

THE INFINITE, THE UNIVERSE AND THE INDIVIDUAL: FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF SRI AUROBINDO

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Abstract

According to Sri Aurobindo the realm of reality has been divided into two hemispheres—the Higher and the Lower. The triune principle of Sachchidananda (the pure Existent, Consciousness—Force and Bliss) represents the higher sphere whereas Matter, Life, Psyche and Mind belong to the lower hemisphere. Sachchidananda, being an eternal and immutable unity distinction-less. Mind, life and matter, are, actually the analytic or dividing consciousness amongst which mind is known only by separation and division. So, the pertinent question is: how can an evolute belonging to the lower sphere transform itself in such a way that it is able to enter the higher or the spiritual sphere? This paper is meant for searching a suitable answer of this question.

Keywords: Reality, Super-mind, Truth-Consciousness, The Infinite, The Universe, The Individual, Oneness

Introduction: Sri Aurobindo says, “Super-mind is the vast self-extension of the Brahman that contains and develops. By the Idea it develops the triune principle of existence, consciousness and bliss out of their indivisible unity. It differentiates them, but it does not divide. It establishes a Trinity, not arriving like the Mind from the three to the One, but manifesting the three out of the One—for it manifests and develops—and yet maintaining them in the unity—for it knows and contains.”¹

Over-mind cannot transform the entire Nature nor does it guarantee against the downward pull of in conscience. Hence to achieve a complete integral transformation of the entire nature the descent of Super-mind is imperative. He says, “Without a mediating principle between them, we would, in order to reach the transcendent unity of Sachchidananda, have to abandon the world of mind, life and matter. Or, if we limited our awareness only to the phenomenal world, we would lose part of the truth. If the reality of either unity or multiplicity is denied, the hope of a divine life on earth is impossible.”² So, Sri Aurobindo feels that the only escape root for this solution is to find an intermediate link which establishes a relation between these two. It must, on the one hand, be similar in nature to Sachchidananda, and on the other, it must not be the opposite of the mental. Such a link is

the Super-mind which belongs to the higher hemisphere and yet it is the end and the ideal of mind that which mind is going to be.

In his view, “As (Super-mind) belonging to the higher hemisphere it must have a full consciousness of Sachchidananda. It is not Sachchidananda itself, and yet it is akin to its nature because it is the consciousness of Sachchidananda. Likewise, it is not mind itself, and yet it is its culmination and fulfillment.”³ Super-mind, being a principle of “Active will and knowledge” is superior to mind and cannot be reasoning mind because, according to Sri Aurobindo, the consciousness in reasoning mind is not sufficient to explain the existence in the universe. To determine the nature of Super-mind we must throw light on these two aspects of Super-mind—(i) Super-mind as Truth-consciousness—as the spiritual principle having complete knowledge of Sachchidananda and (ii) Super-mind as the ideal and the culmination of mind. However, Sri Aurobindo calls the Super-mind as the creator, the Real idea and the Supreme Truth-consciousness. He describes Super-mind in this way: “For the Super-mind is the vast; it starts from unity, not division, it is primarily comprehensive, differentiation is only its secondary act.”⁴

Discussion: Super-mind has been described as the Supreme Truth-consciousness. From the standpoint of Super-mind (Truth-consciousness), all existence is one Being having consciousness as the essential nature, it is one consciousness whose active nature is will, it is one consciousness-force which is delight whether actively creative or at rest. The universe is an expression of consciousness, which although manifesting itself in the multiplicity, is all the time conscious of the basic unity. Creation, then, is through this consciousness, which essentially sees things as basically one, which differentiates the one without actually dividing it. Therefore, it is the Truth-consciousness. Supramental consciousness is called Truth-consciousness also to distinguish it from mental consciousness. Mind essentially makes divisions and thereby creates appearances contrary to the nature of the real. Super-mind does not create divisions and does not give false pictures, it never misses the real unitary nature of the One, and therefore, it has been called Truth-consciousness.

Super-mind has also been called the creator or the creative idea, the real idea. Sri Aurobindo feels that the creative principle must not be viewed as something over and above the one, but as something which is able to do justice both to the oneness of the one and to the world. Sacchidananda is pure, conscious and blissful existence – beyond space and time;

creation, on the other hand, is movement – a development in space and time. There must be a link in between these two, and the link must be such that it is capable of explaining both the unity of the one and its development. In his view that is possible only if the creative principle is conceived as a conscious Idea, which, as Idea, is one, at the same time, is capable of expression. It is not anything different from Sachchidananda, it is its own consciousness, its own Idea. As pure consciousness, it is unitary, as an Idea it is capable of development.

The second basic character of Super-mind is, it is the culmination and consummation of mind. “Sri Aurobindo firstly makes a distinction between the two emphasizing the elements that mind lacks, and then he goes on to show that mind, in fact, is a subordinate power of Super-mind, not opposed to it, but almost a version of Supermind in the lower hemisphere which is waiting to be uplifted to the supramental level.”⁵

Sri Aurobindo argues that Super-mind is a logical necessity. Sachchidananda in itself is a spaceless and timeless absolute of conscious existence that is bliss. But the world is not timeless and spaceless, it is an extension in Time and Space and a movement, a working out, a development of relations by causality in Time and Space.

