize it. It is an opportunity for progress, something else we can offer to Mother. Call Mother's force and Her light to dissolve it and you will make a fabulous progress.

Absolute Evil

One of the most intriguing facts of life is that good can generate evil and evil can generate good. *Les Misérables* is a the wonderful novel by Victor Hugo, in which one of the characters is a poor inn-keeper named Thenadier who does not mind lying, cheating or stealing to get ahead. After the battle of Waterloo, he sneaks onto the battlefield to steal jewelry off of the bodies of dead soldiers. He comes upon a man's arm protruding from under a pile of dead bodies and spots a gold ring on one of its fingers. When he reaches down to remove the ring, the hand grabs him. He discovers the man is still alive and is compelled to help the wounded soldier off the battlefield, thus saving his life. He was forced to be good in spite of his evil intention. At the end of the story Thenadier wants to expose the hero of the story, Jean Valjean, and prove that he is really a bad man. Jean has saved the life of a man named Marius who was in love with Jean's daughter. This evil man, Thenadier, wants to prove that Jean is a murderer by revealing that he had seen Jean carrying away a dead man's body from the sewers. That body was actually Marius and Jean was actually saving his life, but

Jean had never told either Marius or his own daughter that he was the one who had saved him. Thenadier goes to Marius and says, "I saw Jean carrying away a dead man from the sewer." And through this accusation of Thenadier, Marius discovers that it was Jean, his own father-in-law, who had saved his life, but had never wanted to tell him. Once again, Thenadier's intention was evil, but his action leads to good.

There are many instances in both life and literature in which a man acts in a very bad way, but the outcome is positive. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Lady Catherine comes to Elizabeth Bennet in order to prevent Eliza's marriage to Darcy, who is Lady Catherine's nephew. Her efforts end up having the very opposite result. They persuade both Eliza and Darcy that the other is willing for the marriage. The Black Plague, which destroyed one-third of the population of Europe during the 15th century, also resulted in the destruction of feudalism and generated the impetus for the birth of democracy. It created such a scarcity of labour that former serfs migrated to towns where they were well-paid for their services and became free men. In our own lives we can see that wrong things done to us have sometimes brought great good in their wake. Many highly successful entrepreneurs trace back their success to early failures in which they learned invaluable lessons that they later applied profitably.

Sri Aurobindo explains this phenomenon for the first time. This is possible because there is no such thing as absolute evil. Evil is relative. It comes from an absence or limitation of consciousness, an absence or limitation of knowledge. It is not a thing in itself. Even when evil is on the surface of a person, there is more of consciousness behind, and so the result may be mixed. The evil intention expressed also gives unintended expression to the element of good in the person's consciousness.

The same thing is true in the opposite direction. We may try to do something good, but it may have bad consequences.

We can explain it in many different ways. We may say our motive was not lofty enough. Or maybe we did not have the right knowledge to do good. Mercedes' intentions were good and she was truly in love with Edmund, but their relationship brought him intense suffering, which was converted for him into wealth and happiness only after they were separated and he gave her up for good. In *North and South*, a story about the American Civil War, a lady of very good intentions and actions constantly brings misfortune to those who try to help her. Her outer nobility conceals the low consciousness of her origins which brings misfortune to her and others.

This complexity of life with all its combinations should not frighten us. We should understand how it happens. Just because a man is a devotee of Mother does not mean he is all good. Just because someone is an Ashramite does not mean he is very pure. Humanity is a mixture of impulses, because our consciousness is divided and ignorant. Until we overcome division, ignorance and ego, we cannot be rid of evil.

THREE STATUSES OF LIFE

This is the origin of Ignorance, falsehood and evil. Sri Aurobindo says that this life which has been emerging from the stone has three statuses. The first status is the life of divided individuality, the life in matter which is unconscious in the form. This status gives expression to a great truth of existence, the truth of individuality. When we inquire why the Divine has gone to all the trouble of fashioning the creation in this manner, we discover that one of the divine goals of the creation is to affirm the truth of individuality. The entire creation is a manifestation of the Divine which is Truth. Therefore, everything the Divine creates or manifests has a truth behind it or expressing through it. Individuality is the affirmation of the truth of the Many, the truth of each individual form.

The divine has created permanent forms in matter so that those individual forms can become divine or evolve to reveal their inherent divinity. Forms become divine by becoming more perfect. What makes a form beautiful? The higher the quality of the consciousness and the force that can express through a form, the more beautiful and perfect it becomes. Because of this, perfection has enormous power to release the Infinite in the finite. For example, if a business establishment makes its internal organization perfect, that perfect internal organization has the power to attract the market, leading to an incredible expansion. If a company's records are perfect, its accounts are perfect, its physical cleanliness is perfect, the harmony of its interactions is perfect, life will move towards the company and bring unimaginable prosperity. Systematic organization of the work makes the form perfect and when that is perfect, the consciousness hidden within it comes to the surface. The market responds, people respond, money responds. We can now understand why the evolution begins with divided individuality. Sachchidananda has gone to all this trouble so that separate forms can emerge and become perfect, become divine in life.

The second status of life is the status that we see in the animal kingdom and in the human realm of society: the status of mutual devouring. This is where we clash and mix with each other. One company grows by swallowing up another company. In any event, one person acts more important and other people submit to his importance. Among the scientists, they debate and one proves himself more clever than the rest. There is a marvelous story about a very arrogant sannyasi 500 years ago who was a great philosopher. He knew all the Vedas and Upanishads, and he toured the country in order to humiliate all the local pundits with his erudition. Everywhere he went, he annihilated and humiliated everyone else by his wisdom. The local kings proclaimed him the wisest man and he felt very proud. Finally, he came to a South Indian kingdom and the king summoned his wise men and asked them what to do.

They told the king that there was no one in the kingdom who was a match for this man. The king thought for a while and then said, "Call the cook." The king's cook was a man with only one eye. The king spoke to the cook and whispered some instructions to him. The sannyasi came and addressed the king: "Your majesty, I have come here in all humility to learn and to seek the wisdom of your wise men. I would like to debate with the wisest of the wise in your kingdom." The king said, "Very well," and called the cook to step forward. They spread the mats and the cook, now dressed up in robes, sat silently opposite to the sannyasi. The sannyasi started the debate by raising his hand and showing one finger. The cook, without any hesitation, immediately raised two fingers. The sannyasi was shocked, not only by the answer but by the speed of the other man's response. The sannyasi pondered very carefully and after some hesitation, he raised three fingers. Immediately the cook raised his fist and shook it at the sannyasi. The sannyasi threw down his scriptures, made pranams at the feet of the cook, made pranams to the king, and exclaimed, "Your Majesty, today is a great day. I have really met my match." The king asked the sannyasi, "What happened?" The sannyasi replied, "I raised one finger to express the ultimate truth of life that all is One. Your wise man responded with two fingers to remind me that the One is really two, the Purusha and the Prakriti, the Siva and Shakti. Then I thought, finally I would outsmart him. I showed three fingers to indicate that the Two is really Three, the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual. But your wise man responded with the closed fist signifying that all division is really an illusion, because the One can never be divided." The wise man went away defeated and humbled. Then the king called the cook and asked "What happened?" The cook said, "That man raised one finger to say that I have only one eye. I raised two to tell him that my one eye is better than his two! Then he raised three to say that my one eye and his two eyes makes three. By then I was really angry. So I shook my fist at

him, meaning that if he makes one more gesture, I am going to punch you in the nose!" That is mutual devouring!

