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## THE QUEST OF REALITY AND THE EARTHLY DESTINY: SRI AUROBINDO'S IDEOLOGY

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**Abstract:** The evolution from the empirical aspect has taken place primarily within matter, i.e., to the physical senses on which science bases itself, life appears as gradually emerging out of unconscious matter through a purely mechanical process. But on another side, mostly from the vision of the non-scientific traditions, the world has the appearance of an over mental creation rooted irretrievably in ignorance and suffering. Here, the quest of reality is still to be satisfied because of the above mentioned conflict theories. In Sri Aurobindo's ideology on evolution has a synthesis of both theories which appear as partial truths. For Him, the former describes the manifestation of the material universe out of consciousness but misses out on the dynamic link between the divine consciousness and the manifestation. The latter describes the outer mechanism of the evolution, but misses out on its inner meaning and the role of consciousness in the whole process. The two views cover a different aspect of the picture. As such they do not contradict but enrich and complement each other. Aurobindo adds to this synthesis of these two theories and furnishing the different planes of consciousness, for the possibility for achieving the earthly destiny, which he calls as the manifestation of the highest forms of Supramental consciousness.

**Keyword:** Consciousness, Involution, Evolution, Ascent, Descent, Matter, Spirit, Mind, Exclusive-concentration, Supramental Consciousness

### INTRODUCTION:

The quest of ultimate reality is in the sense of searching the Primal Cause of the whole existence. The investigation necessarily involves in seeking the origin of existence. Many have reflected, and tried to understand it. As a result, many theories had been proposed and in turn it affected in many groups, such as, naturalism, materialism, fundamentalism, Creationism, Absolutism, etc. though they have their own stand point, yet they less satisfy the evolutionary skeptic. To justify them, overall they can be divided into two: scientific (as Mechanical Unintelligent Substance) & non-scientific (as Spirit) evolutionary theory. But the search of evolutionists seek for Monism (a real monism) rather than the dual reality, because their rational inquiry denies the Pure Spirit as an illusion of imagination and the Mechanical unintelligent substance (of Nature) as an illusion of the senses. Here, we find a constant theoretical conflict between the scientific and non-scientific theories. And the evolutionist cannot rest satisfied with this contradictions. So the need here is to further the investigation by propounding a synthetic theory, which integrates both scientific and non-scientific assert. Such an integral theory can be found in Sri Aurobindo's ideology.

In twentieth century, Sri Aurobindo structures a synthetic view encompassing the essence of both the above mentioned conflict theories. This integralistic view has the synthesis of ideas drawn from various sources with constant emphasis upon integral understanding. Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy is one which attempts to go beyond East and West in the sense of returning to the resources of consciousness to draw upon the rich storehouse of

knowledge existing in consciousness in order to form a higher truth than has heretofore been realised. This higher truth is grounded in emergent evolution which raises everything to Sachchidananda. The central concept of Sri Aurobindo is the idea of emergent evolution. He visions man is growing and has to grow in consciousness till he reaches the complete and perfect consciousness, not only in his individual but in his collective (social) life. In fact, the growth of consciousness is the supreme secret of life, and that is the inherent mover to earthly evolution. Evolution, according to him, has a purpose and man moves and has to move towards such goal i.e., unfolding or progression of consciousness.

### AUROBINDO'S CONCEPT OF EVOLUTION

Evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo's understanding is that life evolved out of matter and that mind evolved out of life. He takes matter, life, and mind as limited forms of consciousness. He then argues that because life is a less limited form of consciousness than matter, and mind is a less limited form of consciousness than life, the next step in evolution could be a still less limited form of consciousness. The word consciousness which Sri Aurobindo uses it primarily from the Sanskrit word Cit. Obviously, this leads in some respects to quite different views of the Vedantic concept of consciousness. His usage of the word consciousness in his idea of emergent evolution not only means as individualized awareness but also as a supportive of individuation and as the movement on different levels of emancipation. He uses the notion of consciousness as the

fundamental reality. Consciousness, in other words, is the very essence of everything in existence and as such not only the source of individuation and the sense of self, but also a formative energy: "Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. It can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; it can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti, awareness but also conscious force."

Consciousness is a fundamental thing, the fundamental thing in existence—it is the energy, the motion, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it—not only the macrocosm but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself. For instance, when consciousness . . . forgets itself in the action it becomes an apparently "unconscious" energy; when it forgets itself in the form it becomes the electron, the atom, the material object. In reality, it is still consciousness that works in the energy and determines the form and the evolution of form. When it wants to liberate itself, slowly, evolutionarily, out of Matter, but still in the form, it emerges as life, as animal, as man and it can go on evolving itself still farther out of its involution and become something more than mere man.

