

SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF MIND AND ITS DIFFERENT STAGES

Dr. Chhanda Das Gupta (Nayek)

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Sambhu Nath College, Labpur,
Birbhum, West Bengal-731303

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ABSTRACT

The next stage in the process of evolution is Mind. Mind is consciousness which measures, limits and cuts the forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer. His concept of mind is different from others. To him, the mind is the primary means of manifestation in man. Mind is not a thing. It should not be equated with the brain. It is a function or a process. The function of mind expresses itself in higher mental processes in feelings, emotions, attention, and memory etc. In his writings he brings out the different planes of mind. They are: - 1) The Higher Mind 2) The Illuminated Mind 3) The Intuitive Mind 4) The Over Mind 5) The Super Mind. Sri Aurobindo has taken sufficient pains to distinguish them from one another.

Keywords: *The Higher Mind, the Illuminated Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Over Mind, the Super Mind.*

The Higher Mind and its origin in over mind and Supermind:

“Our first decisive step out of our human Intelligence, our normal mentality is an ascent into a higher Mind, a mind no longer of mingled light and obscurity or half-light, but a large clarity of the Spirit. Its basic substance is a unitarian sense of being with a powerful multiple dynamisation capable of the formation of a multitude of aspects of knowledge, ways of action, forms and significances of becoming, of all of which there is a spontaneous inherent knowledge. It is therefore a power that has proceeded from the over mind, -- but with the supermind as its ulterior origin, -- as all these greater powers have proceeded: but its special character, its activity of consciousness is dominated by Thought; it is a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge.”¹

Contrast between Higher Mind and Thinking Mind and Ordinary Intuition:

“But here in this greater Thought there is no need of a seeking and self-critical ratiocination, no logical motion step by step towards a conclusion, no mechanism of express or implied deductions and inferences, no building or deliberate concatenation of idea with idea. In order to arrive at an ordered sum or outcome of knowledge: for this limping action of our reason is a movement of Ignorance searching for knowledge, obliged to safeguard Its steps against error, to erect a selective mental structure for its temporary shelter and to base it on foundations already laid and carefully laid but never firm, because it is not supported on a soil of native awareness but imposed on an original soil of nescience. There is not here, either, that other way of our mind at its keenest and swiftest, a rapid hazardous divination and insight, a play of the searchlight of intelligence probing into the little known or the unknown.”²

The Higher Mind in its aspect of Cognition:

“This higher consciousness is a Knowledge formulating itself on a basis of self-existent all-awareness and manifesting some part of its integrality, a harmony of its significances put into thought-form. It can freely express itself in single ideas, but its most characteristic movement is a mass ideation, a system or totality of truth-seeing at a single view; the relations of idea with idea, of truth with truth are not established by logic but pre-exist and emerge already self-seen in the integral whole. There is an initiation into forms of an ever-present but till now inactive knowledge, not a system of conclusions from premises or data; this thought is a self-revelation of eternal Wisdom, not an acquired knowledge. In the end there is a great totality of truth known and experienced but still a totality capable of infinite enlargement because there is no end to the aspects of knowledge, *nastyanto vistarasyame*.”³

The Higher Mind in its aspect Will:

“This is the Higher Mind in its aspect of cognition; but there is also the aspect of will, of dynamic effectuation of the Truth: here we find that this greater more brilliant Mind works always on the rest of the being, the mental will, the heart and its feelings, the life, the body, through the power of thought, through the idea-force. It seeks to purify through knowledge, to deliver through knowledge, to create by the innate power of knowledge. The idea is put into the heart or the life as a force to be accepted and worked out; the heart and life become conscious of the idea and respond to its dynamisms and their substance begins to modify itself

in that sense, so that the feelings and actions become the vibrations of this higher wisdom, are informed with it, filled with the emotion and the sense of it: the will and the life impulses are similarly charged with its power and its urge of self-effectuation; even in the body the idea works so that, for example, the potent thought and will of health replaces its faith in illness and its consent to illness, or the idea of strength calls in the substance, power, motion, vibration of strength; the idea generates the force and form proper to the idea and imposes it on our substance of Mind, Life or Matter. It is in this way that the first working precedes; it charges the whole being with a new and superior consciousness, lays a foundation of change, prepares it for a superior truth of existence.”⁴