We are now entering the third status of life. The third status becomes possible only when mind decides to outgrow the animal vitality and elevate itself. It begins at the point when we discover that cooperation and harmony are more powerful and valuable than competition. It matures when we become aware of some deeper truth in our souls behind. Sri Aurobindo calls this third status of life, which we as Mother's devotees can enter today, the status of self-giving and love. This is not supramentalization. This is not the final fulfillment on earth. This is possible for every sincere devotee today, if we follow the methods we have been talking about, if we see and offer up in consecration our falsehood, ignorance and wrong will.

Three Statuses of Life

- **Divided individuality**
- **Mutual devouring**
- **Self-giving & love**

What happens then? We have been saying that the process of life is a pretty tough thing in which we learn something only when we get knocked on the head or thrown into prison for 14 years or thrown into a court case. When we decide to live according to this higher status of life, Mother's life, we find that all the lessons come to us without the need for those negative experiences. We do not need the threat of death to discover the value of life. We do not need to have a strong negative force challenge us in order to make a progress. We discover all the areas for progress and willingly take steps to evolve.

We make far more progress than the soul ever set out to make in a single lifetime. Mother says that the experience of the soul in a lifetime is to make one progress, to change one attitude or one motive. The parents of Romeo and Juliet learned only one experience in their lifetime and they had to pay a heavy price for it. Mother says you can make this progress of a lifetime at EVERY moment. Normally, when the soul makes the progress it came to make, it leaves. Usually the character is so limited that it permits only this one experience, so after learning it the soul leaves. But in Mother, if you change one attitude, She brings you the opportunity to make the next progress and the next. The progress of hundreds of births can be made in one lifetime. Mother also says that whatever progress we do not make now, we will never have a better opportunity to make in future. If we do not do it now in the circumstances we are in, it means we will not do it unless there is a greater pressure. And therefore, the experience will come back next time with a greater pressure to compel us to make the progress that we are not making now. We will never have a better opportunity to grow and make the progress than we do now. Knowing about Mother in this life gives us a great opportunity that we should take full advantage of.

MIND

Now we come to mind. Mind sees everything on the surface. It cannot see below the surface. If someone wants to know you with his mind, he might say, 'He is very tall.' He may describe you by your caste, your profession, or your wealth. The mind knows the external world only by its external appearances. It has to rely on the senses to give it indirect information about the world in the form of sense impressions which it then tries to piece together into knowledge.

Mind is incapable of knowing the reality of anything in its totality. It knows only by a process of division and aggregation.

It continuously divides reality into smaller parts and then combines the parts together to form larger wholes. Mind sees only the parts, it sees only the surface of those parts. The knowledge we gain through the faculty of mind is inherently limited. If we really want knowledge, we have to go beyond the surface mind. We have to go within.

Mind has another characteristic. It cannot reconcile opposites. Sri Aurobindo tells us in the first chapter that all of life consists of a confrontation of opposites and that the creation of opposites is the very method by which the Divine manifests in the world. This mind divides everything into opposites. The indivisible One manifests by dividing the force of its being into an infinite number of aspects. At the same time, the creation of each aspect gives rise to the creation of its opposite as well. The manifestation of good brings with it the manifestation of evil. Courage is accompanied by cowardice. Light and darkness manifest together. And yet God has given us a mind that is incapable of reconciling opposites in order to discover the greater reality of which these apparent opposites are expressions. Mind cannot reconcile reason and faith. If we say you can know something rationally, but something else has to be accepted on faith, the mind says I can only do one or the other. I can have faith in it, or I can try to know it. I cannot do both.

Mother's life is a complete contradiction to the mind. Once someone came to Mother and asked a question, and She gave the answer. The next day someone else came to Her and asked the same question. She gave another answer to the same question. Her attendant asked Her why She had given a different answer to the same question. She replied, "Same question, different person." The answer is to the person, not to the question. Our minds cannot handle that. In the year before Mother left Her body, She was seeing a hundred people a day. Even in the last year She was seeing 30 or 40 people a day. After Sri Aurobindo had his realization in 1926, Mother would not allow anybody

to see Him. The sadhak who went to clean Sri Aurobindo's room while He was lying on the bed was instructed not to look down at Sri Aurobindo while cleaning the fan over the bed. When His bathroom was being remodeled, for a few weeks He had to come downstairs and use another bathroom. This meant he had to come down the staircase and through a hall to the other bathroom. Mother told all the sadhaks to stay in their rooms during the time He was to come down. And more than that, She hung curtains along the staircase and through the hall all the way to the bathroom, so that no one would be able to see Him by chance. How can we reconcile that? Mother was seeing a hundred people a day, and yet She had said no one should look at Sri Aurobindo. These are not things that the mind can reconcile. We cannot accept that both could be true. We want simple things without contradictions. But the Divine has created the world through contradictions. That is the genius of the method of its creation.

If you try to create something, you will find the same principle is true. If you are a CEO of a company, you have a Vice-President of Finance. You tell him to cut costs and minimize expenditure. Then you talk to the Production Manager and tell him to double production, which requires higher expenditure. Then you call the VP Marketing and ask him to sell much more. You allow or even encourage your executives to fight with each other so that when the Production Manager and the VP Marketing ask for more funds for production and sales, the VP Finance tries to refuse them. Through that contradiction they work out something which hopefully is efficient. This is the way of life. The mental idea that things should be simple and rational is only an idea.

Relationship between Matter and Mind

Mind emerges in the evolution by the contact of matter that generates sensations. That is how we become conscious. If

I touch something very hot, I get an intense sensation in my hand; I shout and move my hand away. I look at it and study it, understanding it is a hot coil. It creates a thought. That may sound very primitive, but this is how thought was born in humanity. Thought was born, not because we sat in meditation and received thoughts in our head. Thoughts were born because we had intense physical experiences that generated intense sensations, which gave rise in turn to waves of mental sensations which we call thoughts.

The process starts with a physical sensation, a physical contact, and leads to a thought. Later the same process occurs with social contacts and emotional interactions. I am excluded from a group of friends, and the pain of that exclusion makes me think about the nature of true friendship and the character of those who have rejected me. I am emotionally attracted to someone, who later turns out to be undesirable. The rude emotional shock of being disappointed generates thought. I believe a certain thing to be true. When I am confronted by the very opposite of it, it is a blow to my convictions that makes me think freshly. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers died during the trench warfare of World War I. When Winston Churchill, who was directing the British navy, tried to convince the army generals that tanks could be used to save lives and shorten the war, the generals rejected the idea as utter nonsense. The idea that a non-army person could have a meaningful idea was a violent affront to their pride. The tank proved to be such a powerful weapon that all armies in the world quickly embraced it. It took the loss of so many lives to make the generals consider something new!

That is how in the evolution mind is awakened. In Savitri He writes, "Life teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance." All the intense stimulations of life make us think. You all know the difference between life in the village and life in the city. People are less sophisticated in the village, there is less thought in the village. Living in the city results in contact with many people,

involvement in innumerable events, and exposure to vast amounts of information. This intense life activity stimulates thought. Living in a large city is itself an education. The city is a 'univer-city'.