In short, the essence of Aurobindo's concept of evolution is that consciousness is not seen as something produced by the brain, or limited to humans, but rather as a fundamental aspect of reality, if not the very essence of it. Sri Aurobindo, therefore, takes consciousness as the primary thing or the basic stuff out of which the universe is made.

#### PROCESS CYCLE

For the understanding of his emergent evolution by the hierarchical view of consciousness it is necessary to outline his process cycle (emergent evolutionary cycle) which consists of a cycle of involution and evolution. Sri Aurobindo's explanation of evolution process consists of two stages, such as, involution (descent or the downward phase from the origin) and evolution (ascent or the return phase to the origin). Involution is the descent of Absolute, Indeterminable, and Supreme Consciousness as matter. For the human understanding, this indescribable Reality has been explained as a triune entity of Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss, means it always exists consciously with delight; it has no other reason for existence but the pleasure and joy of simply existing. Involution is to say, the descent of the delightful conscious existence as the material world. If the purpose of this descent is questioned then it is due to His Will or Wish. Sri Aurobindo describes this involution has a two-step process, the first step as the manifestation of multiple instances of the one Self out of Itself—multiple, but still identical. And the second step as a gradually increasing self-differentiation through a process that he compares with our human form of exclusive concentration.

In other words, in the process of involution, the many selves only appear separate and different from each other by a process of "exclusive concentration" that takes place in portions of the original Self that in essence these many selves remains one. Here the one single Supreme Consciousness becomes Many by a gradual and process of

exclusive concentration (i.e., self-concentration and self-limitation). Sri Aurobindo emphasizes to remember that, the One in becoming many still remains the same immaculate one in and through the many, similarly, the many in spite of its manifoldness still continues to be the one in the uttermost degree. It is the world of fundamental realities. Sri Aurobindo names it as Supermind. The descent or fall from the Supermind leads to the next stage called the Overmind. It is the level of consciousness where the perfect balance of the One and Many is disturbed. It is the beginning of Ignorance, Avidya, Maya. To summaries, the next step of descent is the mind where the original unity and identity and harmony are disrupted to a greater degree. A further descent occurs when consciousness passes from Mind to Life, here there is a greater withdrawal of one another and a narrow concentration upon one's own separative existence. The last step in the process of involution is Matter, where consciousness has totally fallen into veiled form. Thus the involution process is the descent of Absolute Consciousness into dormant or subtle consciousness. Sri Aurobindo names it as inconscience.

When consciousness has fallen to its extreme and ultimate limit as incoscient or Matter, by the very force of its downward drive and the very pressure of its inner impetus, it starts to bounce back to its origin. And this gradual unfolding, unveiling, expression, ascent of consciousness is called as evolution. Evolution is the inverse action of involution. It is conscious movement, and the reunion of Many into One. For Sri Aurobindo, evolution includes a concept of progress: it means to manifest into higher consciousness from its lowest or concealed consciousness. Here all the stages found in the downward cycle are progressed in a reverse order. That is to say, the subtle consciousness with inner impetus it reveals itself through Matter as embodied Life. The submerged consciousness strives to come still further to express itself to become the next higher degree as a Psyche, which is of feeling and sensation in animals. Even then consciousness still tries to reveal itself to more free and clear. And thus it arrives as man with a full-fledged Mind, with intelligence and self-consciousness and capacity of self-determination. Thus the ascending consciousness starting from Matter rises into Life, passes on through Life and Psyche into Mind, driving towards the Supermind and then Sachchidananda. Consciousness, at the stage of evolution, at present has arrived at the higher levels of Mind; now, it is the time for progress to attain the Overmind and then Supermind. Sri Aurobindo believes that evolution progresses onward and will rise beyond mind to another status or higher form of consciousness than mental consciousness. For Sri Aurobindo, the completion of the upward thrust of creation, back to 'The One', towards infinite power and the principle of being, must be the destiny of all that is, of any world and of everything in it.

Sri Aurobindo's work, *The Life Divine*, deals with a chapter titled "The Human Aspiration", in which he shows the urge for progress, the yearning for freedom, light, and perfection, which is so consistently contradicted by our immediate experience. He sees this urge for progress as an expression in the individual of a much vaster movement in