These higher forces are limited in the realm of Ignorance:

“It has here to be emphasized, in order to obviate a natural misconception which can easily arise when the superior power of the higher forces is first perceived or experienced, because they can appear dizzying and give a vast sense of possibilities. But in the lower world the situation is not the same as in their own realm. Sri Aurobindo explains that these higher forces are not in their descent immediately all-powerful as they would naturally be in their own plane of action and in their own medium. In the evolution in Matter they have to enter into a foreign and inferior medium and work upon it; they encounter there the incapacities of our mind and life and body, meet with the unreceptiveness or blind refusal of the Ignorance, and experience the negation and obstruction of the Inconscience.”⁵

The Cognitive Mind resists the Illumination of the Higher Mind

“Thus the higher Idea descending into the developed mental intelligence has even there to overcome the barrage of a mass or system of formed ideas which belong to the Knowledge-Ignorance and the will to persistence and self-realization of these ideas; for all ideas are forces and have a formative or self-effective faculty greater or less according to the conditions, - even reducible to nil in practice when they have to deal with inconscient Matter, but still potential. There is thus ready-formed a power of resistance which opposes or minimizes the effects of the descending Light, a resistance which may amount to a refusal, a rejection of the Light, or take the shape of an attempt to impair, subdue, ingeniously modify or adapt or perversely deform the light in order to suit it to the preconceived ideas of the Ignorance.”⁶

Resistance by the Vital and the Subconscious

“In the lower levels of the being, in the heart and life and body, the same phenomenon recurs and on a more intense scale; for here it is not ideas that have to be met but emotions, desires, impulses, sensations, vital needs and habits of the lower Nature; these, since they are less conscious than ideas, are blinder in their response and are more obstinately self-assertive: all have the same or a greater power of resistance and recurrence, or take refuge in the circum-conscient universal Nature or in our own lower levels or in a seed-state in the sub-conscient and from there have the power of new invasion or resurgence. This power of persistence, recurrence, resistance of established things in Nature is always the great obstacle which the evolutionary Force has to meet, which it has indeed created in order to prevent a too rapid transmutation even when that transmutation is its own eventual intention in things.”⁷

Overcoming the resistance to the transformation:

“This obstacle will be there, -- even though it may progressively diminish, -- at each stage of this greater ascent. In order to allow at all to the higher Light an adequate entry and force of working, it is necessary to acquire a power for quietude of the nature, to compose, tranquillize, impress a controlled passivity or even an entire silence on mind and heart, life and body: but even so a continued opposition, overt and felt in the Force of the universal Ignorance or subliminal and obscure in the substance-energy of the individual's make of mind, his form of Life, his body of Matter, an occult resistance or a revolt or reaffirmation of the controlled or suppressed energies of the ignorant nature, is always possible and, if anything in the being consents to them, they can resume dominance. The power of the spiritual Higher Mind and its idea-force, modified and diminished as it must be by its entrance into our mentality, is not sufficient to sweep out all these obstacles and create the gnostic being, but it can make a first change, a modification that will capacitate a higher ascent and a more powerful descent and further prepare an Integration of the being in a greater Force of consciousness and knowledge.”⁸

The Illumined Spiritual Mind:

Sri Aurobindo says the power of the spiritual Higher Mind...prepare(s) an Integration of the being in a greater Force of consciousness and knowledge. “This greater Force is that of the Illumined Mind, a Mind no longer of higher Thought, but of spiritual light. Here the clarity of the spiritual intelligence, its tranquil daylight, gives place or subordinates itself to an intense luster, a splendor and illumination of the Spirit: a

play of lightning of spiritual truth and power breaks from above into the consciousness and adds to the calm and wide enlightenment and the vast descent of peace which characterize or accompany the action of the larger conceptual-spiritual principle, a fiery ardor of realization and a rapturous ecstasy of knowledge.”⁹