This is the process by which our intelligence has emerged, like iron being hammered into useful shapes. It sounds like a very crude process, and it is. Humanity has evolved from the stone and the animal by the contact of material form with other material forms resulting in sensations that stimulated the gradual awakening and emergence of consciousness. At a later stage, the same process repeats at the social and mental level. Contacts with other people and their attitudes generate vital sensations in us that give rise to thoughts about people and society. Contact with different ideas and experiences generate mental sensations that give rise to thoughts about the meaning of life and existence. This gradual emergence of conscious thought out of physical experience is what we mean by evolution in the Ignorance. The knowledge that mind acquires from this process based on our personal experience and sensations is extremely subjective, fragmented and limited. It is itself a form of ignorance.

If we want to acquire real knowledge, or rationality, what must we do? The first condition to acquire that knowledge is that we should not speak from our sensations. We must detach ourselves from sensations and allow the mind to think and act on its own. Only then it can become rational. If you want to judge the innocence of a person or the facts of an event, you have to first detach yourself from sensations, emotions and preferences. Just because you dislike the color of a person's hair or the turn of his nose, you should not base your judgment on that personal preference. You must become objective, which means to detach yourself from your personal, subjective viewpoint. Only then do we become 'reasonable'. But this is only the first step to real knowledge, because what we call reason is really only the viewpoint of the separate individual ego. Reason is

ego, according to Sri Aurobindo. Real knowledge of the world comes only when we transcend the ego, go deep within and acquire true self-knowledge. Going within we discover the deeper sources of our thoughts, emotions and impulses; we become conscious of the division and conflict between our mental, vital and physical personalities; we observe thoughts and influences entering us from outside. The greater the self-knowledge we acquire, the greater our knowledge of the world around us and the greater our control and mastery of life.

The contact of forms of matter generates sensations and sensations give rise to thoughts. There is also a process in the reverse direction. Our minds also act on matter. When the body receives a visual sensation that a ball is coming toward it, that sensation generates a thought in the mind. The mind decides it has to do something to avoid getting hit by the ball. Mind activates its will and releases vital energy to raise the hand to stop the ball. This is the process by which immaterial mind acts indirectly on matter. We have to understand both aspects of the relationship between physical matter and mind.

We have already said that matter is asleep, the life force wants to do its own thing, and the mind has its own ignorant understanding. How do matter, life and mind work together? In fact, they are working together all the time. We are constantly experiencing the sensations of life or matter or events. These sensations of experience generate thoughts and these thoughts generate decisions that go back down through the vital as sensations leading to physical actions.

The process by which the Divine creates and the process by which we human beings create is the same. The Divine creates by converting Real-Ideas into material forms. We create by translating ideas into actions. If we want to create, we have to have a clear idea and by an act of will we have to convert that idea into a decision. The decision releases and directs our vital energy to do what we have decided to do. When we do that, we are doing exactly what the Creator is doing in creating the

world. The Divine conceives of a Real-Idea, it converts it into a will, and it releases the force of life to move matter. We can use the same process to achieve unflinching success.

Mind over Matter

Mind can determine matter, but normally it is a slave to Matter. Mind can make matter respond, but most of the time we do what our bodies want and we justify it. We do not feel that we are the masters of our bodies. We feel in many ways that the body pushes us around. It is important for us to understand how mind moves matter, because the process of unflinching success is to move life, to move the conditions of life around to make them favorable.

The power of mind over matter is dramatically illustrated by what is known as the placebo effect. A placebo is something that is not a real medicine, but it has the effect of a real medicine. There is a true story of an American man who developed two large tumors in his intestines during the 1950s. When he was on his deathbed, he read in the newspaper about a serum that cured horses of cancerous intestinal tumors. He pleaded with his doctor to administer this drug to him. Since the patient was expected to die in a few days, the doctor agreed to administer the drug. To his great surprise, two days later the tumors were completely gone. A couple of weeks later, the patient read another article in the paper which reported that this same horse serum does not work against cancer in human beings. Two days later, the tumors came back to their original full size. The doctor understood that something was happening here. Whether the serum was working or not, something was happening. He spoke to the patient who was again on his deathbed and told him he had found a super double strength version of the horse serum which had been successful in curing cancer in humans. The doctor gave the patient injections of water. Two days later the tumors completely disappeared. Two months after that, the

man read in the paper that no one had ever been cured by that horse serum. He died within a few days.

What is this power? The mind's belief has such a power. In Japan they did studies of patients who were severely allergic to poison ivy, a particular plant in the forest which causes intense rash. When contracted by people who are severely allergic to it, the whole body breaks out in a rash. The Japanese medical scientists rubbed an ordinary leaf on one arm of these highly allergic patients, but told them that the leaf was poison ivy. They then rubbed real poison ivy on the patients' other arm, but told them it was only a harmless ordinary leaf. Out of 13 patients, ten of the patients got rashes on the arm touched by the harmless leaf, but only 3 got any rash on the arm touched by the real poison ivy. The effect of mind on our body is so powerful.

Scientists did a test of a new drug for baldness. They found 86% of the men who took this drug showed new hair growth. They also found that 42% of the men who took the placebo drug, which was just candy, also grew new hair. They developed a new asthma inhaler and found that a third of the patients who were using a placebo inhaler with only vanilla fragrance in it got the same relief as those using the real inhaler. Even with regard to the body, mind has such a power.

Our purpose here is not to gain mastery over the body and physical matter. Our objective is accomplishment in life, which is much easier. Mind can be a powerful instrument for that accomplishment. There is a true story about an ardent devotee of Mother and his friend, who was a high school teacher. One day the friend came to the devotee's house and said that his father was very ill and in coma. The doctors said the old man is not likely to survive through the week. The friend and the devotee went to the hospital. They were told by the doctor that the father had just given up living and was deteriorating rapidly. After the doctor left, the devotee asked his friend whether he really wanted his father to live. The devotee asked, "Are you

willing to do anything necessary to save your father's life?" The old man's son said 'yes'. They went into the room where the old man was lying on the bed unconscious. The devotee called out the patient's name, but the patient did not move. Then the devotee said loudly, "You have to get up, you have to build the house." After a moment, the old man stirred. Again the devotee said, "Get up, what are you doing on the bed? You have to build your house!" One eye opened. A feeble voice asked, "What house?" The devotee continued: "Your house, your life-long dream of a house. Your son has agreed to build the house. He will even offer tuitions to earn more money. In 12 months the house will be completed." The father looked at the son and asked "Really?" The son nodded. The devotee left the hospital and went home. The next morning his friend came to his house and said his father had come home from the hospital! He built the house and lived for at least another ten years. When the old man's mind lost interest in living, the life went out of his body. The devotee knew that the old man had a life-long desire to build a house, but he had given it up because he thought he would never be able to fulfill it. When the old man realized his dream could be fulfilled, life surged back into his body. That is the power of mind over life.

REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

This story illustrates essential requirements for accomplishment. For us to accomplish anything in life,

- There has to be an aspiration or urge of the being, a desire to accomplish.
- There must be an awareness of a possibility, a way for us to do it.
- There must be a seeking for the enjoyment of that accomplishment.