nature, a movement that shows itself most clearly in the, at first sight rather improbable, evolution of life and mind out of matter. But it seems that here exists a crisis in evolutionary progress. i.e., there is stagnant in the progress of consciousness in the mental level itself. Sri Aurobindo observes Man is pre-eminently the Mental Being, i.e., man in his essential nature a mental being encased in body and enmeshed in the life activities. He is more than thinking, willing and feeling result in mechanism of the physical or an understanding nexus of the vital forces. Sri Aurobindo undoubtedly believed that human life on Earth was special, because human consciousness is that which has to take part for the next level of consciousness. But, here human fails to reach his destination because, in general, we equate consciousness with the ordinary human mentality, i.e., the ordinary human mentality is considered to be only the most primitive form of mental consciousness, the most ego-bound, and the most dependent on the physical senses. Ordinary human mind is found as that which centered between body and world, due which it is addicted with emotions and thoughts. The world of our ordinary human experience is a mixed world somewhere in the middle. Its basis is physical, but it is permeated and transformed by life and mind, whereas Sri Aurobindo visions it as an absolute, divine consciousness that which is the inherent or immanent essence of evolution, i.e. because of which matter, life, and mind are unveiled towards manifestation. Thus Sri Aurobindo was mainly interested in the next higher level of consciousness that would evolve after the ordinary human level or mental level of consciousness. For Him, man is a transitional being; he is not final. Above mental level, Sri Aurobindo visions various progressive levels of consciousness such as: there is the unitary Higher Mind of self-revealed wisdom, the Illumined Mind where truths are seen rather than thought, the plane of the Intuitive Mind where truth is inevitable and perfect, and finally the cosmic Overmind, the mind of the Gods, comprehensive, all-encompassing.

The change or future progress what Sri Aurobindo visions in evolution, needs a great personal effort to higher levels of awareness. What Sri Aurobindo visualizes is a whole new stage of evolution, in which a true Gnostic consciousness becomes an organic, incarnate aspect of physical life, in the same natural manner as, at present, life and mind are a normal part of the physical universe. This is what He calls as the divine life upon the earth, i.e., as discussed above, Sri Aurobindo takes consciousness as the primary thing and not as just one out of several fundamental elements of reality. This fundamental element involves itself descending on its own will, which he calls as involution. This involution as a two-step process, such as: the first step as the manifestation of multiple instances of the one Self out of Itself—multiple, but still identical. And, the second step as a gradually increasing self-differentiation through a process that he compares with our human form of exclusive concentration. Here, exclusive concentration, on the level of the individual human being, is a mental activity in which one forgets ourselves and all but a small part of the reality on which we are focused. Thus for Sri Aurobindo, at the level on which the cosmic Infinite differentiates itself into the

multitudinous universe, exclusive concentration is "a self-limitation by idea proceeding from an infinite liberty within." In other words, the exclusive concentration can be described as the individuality and agency can be understood as having come into existence by an ability of the universal consciousness to form different centers of itself, each having a limited ability of self-awareness and formative energy. So, for Sri Aurobindo, the destiny of the evolution can be achieved only when one rises beyond from his individuality, and divert his exclusive concentration to find a truly Gnostic consciousness, which is intrinsically harmonious and perfect. For Him, man is God hiding himself from Nature so that he may possess her by struggle, insistence, violence and surprise. God is universal and transcendent man hiding himself from his own individuality in the human being. Sri Aurobindo, furnishes the possibility of achieving the earthly destiny by the diversion of exclusive concentration, which can be practiced by moving freely and identifying the "inner-divine-consciousness". I.e., in the ordinary waking states we are moreover not aware of such inner worlds as they are in themselves. We are aware only of their subordinate manifestations within the physical world. However, in other states of consciousness it is possible to enter into contact with the inner worlds themselves through our inner senses. With increasing experience and knowledge, one can learn to identify their typical aspects and regularities, and one can even act on other persons and events in these inner worlds in a manner that supports the claim for their shared objective existence. Access to inner worlds is mediated in a psychological and phenomenological sense through a movement of consciousness that is experienced in its first steps as a form of going inside". The inner worlds are, however, not supposed to be limited to one's own being or one's subjective consciousness; instead, it is considers as equally objectively real when compared with the physical world. Thus, as above mention description of the levels of mind, our ordinary mind is based on ignorance and tries from there to arrive at knowledge which is inherently approximate and fallible, which Sri Aurobindo calls as the Supramental knowledge-means the knowledge, based on a fully conscious identity with the whole. It knows the universe as if from inside. In other words, it can be said that it knows the world in the way the Divine knows the world. Thus for Sri Aurobindo, the Supramental knowledge is inturn the development of mental consciousness towards the higher levels of consciousness , that is what Sri Aurobindo calls as Supramental Consciousness. And thus earthly destiny is achieved.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, as discussed above, Sri Aurobindo's ideology on ultimate reality emphasizes the essence of consciousness for the earthly existence, in which, consciousness is not only an activity or a quality of individuals, but an essential aspect of all reality. In other words, consciousness exists not only within individuals, but also independently, on a cosmic scale, and the individual consciousnesses can be seen as instances, portions, or representatives of these different types of cosmic consciousness that which inturn helps in achieving the earthly destiny.

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