“The Illumined Mind does not work primarily by thought but by vision; thought is here only a subordinate movement expressive of sight. The human mind, which relies mainly on thought, conceives that to be the highest or the main process of knowledge, but in the spiritual order thought is a secondary and a not indispensable process. As the Higher Mind brings a greater consciousness into the being through the spiritual idea and its power of truth, so the Illumined Mind brings in a still greater consciousness through a Truth-sight and Truth-light and its seeing and seizing power. In the transformation by the Illumined Mind there would be a similar fulfillment for the seer, the illumined mystic, those in whom the soul lives in vision and in a direct sense and experience: for it is from these higher sources that they receive their light and to rise into that light and live there would be their ascension to their native empire.”¹⁰

The Intuitive Spiritual Mind: This is region of higher consciousness, which would seem to pertain more to a very high stage of realization far beyond ordinary nonduality, rather than intuition in the ordinary sense of the term. There is the Non-dual Absolute and equivalent states of Realization, then the Higher and Illumined Mind, and then Intuition. It is described by Sri Aurobindo (in “The Life Divine”).

*Intuition is always an edge or ray or out leap of a superior light; it is in us a projecting blade, edge or point of a far-off supermind light entering into and modified by some intermediate truth-mind substance above us and, so modified, again entering into and very much Minded by our ordinary or ignorant mind-substance; but on that higher level to which it is native its light is unmixed and therefore entirely and purely veridical, and its rays are not separated but connected or massed together in a play of waves of what might almost be called in the Sanskrit poetic figure a sea or mass of "stable lightnings". " Intuition has a fourfold power. A power of revelatory truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or truth-hearing, a power of truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, which is akin to the ordinary nature of its intervention in our mental intelligence, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth, these are the fourfold potencies of Intuition. Intuition can therefore perform all the action of reason, -- including the function of logical intelligence, which is to work out the right relation of things and the right relation of idea with idea, -- but by its own superior process and with steps that do not fail or falter. The intuitive light and power may be hampered in its task because it is the edge of a delegated and modified supermind, but does not bring in the whole mass or body of the identity-knowledge. The basis of **Inconscience** in our nature is too vast, deep and solid to be altogether penetrated, turned into light, and transformed by an inferior power of the Truth-nature.”*

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Sri Aurobindo's concept of Adhimanas (over mind): State of consciousness beyond individual mind, beyond even universal mind in ignorance; it carries in itself a first, direct, masterful cognition of cosmic truth. It is a creator of truth, not of illusions or falsehood. Over mind takes each aspect of power and gives to it an independent action. It is the protective Double, a delegate of the Supermind consciousness. It has not the integrality of the supramental truth but it is well aware of the essential truth of things. Thus, over mind gives to the Sachchidananda Brahman the character of a teeming infinite of possibilities which can be developed into worlds or one world. It is a sort of delegation from the Supermind (this is a metaphor only) which supports the present evolutionary universe in which we live here in matter. Over mind sees calmly, steadily, in great masses and large extensions of space and time and relation, globally; it creates and act in the same way—it is the world of the great Gods, the divine Creators.

An Over mind that covers as with the wide wings of some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of Knowledge- Ignorance, links it with that greater Truth- Consciousness while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden Lid it veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with its flood of infinite possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual low of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality. The integrity of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together; it maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close interpenetration and a free and full consciousness of each other: but in Over mind this integrality is no longer there. Over mind Energy proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all- comprehending Unity. It takes each Aspect or Power and gives to it an independent action in which it acquires a full separate importance and is able to work out, we might say, its own world of creation. “In Over

mind we have the origin of the cleavage, the trenchant distinction made by the philosophy of the Sankhyas in which they appear as two independent entities, Prakriti able to dominate Purusha and cloud its freedom and power reducing it to a witness and recipient of her forms and actions, Purusha able to return to its separate existence and abide in a free self- sovereignty by rejection of her original overclouding material principle. In Over mind the separateness is still founded on the basis of an implicit underlying unity; all possibilities of combination and relation between the separated powers and Aspects, all interchanges and mutualities of their energies are freely organized and their actuality always possible.”¹²