- We must make a firm decision to accomplish it.
- We should convert that decision into a plan of action that will release the energy of the vital.
- We should possess the knowledge and skill needed for that accomplishment.
- Then we should set ourselves into action to achieve it.

This is the process the Supreme Consciousness uses to create the world. There is an urge of the Being, which we call a vibration, that wills to manifest itself. The urge expresses the awareness of a possibility and a seeking for Delight. That urge, awareness and seeking take the form of a Real-Idea representing what the Divine wants to accomplish.

In man, too, their must be an aspiration and an awareness which are mentally formulated into an idea or goal—I want to expand my organization or get the highest marks or become the President—and then converted into a plan. That idea or goal should release our energy and move us to action. We all utilize this same process all the time, but usually we do it subconsciously without thinking. We are not aware of the urge of our being that motivates us. When we decide we want to build a house, we are not conscious of what it is deep inside us that moves us to accomplish more. But there is an aspiration of our being to expand, an aspiration of our consciousness to express itself, and a seeking to enjoy the delight of experience which comes when we accomplish anything. We can apply this method to achieve anything: put the urge of our being behind it, seek the enjoyment of that experience, commit ourselves to the idea, work out the necessary plans, and release our full enthusiasm. Then if we add the one extra ingredient of relying on Mother and Her force, rather than on ourselves and our capacities, and with that Force we act, there is nothing in the world that we cannot accomplish. There is nothing that the people here today cannot accomplish.

What does this mean in practice? It means that if we do not

enjoy what we are doing, we probably will not accomplish much. It means if we do not really, seriously want to achieve something, we probably will not achieve it. It means that if we do not formulate a clear goal or intention, it is probably not going to happen. If we do not organize our thoughts and actions, we are not going to achieve the maximum possible. If we do not put the full force of our energy behind our action, then we cannot expect to accomplish the maximum. This is the human part. This is what we do all the time. The difference for us as devotees is that we can add one more ingredient to the equation. We can add Mother and convert human success—which may result in success or may result in failure—into unflinching success.

One of our clients is a devotee running a retail electronics store in Canada. A few years ago he told one of his most experienced salesmen who was not performing up to his potential, “If you really want to sell more, you can. You are not putting the force of your personality behind your effort.” The salesman thought that maybe his boss was right. He took the decision that he would make the next person who walks into the store buy a \$5000 home entertainment system from him. The experienced salesman turned to a young salesman beside him, and he told him of his decision very emphatically. Two minutes later, a customer walked into the store with long black hair, a leather motorcycle jacket and a beard. The salesman thought this is definitely not the kind of customer who will spend \$5000 on an entertainment system. Then he reminded himself of his decision and reaffirmed his commitment to achieve it. One hour later, that same customer walked out of the store with a \$5000 dollar system. That is the power of aspiration and mental determination to accomplish.

We have all seen this process working in our own lives at moments when we call Mother intensely. But this is a power we can express every day to accomplish everything we want to accomplish. Why just resort to it in times of emergency? When

someone is giving us trouble, why shouldn't we make this the normal way we act? Why shouldn't we rely on Mother's power to make everything we do a great success—not an ordinary success, but a success which is ten times or a hundred times more?

Controlling the Vital

Often the mind knows what it should do. But in times of crisis, the vital gets so disturbed that the mind is not able to be calm and think. Why does this happen? We see as part of the evolution that the vital has emerged first and the mind has come later. The vital is much stronger. It is more on the surface. The animal has been around for a long time, but the thinking mind is a more recent phenomenon. We possess within ourselves the whole inheritance of the animal. Our vitality is very strong and in life it is difficult for the mind to control the vital. Normally, it is the vital that rises up and tries to subordinate the mind to its own purposes.

Mind can control the vital. That requires some effort and mastery. It does not come naturally to us. In the USA we put on management conferences and sometimes we ask some of the participants to speak. They are very successful businessmen and yet when we ask them to speak before an audience, they say it is very frightening and they refuse. They say their minds understand that it is ok, but something else is frightened. That is natural, but is it inevitable? Normally, mind does not have that capacity to control the vital when it is upset. We do, of course, control our vital. We teach our children the rules of life. We sometimes do that with ourselves too. We discipline the vital. But when the vital is excited, it is very difficult to even think of Mother. Do not try to think about Mother with the mind, try to think about Mother with the vital. Imagine Mother in the vital, ask the vital to call Mother. If you start practicing this on a regular basis, then when things go wrong you won't

find it so very difficult. The vital is our center of energy and all accomplishment in life is based on our energy. So if you can imagine Mother in that center, She has the power to completely govern the vital energy. Instead of relying on mind, which is a very small power, even though it is a higher power, rely on Mother.

At times when we are in an emergency, after we have tried everything we can and there is nothing left to do, we sit down and force ourselves to concentrate on Mother. But we should be able to do that at any time. If the vital learns to rely on Mother, the whole life will become so sweet and easy. It will give us clarity and peace of mind. If you can call Mother into the vital and lodge Her presence there, you will always have energy, you will be calm, people will be attracted to you, and you will feel cheerful all the time. If we do that in the ordinary times, when the difficult times come, we will be able to put Mother there. If we do not think of Mother until an emergency comes and then we want to be able to control the childish vital, it will be difficult. You cannot raise a child without discipline all its life and then expect that when the guests come the child will automatically behave properly. If you put Mother's presence in the vital on a constant basis, the vital won't get out of control even in difficult times.

When you become more conscious, you will see that the vital is actually a separate center of consciousness. It can become more conscious if you send Mother there. The vital can feel very happy when Mother comes, because the vital loves energy and strength. Some 15 years ago I went to Europe to contact some computer software companies. I was traveling all over Europe on a tight schedule. On the last day of my tour I was in Paris to meet with a very large, important software company. When I went to their corporate office and entered the lobby, I realized that I had no energy at all. I had been traveling for two weeks and I was exhausted. Then I thought this is the most important meeting of my entire trip and without energy surely I cannot

accomplish anything. So I started calling Mother intensely from the vital and asking Her for energy. Within ten minutes I felt like somebody had pumped me up. I felt buoyant and charged with energy. I met the Vice President of the company for one hour, and he was very excited by our proposal. Similarly, when you are very upset, call Mother as Peace into the vital. She will come and fill the vital with peace.

LIFE RESPONSE

If you really relate to Mother, you will find life responding to you. Mother says clearly that the outer life is a reflection of the inner life. Now that should be clear to us because we know that the outer life and inner life are one. Just because our ego draws a boundary between the two does not mean that this represents a real division between what goes on inside us and what goes on in the world around us. The vibration of life that comes towards us does not stop at the boundary we call ourselves. Life vibrations know no boundaries. Life is a universal force. The inside of us and the outside of us are both part of the same field. Sri Aurobindo and Mother have given us a great knowledge, which says that everything around us is a reflection of what we are inside. The natural conclusion is that if we change what is inside us, we can change what comes to us from outside. The Gita says that man can become anything he wants to become. Then you may ask, "If man can become anything he wants, does that mean we are today what we want to be?" That is the fact. We have become what we wanted to become in the past. We possess that power. If we want to accomplish in life, even a firm decision of the mind has the power to make life respond.

