

Sri Aurobindo and Integral Yoga: A Review

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ABSTRACT

Scientific development may help us in materialistic achievement but it may not be able to achieve the eternal peace. The ancient yoga may help to get rid of turmoil, hazards, and so. Practicing yoga is very much helpful to maintain peace, to lead and to uplift the human being. But the so called types of yoga may not help alone in evolution. Sri Aurobindo integrated all sorts of yoga to achieve the ultimate aim. He believed that the integration of all yogas mentioned in the Gita helps the human life to be transformed into a celestial one. For the total development of an individual he stressed on integration among all the areas of yoga, not on any one. He formulated three main stages, a 'Triple transformation', in the progression of the Integral Yoga: the Psychic, the Spiritual, and the Supra-mental. Therefore, the Integral yoga i.e. the synthesis of physical, vital, mental and spiritual being takes us from lower level of existence to higher level and to the highest level.

Key words: Yoga, Integral Yoga, Evolution.

Introduction:

We, the human beings, always seek wellbeing and run after happiness. We rush in the direction of one or two aspects to achieve satisfaction in life by hook and crook. So we keep away values. We desire more and more. We cross our capacities consciously or unconsciously. So some expectations are fulfilled, some are not. This may be the cause of dissatisfaction which may lead to misery, sorrow and unhappiness etc.

According to the *Bhagwad Gita*, if we perform our duty without expectation, loss or gain will not affect us. Happiness and sorrow simultaneously make us in a state of equilibrium. It helps us to lead life in the most integrated way. This balanced state

is the yoga. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo (along with the Mother) teaches such type of *integration* but also direct the human life to be transformed into a celestial one.

A Short Biography of Sri Aurobindo:

The 15th August is unforgettable to the Indians for achieving independence. Sri Aurobindo was also born on that very date but that was before seventy five years in 1872 in a very famous family in Kolkata. He started his early education in a convent school in Darjeeling. Then he left India for western education. In 1893, he returned India and joined the state service in Baroda. Here he performed different types of works like in Survey and Settlement departments, department of

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Revenue, Secretariat, teaching grammar and foreign language etc. Gradually he became interested in making India free from the British Rule. He started communication with his family in Bengal. In Bengal with Barin's help he established contacts with revolutionaries, inspiring radicals like Bagha Jatin, Jatin Banerjee, Surendranath Tagore. He helped to establish a series of youth clubs. He helped found the *Anushilan Samiti* of Calcutta in 1902.¹ He strongly believed in *Swaraj*, *Swadesh*, *Boycott* and *National Education*. He wanted to make it established in all the Congress meetings. He travelled various parts of India for nationalist movements. In 1908, he was arrested in a case connected with bomb. Later he withdrew himself from all sorts of political activities and transformed into spiritualism in Pondicherry. He died on 5th December, 1950.

Yoga and The integral Yoga:

Literally yoga is the unification of *jibatma* with *paramatma*. It integrates our body, mind and thought process. This in return controls our life style, reduces stress and makes one free from diseases. Sri Aurobindo described yoga in different ways. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, he described yoga as 'union'. Yoga is both – a path and the destination to a superior consciousness. This unifying power differentiates the human being from an inferior animal. Yoga is the exchange of an egoistic for a cosmic consciousness lifted towards or informed by the supra-cosmic, transcendent unnamable who is the source and support of all things. Yoga is the passage of the human thinking animal towards the God-consciousness from which he has descended.²

In his own writings it is found that 'yoga is the union of that which has become separated in

the play of the universe with its own true self, origin and universality' and 'the union of the soul with the immortal being'. The essence of yoga is the contact between the human being with the divinity.

The integral yoga is the way of a complete God-realisation, a complete Self-realisation, a complete fulfillment of our being and consciousness, a complete transformation of our nature-and this implies a complete perfection of life here and not only a return to an eternal perfection elsewhere.³

It implies realisation of God. It helps to become a part of a divine work. The object of this Yoga is not to liberate the soul from Nature, but to liberate both soul and nature by sublimation into the Divine Consciousness from whom they came.⁴

Transformation of Sri Aurobindo into spirituality:

We all know that a transformation occurred in the life of Aurobindo when he was in Alipore Jail custody. He was very much influenced by Swami Vivekananda. Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a *Maharashtrian Yogi*, instructed Aurobindo to depend on an inner guide and any kind of external *guru* or guidance would not be required.⁵ Gradually he became more and more concerned with the spiritualism. In Pondicherry, he established an ashram. He devoted himself to propagate the Hindu philosophy and turned into *Rishi Aurobindo*.