Over mind gives to the One Existence-Consciousness- Bliss the character of a teeming of infinite possibilities which can be developed into a multitude of worlds or thrown together into one world in which the endlessly variable outcome of their play is the determinant of the creation, of its process, its course and its consequence. “The Over mind is a principle of cosmic Truth and a vast and endless catholicity is its very spirit; its energy is an all- dynamism as well as a principle of separate dynamisms: it is a sort of inferior Supermind,--although it is concerned predominantly not with absolutes, but with what might be called the dynamic potentials or pragmatic truths of Reality, or with absolutes mainly for their power of generating pragmatic or creative values, although, too, its comprehension of things is more global than integral, since its totality is built up of global wholes or constituted by separate independent realities uniting or coalescing together, and although the essential unity is grasped by it and felt to be basic of things and pervasive in their manifestation, but no longer as in the Supermind their intimate and ever- present secret, their dominating continent, the overt constant builder of the harmonic whole of their activity and nature.”¹³

“A pure experience of truth, Knowledge, Delight, imperishable existence would here be itself a contradiction of the truth of things. The Non- Existence is a concealed Consciousness, the insensibility a masked and dormant Ananda, these secret realities must emerge; the hidden Over mind and Supermind too must in the end fulfill themselves in this apparently opposite organization from a dark Infinite.”¹⁴

Supermind cannot manifest itself as the Creator Power in the universe from the beginning, for it did, the Ignorance and Inconscience would be impossible or else the slow evolution necessary would change into a rapid transformation scene. “Yet at every step of the material energy we can see the stamp of inevitability given by a supramental creator, in all the development of life and mind the play of the lines of possibility and their combination which is the stamp of over mind intervention. As Life and Mind have been released in Matter, so too must in their time these greater powers of the concealed Godhead emerge from the involution and their supreme Light descend into us from above.”¹⁵

The Supermind

Supermind in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy refers to the infinite unitary truth-consciousness or truth-idea simultaneously transcendent and immanent to planes of matter, life, and mind. Supermind is the dynamic form of Sachchidananda (being-consciousness-bliss), and the necessary conduit, mediator or linkage between Sachchidananda and the manifest Creation. “The super mind, the Truth-consciousness, the Real-Idea which knows itself and all that it becomes.” The objective and final stage of integral yoga is to actualise the Supermind within one's being, this would constitute a divinisation of matter itself or a realisation of its inherent primordial propensity, and usher in a completely new, 'divine' way of existing.

“The term above is the unitarian or indivisible consciousness of pure Sachchidananda in which there are no separating distinctions; the term below is the analytic or dividing consciousness of Mind which can only know by separation and distinction and has at the most a vague and secondary apprehension of unity and infinity,-for, though it can synthesize its divisions, it cannot arrive at a true totality. Between them is this comprehensive and creative consciousness, by its power of pervading and intimately comprehending knowledge the child of that self-awareness by identity which is the poise of the Brahman and by its power of projecting, confronting, apprehending knowledge parent of that awareness by distinction which is the process of the Mind”¹⁶.

“Above, the formula of the One eternally stable and immutable; below, the formula of the Many which, eternally mutable, seeks but hardly finds in the flux of things a firm and immutable standing-point; between, the seat of all trinities, of all that is biune, of all that becomes Many-in-One and yet remains One-in-Many because it was originally One that is always potentially Many. And shall we not say that its very existence points back to something beyond our supreme perception of the ineffable Unity, - - Something ineffable and mentally inconceivable not because of its unity and indivisibility, but because of its freedom from even these formulations of our mind, -- Something beyond both unity and multiplicity? That would be the utter Absolute and Real which yet justifies to us both our knowledge of God and our knowledge of the world”.¹⁷

Conclusion: In conclusion I can say that according to Sri Aurobindo, "Consciousness and Force are the twin essential aspects of the pure Power of existence; Knowledge and Will must therefore be the form which that Power takes in creating a world of relations in the extension of Time and Space. This Knowledge and this Will must be one, infinite, all-embracing, all-possessing, all-forming, holding eternally in itself that which it casts into movement and form. The supermind then is Being moving out into a determinative self-knowledge which perceives certain truths of itself and wills to realise them in a temporal and spatial extension of its own timeless and spaceless existence. Whatever is in its own being, takes form as self-knowledge, as Truth-Consciousness, as Real-Idea, and, that self-knowledge being also self-force, fulfils or realises itself inevitably in Time and Space"¹⁸.

Footnotes and references:

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