Some years ago while we were planning for a conference, a professor had arranged to meet me at 11 o'clock regarding some agricultural proposal. In the midst of my discussion with

some colleagues regarding the conference, I kept looking at my watch and seeing the time, thinking the professor would come and interrupt the discussion. By 12 o'clock he had not come and I was wondering where he was. I began to think about it and I saw that I really did not want the professor to come and so he had not come. I thought this is not right of me. I do not know why he is coming and whether it is worthwhile or not, but I do not have a right not to want him to come. It seemed like a wrong attitude on my part. I decided to withdraw the wrong attitude that the professor should not come. When I walked out of my room, I was told he had arrived downstairs. That is life response. Our attitude has power to determine how life responds.

Robert runs a company in Holland. A young man joined his company as a salesman. The young man did not really know much about Mother or even about sales. He went out with one of the other devotees on a sales call. In the store, the owner told him the buyer was not there, so he would have to come back later. He left the store and the devotee asked him why he was leaving. He told her that the buyer was not present in the store. The devotee told him that if he relied on Mother, the store owner would definitely buy something. He should decide that he was going to rely on Mother, take the samples of the products, go back into the store and show them to the owner. He agreed and took all the samples inside the store. The moment he started talking to the owner, the buyer walked into the store. That is life response. Our decision, our will, has power to determine how life responds. When it is backed by faith in Mother, it never fails to respond.

Sri Aurobindo says Spirit has the power to move even Matter. All we want to do is move life. For Mother to move our tiny little life, to improve our circumstances and the results we achieve, is very easy for Her to do, if only we ask Her. Sometimes when we are not even thinking about it or before we even come to know Mother, She does move life. Two weeks

before the date set for my wedding, I was in a bookstore in California. I was planning to start medical college in a few months. I stood looking at the books on one of the shelves. Suddenly a book on the very top shelf fell down and landed on my lap. I picked it up and saw it was about Sri Aurobindo. I bought it and that is how I learned about Mother. It was life responding, not to my decision, because I did not have any decision, nor to my mental attitude, but to something in me that was seeking, my aspiration. Suppose someone had brought that book and handed it to me as a gift, that would also be a life response. The principle is the same whether the book comes or information comes about Mother or a gift comes. It is life bringing us what we are seeking.

John, a Canadian devotee, told me that he needed some money to pay off an old partner. This was the last savings he had, so he was hesitant to take that money. He asked me whether he should pay his partner, and I said he definitely should. It was very difficult for him. But he decided to do it. He had kept that money as an investment, and when he inquired about cashing in the investment, he found that it had become 70 percent more than he had been expecting. His willingness to give up his security and do what was right led to the discovery that he had much more money than he thought he had.

If you make the internal organization perfect in business, the market will respond. This is a response of life. If you clean perfectly, money will come. We had a client named Walt who was not even a devotee. On the last day of one of our management conferences, I said to the audience, "If you do not follow any of our advice, at least go back and clean your premises and you will see money comes." Ten years later Walt attended another conference we were conducting. He stood up and related to the audience how ten years ago he had gone back from our earlier conference, cleaned his offices thoroughly, and received a huge amount of money which he had not been expecting. That shows there is a connection. Why should we

only do it now and then?

We do not always feel life is doing what we want. So how can we reverse that and make life do what we want? To create luck in your life means you must acquire the capacity to make life respond to you. Life is not out there. It is inside you. All you need is not out there. What you need is the right attitude to bring things to you. If you use all of your capacities and rely on Mother, customers will come, money will come, whatever you genuinely aspire for will come.

There is a special version of life response in the opposite direction. This is more easily experienced in India. We call it a power cut. When the power goes out, it is a life response. Power means life and energy. When the power goes out, it means the energy is going away. It is a negative response. Life is very sensitive. Power goes out when we have a negative thought, a negative attitude or a negative impulse. Even if you live in America, life is very sensitive but it cannot so easily express through the power supply, because the power system is too well organized. Here you have the advantage of having an immediate indicator, like a red light, telling you when there is a wrong thought you should not have. Over the years we have had endless discussions about this. I remember a time I was working on one of my attitudes. I was sitting in my chair and trying to work very seriously on it and suddenly the lights went out. I felt very discouraged by it and thought, "I am trying to get rid of something and it only makes it worse." Someone came and said the electricity department was doing repair work and the power would be out for the whole day. I tried to still continue doing my work on myself. After about 20 minutes I felt, 'yes, at this point I can change my attitude' and I called Mother very intensely. To my utter amazement, within a second the power came back and remained on the rest of the day. We have heard of dozens of experiences like that.

None of us are 100 percent pure. This is part of our heritage. When we see a negative response from life, we must remember

that we have the power to change that response. We do not have to live with it. If we do not try to blame it on someone else, we have the opportunity to make a progress. When the lights go out, we can look inside and find a correspondence. If the lights go out in this room, each of us can look inside himself and find a correspondence in his own life. How can that be? That is the great creative power of Sachchidananda that it can give all of us an experience at the same time that is precisely true for each of us. If any of us is so pure in our emotions, so committed in our consciousness, then at least while we are all together, none of the others will have a bad impulse. We are one.

THE PSYCHIC BEING

Sri Aurobindo says that after years of searching, He made a supreme discovery. He discovered the psychic. Nobody has ever talked about the spirit evolving before. When you go into the higher experiences or trance you see the great Spirit behind, but He was the first to discover that there is a spirit within the evolution that is evolving. Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine* the we know God in the descent, but we do not know God in the ascent. God in the descent is the Parameshwara who has willed the creation. But what is God in the ascent? It is the godhead concealed in Matter that is evolving from Matter and progressively manifesting itself. That is the psychic. It is not outside of the evolution. It is the seed of spiritual consciousness that is awakening through our conscious experience in Prakriti. When we talk about the soul that goes through the experience of life after life and evolves and gains knowledge, we really mean the psychic.

Sri Aurobindo made the great spiritual discovery that if you concentrate on the Manomaya Purusha, you go to Purushottama, which takes you outside the creation. If you concentrate on the psychic, if you realize the psychic, it takes you to Parameshwara,

the Lord of Creation, inside the creation, and you ascend the path by which the lord descended to manifest the worlds in the first place. You go right up the same path from mind to Overmind to Supermind without ever leaving the world. So He discovered the key. He discovered how we can have that contact with the Lord in the creation and bring down Mother's power into our life. That is the whole secret of this yoga.

Psychic awakening overcomes division

- Contact with Supermind reunites consciousness with force
- Abolishing ego reunites life with the universe

I am sure many of you know that Mother has given some rules for getting in touch with the psychic. She presents ten rules in her essay on Psychic Education:

1. Rely on the soul, not on the mind. What does this mean? The mind cannot really know, so do not put faith in the mind's understanding of things. Know that the mind is a mind of ignorance. Do not take mental initiatives. Only the psychic always knows what is true.
2. Take interest in everything you do. Do not be the vital ego. The vital ego wants to do only what it is interested in. She says we must take interest in all the work that comes to us.
3. Do not complain against others. This is another rule

for the vital. The vital loves to complain against others. It feels so fulfilled when complaining about others. If you do not allow yourself to complain even silently in your own mind against other people, it helps you to move from the vital to the psychic.