His mind set "was formed first by the study of the *Upanishads* and the *Gita*", as well as knowledge that flowed from above when he sat in meditation. The influence of the Indian *Vedanta* on Aurobindo's thought was enormous. The other major component was ideas that Aurobindo encountered during his education, such as the theory of evolution.⁶

Views of Sri Aurobindo:

The views of Sri Aurobindo might be encircled on the basis of some facts, experiences and personal realization of a prophet. These are as per following;

- There is an eternal circle. All things is originated from the *Brahma* and go back to Him;
- Life and death are the two sides of a single circle (re-embodiment of the soul);
- The soul can determine the fate;
- Human endeavour is to attain divine life that is melted into the *Brahma*.

Sri Aurobindo believed that a divine life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we predict. He prescribed that evolution is the process of liberation. Consciousness is the basic element to be transformed into higher and wider level and at last greater perfection occurs. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection.⁷

We all are born with ignorance. There is a possibility of every human being to attain a divine manifestation. Sri Aurobindo stated that there is a possibility to open oneself to higher divine consciousness which would reveal one's true self, remain in constant union of divine and bring down a higher force which would transform mind, life and body. The main objective of Sri Aurobindo's yoga is to realize this transformation.

Transformation of an individual:

Man is born as an ignorant, divided, and conflicted being. Initially he is a product of the original unconsciousness inherent in. He does not know the nature of *Reality*, including its source and purpose; his own nature, including the parts and integration of his being; what purpose he serves, and what his individual and spiritual potential is, amongst others. In addition, man experiences life through division and conflict, including his relationship with others, and his divided view of spirit and life.⁸

To overcome such limitations, man must follow a process of self-discovery in which he uncovers his *divine* nature. To that end, Sri Aurobindo suggests a process i.e. Triple Transformation. It includes Psychic Transformation, Spiritual Transformation and Supramental transformation.

- (1) *Psychic Transformation*: It is a movement within, away from the surface of life, to the depths, culminating in the discovery of the evolving soul. From that experience, he sees the oneness and unity of creation, and the harmony of all experienced in life.
- (2) *Spiritual Transformation*: As a result of making the psychic change, the mind of human being expands and he experiences knowledge through light, intuition, and revelation of knowledge, culminating in supramental perception. Light enters from the heights and begins to transmute various parts of his being.
- (3) *Supramental transformation*: After making the psychic and spiritual change, the human being makes the supramental and most radical change. It is basically a complete transformation of the mind, the heart, the emotions, and the physical

body.⁹

Our aim is 'divine perfection'. He mentioned that 'man is a transitional being'. The life of the human being is not final. The next achievement is evolution from man to the superman. It is unavoidable as it is the intention of the inner spirit and the logic of nature's process.

Conclusion:

If we analyze the life of Sri Aurobindo, it is found that he revealed some realizations in his own life.

- He achieved the first realization while he was meditating with the Maharashtrian Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele. It was the realization of the silent, spaceless and timeless *Brahman*.
- His second realization was of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine which happened in the Alipore jail.
- Other two realizations were related to the 'Supreme Reality with the static and dynamic *Brahman*' and that of the *higher planes of consciousness* leading to the *Supermind*.

Sri Aurobindo was deeply influenced by Western thought, most significantly, Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory and French intellectual Henri Bergson's philosophy of cognitive evolution. The ideas of impending human evolution and global futurism became the foundation of his spiritual philosophy, sociological theories, political ideology and educational thought.¹⁰

According to Sri Aurobindo, the truth of existence is its 'becoming' and evolution gradually unfolds the truth. Evolution is not the evolution of 'matter' but evolution of 'consciousness'. Consciousness is the life force, the energy, the motion that creates everything in the universe, from

the 'microcosm' to the 'macrocosm'; evolution step by step from mind, higher mind, intuitive mind, over mind, and super mind.

The integral yoga plays a vital role in total transformation among physical, mental and spiritual. Liberation of the soul from the cycle of birth and death is not enough for the accomplishment of man's spirituality, rather 'synthesis' of whole existence to be amalgamated with the divine light disguised within.

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