According to Sri Aurobindo, “The Super-mind principle has three movements. (i) It is the comprehending unity of all things, (ii) It supports the manifestation of the One in the many and the many in the One, (iii) It supports the evolution of individuality.”⁶ These three movements of the Super-mind are analogous to the three aspects of Brahman: transcendent, universal, individual. Super-mind functions as the conscious mediator recognizing the one in itself and all things and all objects as emanations of its own will and knowledge.

The difference between mind and Super-mind consists in the difference between their manners of apprehending reality. Super-mind essentially gets the unitary picture of reality. Mind is not capable of having a knowledge of the reality. But the spiritual object of Super-mind is already present in mind. It is because Super-mind has already descended into mind, that mind is capable of spiritual activities. Sri Aurobindo says that mind is actually a fall from Super-mind. This fall, according to him, is a necessary condition of creation, because it represents the descent of the spirit.

Super-mind is the link between the absolute one and the relative many. According to Sri Aurobindo, the fundamental nature of Super-mind is that all its knowledge is originally a

knowledge by identity and oneness. The Spirit is one everywhere and it knows all things as itself and in itself.

Sri Aurobindo says, “This is the second character of the supreme Supermind that its knowledge is a real because a total knowledge. It has in the first place a transcendental vision and sees the universe not only in the universal terms, but in its right relation to the supreme and eternal reality from which it proceeds and of which it is an expression.”⁷ In his view, it knows the spirit and truth and whole sense of the universal expression because it knows all the essentiality and all the infinite reality and all the consequent constant potentiality of that which in part it expresses.

In his words, “The third characteristic of the Super-mind arising from this difference, which brings us to the practical distinction between the two kinds of knowledge, is that it is directly truth-conscious, a divine power of immediate, inherent and spontaneous knowledge, an idea holding luminously all realities and not depending on indications and logical or other steps from the known to the unknown like the mind which is a power of the Ignorance. The Super-mind contains all its knowledge in itself, is in its highest divine wisdom in eternal possession of all truth.”⁸ According to him, The Super-mind is eternally and on all level truth-conscious.

Super-mind sees directly the spirit and essence. Super-mind is a knower and creator of its own truth, the mind of man only a knower and creator in the half light and half- darkness of a mingled truth and error.

Sri Aurobindo speaks about three general poises of Super-mind. These poises are nothing but the three different sessions of its cosmic and spiritual consciousness. It is to say that the first poise is the state in which the unitary character of the supramental consciousness is still intact, although it is potentially ready to be differentiated. Then the process of differentiation starts and multiplicity makes it appearances. And at last, this multiplicity is fully expressed. But in all the stages the urge towards unity is always there, because consciousness of integral unity represents the basic character of Super-mind.

Sri Aurobindo says that Super-mind is in its very essence a truth-consciousness, a consciousness is always free from the Ignorance. In the Super-mind feeling and emotion do not depart from their truth, sense cannot mislead or deviate into the grossness. Super-mind is

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an eternal reality of the divine Being and the divine Nature. Super-mind is the grade of existence beyond mind, life and matter. He also speaks that there is always a difference between the supreme Super-mind of the omniscient and omnipotent Isvara and that which can be attained by the Jiva. In his words, “The human being is climbing out of the ignorance and when he ascends into the supramental nature, he will find in it grades of its ascension, and he must first form the lower grades and limited steps before he rises to higher summits. He will enjoy there the full essential light, power, Ananda of the infinite self by oneness with the Spirit, but in the dynamical expression it must determine and individualise itself according to the nature of the self-expression which the transcendent and universal Spirit seeks in the Jiva. It is God-realisation and God-expression which is the object of our Yoga and more especially of its dynamic side, it is a divine self-expression in us of the Isvara, but under the conditions of humanity and through the divinised human nature.”⁹

Conclusion : On the Supramental plane we come to know with certainty the original relation of the three terms of existence, the Infinite, the universe and the individual. It becomes certain here that the individual is at once identical in essence with the Infinite and yet in manifestation a concentration of the Supreme consciousness of the Infinite, it is thus from the point of knowledge a self-objectivization of the Infinite so that the Infinite can look at itself from the point of view of the individual. The individual can know the Infinite for it is in fact one with the Infinite, the object in-itself, but this identity does not abolish the differentiation of the Individual so that the two terms can be known subjectively and objectively on the basis of the identity. And the same relation holds true of the individual and the universe, the subject and the object.

Supramental nature sees everything from the standpoint of oneness and regards all things, even the greatest multiplicity and diversity, even what are to the mind the strongest contradictions, in the light of that oneness; its will, ideas, feelings, sense are made of the stuff of oneness, its action proceed upon that basis. Supramental nature does not act by mental idea or rule or in subjection to any inferior impulse. Each of its steps is dictated by an innate spiritual vision.

Notes & References

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