4. Do not seek comfort. She does not advocate austerities, but She advises us not to be preoccupied with the body's comfort. If comforts come to us on their own, we can accept them. But we should not go out of our way to seek comfort or become a slave to it.

Rules of Psychic Education

- Rely on the soul, not mind
- Take interest in everything you do
- Don't complain against others
- Don't seek comfort
- Make progress at every moment
- Inner is reflection of the outer
- Consecrate before eating, sleeping, talking and acting.

5. Make progress at every moment. At every moment there is a progress we can make. We should discover what that progress is. Can I be more thoughtful? Can I be better organized? Can I be more patient? Can I remember Mother?
6. Accept the rule that the outer is the reflection of the inner. Do not be sorry about the correspondences

you see, but be grateful for the knowledge that life presents them to you as a personal instruction. Life is a great teacher for us.

- 7-10. Consecrate. Consecrate before eating, sleeping, talking, and acting. That does not leave much left. Consecrate everything to Mother and the psychic will come forward. When you consecrate everything to Her, you will be in direct contact with Her. Once you have that contact there will never be any question for you of why you are here. You will be conscious at every moment of the spirit evolving in you. You will have that knowledge of the miracle of the Divine Lila. When you do everything for Mother, there is a psychic joy in every act.

FOUR TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Beyond mind, what is there? Sri Aurobindo and Mother tell us to go beyond the divided and ignorant mind and move to the psychic. From there, seek a higher knowledge. They talk about four types of knowledge:

Mental knowledge – this is the knowledge on the surface which pieces things together but never knows the whole and never knows the depths.

Subliminal knowledge – in the animal this is the instinct. There was a true story about a Greek scholar who had an uneducated servant working for him for years. Every day the scholar used to read out to himself Greek passages while he was studying. The scholar died, the servant became old, and fell into a delirium. She started speaking out the Greek classics in her delirium. She had learned it subliminally. Her inner consciousness had learned it and she did not even know she had learned it. There is a subliminal knowledge in us that perceives everything and remembers everything, even when we are not mentally conscious.

Intuitive knowledge – Sri Aurobindo defines intuition as reason without the influence of the senses. Intuition is a direct knowledge, a direct experience of something else. That knowledge can come from inside us or from outside. There are many different types of intuition. First there is the spiritual intuition. When Mother first met Sri Aurobindo, She immediately recognized that He was the Krishna who had been teaching Her for many years in Paris. That was a spiritual intuition. Once Mother had a subtle experience at night, in which a figure just like Sri Aurobindo came to Her and told Her about how he was organizing this and that and how he wanted to make the Ashram into a religion. Mother intuitively knew that this was a false Sri Aurobindo. If we have sincerity and purity of consciousness, we can always know intuitively which things are true and which are false. Sri Aurobindo discovering that the secret of the ascent was the psychic was a spiritual intuition. The secret of this yoga is that the method for realization is not concentration, it is surrender. The surface personality surrenders to the psychic and the psychic surrenders to the Supramental. He discovered this for the first time. Mother said that the gods do not have the psychic, they do not aspire for a perfect realization, because they feel they are already very high. Mother showed Durga what surrendering to the Lord is.

These are examples of spiritual intuition. Then there is mental intuition. Einstein discovered in his intuition the relationship between mass and energy in the universe. Maybe in a million years someone could have calculated it out. It is not something obvious or rational. While Archimedes, the ancient Greek philosopher, was bathing, he suddenly figured out the relationship between the mass of water in his bathtub and the weight of his body which was displacing the water. He became so excited that he jumped out of the tub and ran out naked into the street shouting “Eureka, Eureka! I found out!” That is mental intuition with a little bit of vital enthusiasm.

Then there is vital intuition. If someone knows who is calling

on the phone even before they pick up the receiver, that is vital intuition. A man working on our agricultural estate had vital intuition. He could be busily talking to someone, but, if a mile away at the bus stop a friend of his was getting down, he would know it. He would say, “My friend has arrived from town.” Gurusamy Mudaliar was a famous doctor who used to have two lines of patients outside his house, one for paying patients and the other for non-paying patients. He used to see them alternately. He did not even examine the patients. He just looked at them and wrote the prescription. He was always correct. One time a very famous businessman came to him in the paying line. The doctor looked at him and wrote the prescription, and the businessman made a face. The doctor did not say anything to him. He just handed him the prescription and said, “Next.” The businessman was cured. He was so curious that he came back again and got in the line. The doctor asked, “Why are you here? There is nothing wrong with you.” The man said, “No, but I want to know how you do it.” The doctor asked the businessman if he recognizes his children when he sees them. The man said, “yes”. The doctor replied, “I recognize the disease the same way you recognize your children.” This is vital intuition.

Animals have physical intuition. It is a natural sense that tells them what is good for them to eat. They can also sense danger approaching. Young children sometimes display this intuitive knowledge until they are taught to ignore it.

In addition to intuition, there is something called subtle sense. It is not on our list of four types of knowledge, because it is something different. As there are physical senses through which we perceive physical vibrations in the material world, there are also subtle senses through which we can perceive vibrations in the subtle plane. There was a devotee who had a moving vision. He saw Mother as a huge ball of light which broke into a billion tiny sparks, and each spark went and lodged in the hearts of all the people on earth. Later he learned that

Mother had left Her body at the time he had the vision. That is not an intuition. It is a subtle vision of what actually happened in the subtle plane when Mother left Her body.

Supramental Knowledge – The fourth type of knowledge is also an intuition, a knowledge by identity, but it is an intuitive knowledge that comes from within. Until you experience it, the only analogy that will make it clear is the fact that we all know who we are? We know who we are by identity. We know ourselves, our thoughts and feelings by identity, not by any other faculty. It's an intuition, we can say, but it comes from inside, not from outside. That is the closest we can come to a description of the Supramental way of knowing. Supramental knowledge differs also in one other important respect. It is always knowledge of the whole, not just the parts. Even when the Supramental concentrates on a part, it always sees the whole. It never makes the mistake of thinking one possibility is the only possibility. It not only sees the whole, it automatically sees the solution to any problem. There is nothing missing in its knowledge. The senses tell us that the sun moves around the earth. The mind tells us that the earth moves round the sun. But Sri Aurobindo explains that to the supramental vision, neither of these is fully true. In supermind, neither earth moves nor sun; there is only a change in the relation of sun-consciousness and earth-consciousness. Einstein's theory of relativity leads to a similar conclusion. Both sun and earth are in motion as parts of a larger whole called the universe and what changes is only their position relative to each other.

Moving to the Supramental Consciousness is a long and arduous path. It is a path of yoga. But there is something we can do to move towards this consciousness at every moment. We can take the other person's point of view. Every time we stop identifying with our own mental ego's perception and we see things from the perspective of other people, we are moving away from mind toward the Supramental Consciousness.

In one of the stories about Birbal, Emperor Akbar wakes up

one morning and the first person he sees is a lowly sweeper. Then a courtier comes in and announces that there has been an attack on the kingdom. A half an hour later another bad news is given to the Emperor. In the next two or three hours, a whole series of bad news comes. The emperor wonders why everything is going wrong that day. One of his attendants asked him whom he saw first when he woke up in the morning. Akbar remembers that he first saw the sweeper. He decides the man has bad rasi and orders him to be hung. As the guards are leading the sweeper down the hall to his doom, Birbal happens to come upon them and he asks why they are taking the sweeper away. When he learns that the sweeper is to be hung, he stops the guards and instructs them to bring the sweeper back to the throne room. Akbar looks up and sees Birbal coming in with the sweeper and shouts, "Why are you bringing that man in here again? When I woke up today, I saw that man and everything is going wrong!" Birbal replies, "Your majesty, you were also the first person that this man saw when he woke up this morning, and now he is going to die!" Who then has the bad rasi? Only then Akbar understood there was another point of view. That is taking the other man's point of view.

These are the four types of knowledge. The path of the Integral Yoga is to go from the surface to the psychic in the subliminal and then rise through intuition to Supermind along the same path as the descent of God into matter.

INTEGRAL YOGA & TRADITIONAL YOGAS

Sri Aurobindo makes an essential distinction between the goal of the traditional yogas and the goal of Integral Yoga. The goal of the traditional yogas is to escape to the unmanifest, the Non-Being. The traditional yogas say we should liberate our soul from bondage to mind, life and matter. Sri Aurobindo

says the real goal of yoga is to transform mind, life and matter, to divinize them.

There is another important difference between this yoga and the others. The individual who escapes into Nirvana escapes all by himself. The individual soul that realizes the Parabrahman realizes it only for himself. But the Integral Yoga is a yoga that no one can do for himself. It is a collective yoga that transforms life universally. It is a yoga in which the individual who calls Mother calls Her for all humanity. It is like praying for rain. You cannot pray for rain just for yourself. The rain falls for everyone. When you call Mother, she does not just come for you alone, She comes for everyone. And that is the yoga they were doing, bringing down the Supramental Force for everybody. When we make a progress, that progress is not just for us individually. We are representatives of humanity. Everyone who shares a similar trait or attitude or difficulty, also receives a benefit. When you seek a privilege or protection because of your friendship with a minister, you obtain an individual boon. When you obtain the same boon by a change in the law, you achieve something for everyone in similar circumstances. The law applies to all. Progress in Integral Yoga is like changing the laws for humanity. Our progress is a progress for everyone.

The traditional yogas that seek to know the Absolute through the instrumentation of mind lead to the discovery of the Parabrahman. The Gita, which seeks to relate to the Divine through the heart, enables the devotee to reach the Purushottama through Bhakti. Through the Integral Yoga, through the psychic, we rise to the Parameshwara, to the Supermind. This explains why different yogas lead to different results. The motive of our actions determines the result we achieve. The motive of this yoga is perfection in life, not escape from life. Therefore we reach the Divine power which is lord and master of life and has the power for perfection in life.

In the book he explains the process by which we can overcome division to achieve this goal. The first step to get

out of the limited situation we are in is to go within and bring the psychic forward. We should go from the surface mind to the depths, reach the psychic and bring it to the surface. Once we have realized the psychic and it comes forward, we can experience the eternal Self behind, without ever losing our hold on the world. But in aspiring for perfection in life, we must not limit ourselves to the evolution, any more than the yogi seeking liberation should be limited to his liberation. We have to have the full realization. We must also know the Transcendent. We must not only know the soul, the Jivatma, but also the Transcendent behind the creation. Finally, we must call down the power from the Supermind, the creative power of the Supramental Mother, into our mind, vital and body to transform them. This is how the Integral Yoga differs from the yogas that seek just liberation for the individual soul.

Four Steps to Overcome Division

- Emergence of psychic
- Discovery of the eternal self in us
- Know the transcendent self
- Transformation of our nature

Ascent and Descent

Sri Aurobindo says that in the past the Avatars came down to reveal the divinity, not to work for this transformation. Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the first to come to work for the evolution

here on earth. They did not come just to show humanity that there is a higher reality. They came to speed up the evolution. They took birth in human bodies to bring the Supramental down into the world. They called the Supramental Force down into matter. They came to do the yoga for humanity. In the tradition, so far man has been seeking the Avatar. This is the first time that the Avatars have come seeking man.

A time can come in the development of a country when the government realizes that the people are not there just to pay taxes, that the government is there to develop the country for its people. That is the big difference between the British Raj and the Indian rule after Independence. During British rule people were only there to support the government. After Independence the government knew it was there to help the people. That is the difference here. Until now, the people were there to seek after the Avatars, but now Mother and Sri Aurobindo have come to seek after man.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of the stages of ascent from human consciousness. The first stage is moving from the mind to the higher mind. The higher mind is the mind of silence. In the mind we know by thought, in the higher mind we know without thought, in silence. Above the higher mind is the illumined mind. In the illumined mind, we know by light, by vision, we SEE the reality. Above the illumined mind is the intuitive mind. This is where we know by intuition, an intuition coming from outside and giving us the knowledge. And finally, in Supermind we know by intuition that comes from inside ourselves, because the whole world is within us. We know by identity. So we bring the psychic forward, and then we rise through the higher mind to the illumined mind to the intuitive mind to the Supermind.

In the traditional yoga, each time we go up a step, we go further away from life and the physical world. But in this yoga, each ascent to a higher plane of consciousness is followed by a descent that brings down the higher power into the lower life. It is a double movement: for every ascent, there is a descent.

We rise to the higher and the higher comes down to change the lower. In the final stage, the psychic ascends to the Supramental and at the same time, the psychic descends into matter, bringing the Supramental into matter. When the Supramental force in the psychic transforms matter, the psychic being becomes the Supramental being. So the psychic, that soft, whispering voice behind the heart which can gently guide us now, is destined in the future to become the Supramental being in each of us. That is what we are here for. That is the opportunity we have in every act on the surface of our being, to help that psychic evolve as the spirit in life.

Stages of Ascent

- **Supermind – inner intuition**
- **Intuitive mind – intuition**
- **Illumined mind – light**
- **Higher mind – silence**

Triple Transformation

Sri Aurobindo says that the result of this yoga is a triple transformation. First is the psychic transformation in which the parts of our being open up and allow the psychic to come forward. The mind, vital and body open to the psychic consciousness. The second transformation is the spiritual transformation. The parts of our being directly receive from the Supramental consciousness. We no longer have to

receive through the intermediacy of the psychic. Mother's consciousness-force comes down from the Supramental plane into our parts of being and directs them. But we are still not supramentalized. Our parts are only under Her influence. Finally the Supramental transformation completely changes the nature of mind and makes it other than it is. It loses the sense of division and acquires the Supramental knowledge. The vital becomes universalized and the physical is transformed into the Supramental consciousness. The body becomes Sat, self-conscious being. Mother describes in Agenda what it was like when the cells of Her body became supramentalized.

Triple Transformation

- **Psychic – parts opening to the psychic**
- **Spiritual – parts directed by spirit**
- **Supramental – parts supramentalized**

The Divine Life

In the last chapter, Sri Aurobindo sums up the Divine Life: our divided life becomes a life of unity. The individual remains, but there is only oneness. There are millions of conscious individuals, differentiated centers of individuality, but all consciously know themselves to be expressions of the One. Death becomes immortality because death has no meaning or purpose anymore. There is no longer need for the form to die. The form is plastic and divine. Desire based on a sense of limitation becomes love for everything. Incapacity becomes

the omnipotence of the Supramental force, because it can accomplish everything it wills and in matter it can form itself into anything it wants to be.

Divine Life

- **Division becomes unity**
- **Death becomes immortality**
- **Desire becomes love**
- **Incapacity becomes omnipotence**

LUCK, GRACE & SUPER GRACE

The purpose with which we started out was to discover how we can create luck in our lives. We are all creating our lives all the time, but now we are doing it subconsciously. When we do it consciously, we can do it any way we want to. When we call Mother's power, we can make our whole life luck. There is a phrase: 'The time has come.' Mother has another way of saying it: 'We can make the time come.' We can make this the time when all our lives become lucky. It does not depend on matter, fate, circumstance or any other person. We do not need a bank loan, we do not need an appreciative boss, we do not even need a cooperative spouse. If we want to do it, each of us without condition, has the power to do it in our own life. All we need to do is to fulfill the original conditions and rely on Mother.

We know that when we rely on Mother and ask Her to help

us, the Grace comes down. We have all seen the power of that Grace to save us at different times. How to make that Grace permanent? When we rely on Mother to the extent of giving up our reliance on our own capacities, when we shift our reliance entirely to Her while fully exhausting our own efforts, Grace becomes Super Grace and comes without our asking. It comes in a measure far greater than our expectation. When Grace comes we get the result at the end of a labor. When Super Grace comes, we get the result in the beginning. All the results of a lucky life come to us in the beginning. Sometimes before we have even met any conditions, She comes to us. She does not bargain. She does not negotiate. She gives in advance and hopes we will respond.

Some men have good angels in their lives, benefactors who help them with their education or jobs. These people play the role of a good-will agent. If we have such a person like that in our lives, we say we are lucky. That person personifies luck for us because through that person good things keep happening to us. They give us a knowledge we need or a help we need, and what we could not achieve on our own, we achieve through their help. If we have the right attitude, we feel really grateful to them. Mother offers to be the good angel to everyone. She offers to bring everything that all of us need to accomplish beyond our dreams. The only appropriate response to that is gratitude. If we have faith and if we rely on Her, she keeps coming and giving more.

How to do this? We have to be positive, we have to think positively, feel positively, not just to Mother or about Mother when we are sitting in front of Her picture, but when we are meeting the spirit in life in everybody we interact with, whether it is the servant whom we are bossing around or a neighbor or a friend. We have to take every one of those moments as a divine moment and behave the way Mother would want us to behave in Her presence. Those are the real golden moments to make our lives lucky. You may ask, does how I treat servants have

anything to do with making my life lucky? There are devotees who, by learning to relate to a servant with the attitude Mother wants, have seen luck pour into their lives. Every moment is an opportunity for us.

We exist at several levels and we are very complex beings. We have a surface and a depth, an ego, a vital and a mind. When we take a decision, we exist at many different levels. When we say we want Mother and we say it sincerely, certainly something really has faith in Mother. And when we say we have faith in Mother, it is true something in us has the faith. But that does not mean that every part of us has faith or is sincere. Mother is not asking and expecting us to become Supramental beings in a day or even in a lifetime. All She wants to do is deliver great prosperity, good fortune and happiness in our lives. That requires our decision and commitment to Mother must be at a certain level and intensity commensurate with what we want from Mother. We have to put ourselves in Mother's hands at that level and be pure at that level so that She can enter into us. The index that we are doing that is happiness. The more and more we really relate to Mother in the depths, the happier and happier we feel in our lives. The deeper that happiness goes, the more luck, the more Grace comes.

The Life Divine offers us the knowledge that leads to unfailing success. Back in 1890 there was a railway stationmaster named Richard Sears in the mid-western USA. One day he received a parcel of watches from a company. The company requested him to deliver the watches to a shop in the town and collect the money for the parcel. It was like a VPP package. When Sears went to the shop, the shop owner told him that he did not have any money at that moment, so the watches had better be sent back to the manufacturer. Sears sent a cable to the company saying that the shop had refused the watches. The company sent back a cable suggesting that Sears try to sell the watches himself and pay for them after he sold them. He did not know anything about business, but he was quite strategically located. Up and

down the railway line there were stationmasters at every town and he knew them all by name. He was communicating with them every day on the telegraph. So he sent a telegram to each of the stationmasters up and down the line telling them that he had some watches which he could sell to them at a good price. Within a month he was writing back to the watch company to order more watches. Within a year he left the railway and started a mail order company, one of the very first in the USA. By 1900, his company was worth about \$5 million. By 1920 it was worth \$20 million and was already the largest retail company in the world. By 1984 it was worth \$45 billion dollars, about Rs. 200,000 crores. It all started with a consignment of watches that the shop owner did not want to buy. Now suppose that the stationmaster had become very angry with the shop owner and shouted at him, he may have spoiled everything with a wrong attitude. That is how unimaginable luck can come to us through the smallest of incidents, when we have the right attitude and meet the inner conditions Mother asks for.

What we are talking about is the Infinite. If we want to see Mother in life, we should be able to see the infinite. This man, who was not even a devotee, created an infinite company, which for more than six decades was the largest retail company in the world. He was not a devotee and yet Mother's creative power was flowing through him a hundred years ago. There are people who have not even heard of Mother and who have risen to the top of their fields in music or sports or in the academic fields. Why not us?

What are the steps?

- In whatever we do, we should have knowledge of the whole. We should look at all points of view. Knowledge of the whole means the good and bad, the high and low, without judging, without reacting; objectively we should understand where we are. We should not distort things one way or another.
- In whatever we do, in any area where we want to

achieve unfailing success, we should act from the highest values that are possible for us. Be truthful, honest, clean, punctual, well-organized, generous, thoughtful, kind, and humble. We all know the list. These are not impossible things; these are human values which society has cherished as ideals for thousands of years. At least in this one area where we want to unfailingly succeed, we should be capable of acting from the highest values.

- We should organize our time and energy, be systematic in our thought and action.
- We should release our energy, put the full weight of our personality behind what we want to accomplish. We should not sit around waiting for things to happen. We should exhaust our effort joyously. We should make unceasing effort.
- Finally, having put in that unceasing effort, we should do it while shifting our faith entirely to Mother and calling Her intensely.

Formula for Unfailing Success

- **Acquire knowledge of the whole**
- **Act from the highest values**
- **Organize time and energy**
- **Determined enthusiastic energy**
- **Unceasing effort**
- **Call Mother**

In the next 30 days, take some time and prepare for an

experiment. Decide what it is you want to accomplish. Set a goal that you would consider fortunate and lucky to realize. Decide that during this period with respect to this goal you will practice absolute truthfulness, become totally humble, thoughtful, and generous. Be willing at every moment to take a full effort to accomplish your goal in an organized way. And after preparing yourself for 30 days, when you really feel ready, take three days and shift your whole attention to Mother, your whole faith to Mother, your whole reliance on Her supramental power and call her non-stop for three days. Call Her not to give you anything, but call Her to come in and make your life a life of luck.

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