

# Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga Its Implications

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## I

### Introduction

“The yogi is superior to ascetics and even superior to the men of knowledge. He is superior to men of action. Therefore, O Arjuna, become a yogi.” The Gita, Ch. VI- 46

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was born on August 15, 1872 in Calcutta. His father was Krishnadhan Ghose and his mother was Swarnalata. His father preferred western culture and sent him to England at an age of seven years. After finishing his instruction young Aurobindo came back to India. After his return to India from 1893 to 1906 for a long time he was in the service in the state of Baroda as English professor. He resigned his job as English professor at Baroda and went to Calcutta to take part in the National agitation against the partition of Bengal. Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in the years 1907, 1908 and 1910. He was an extraordinary patriot so the British government took utmost precaution and kept a watch on his activities always. The arrests made him restless. The conditions around him made progressively eager and made his life difficult. During the last arrest and during the trials a spiritual change overwhelmed him.

In 1914 he left the “British India” and went to Pondicherry which was under the “French rule” during that time. In this manner a great nationalist turned into a philosopher and yogi. In Pondicherry he started practicing Yoga and expounded his philosophy. He settled down in Pondicherry and was there till his death in 1950.

Sri Aurobindo was a keen philosopher, contributed to journals and edited his monthly Arya. Sri Aurobindo wrote on different subjects and topics. During his stay in Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo went into complete retirement. He practiced yoga and meditation.

Aurobindo expected his philosophy to be faithful to the “original Vedanta” position and took issue with “Shankara's Advaita Vedanta” on a few points. Adi Sankara uses the term *Maya* where as Sri Aurobindo uses the term *Lila* in their writings. According to Sri Aurobindo the descent was an inevitable expression of the power of the absolute. With regard to mankind he wrote the mental level isn't the highest possible level. The individual must prepare a leap beyond the psyche into the limit of one's fundamental nature. The preparation for this leap is called “Integral yoga” and is a complex discipline capable of changing one's state of mind and one's life. *Yoga* is directed towards God, not towards man.

“It is the lesson of life that always in this world everything fails a man only the Divine does not fail him, if he turns entirely to the Divine. It is not because there is something bad in you that blows fall on you, blows fall on all human beings because they are full of desire for things that cannot last and they lose them or even if they get, it brings disappointment and cannot satisfy them. To turn to the Divine is the only truth in life.”

Sri Aurobindo states that the individual and the Universe are Divine. Both are the manifestations of the eternal one. In the great reality all beings are united. The great seers and sages of ancient India felt that the great eternal one by himself manifested the world of form. Sri Aurobindo agrees in this regard with the great sages and seers of ancient India. He is involved in the matter. Evolution is the method of his liberation from the limitations of matter. The consciousness makes its appearance. The next stage is life. Primitive life and life in the uni-cellular organism. The higher level when compared to that of the mineral which is lifeless. In this process both will and intelligence are involved. This advancement he terms as the ascent. The process of evolution reached its peak in man biologically. So psyche is the highest level reached in man during the process of evolution. Therefore man is exceptional in nature. He is not a mere organism in nature but has a ability to grow further in future. In this context Sri Aurobindo uses the word “super mind” to denote the future evolution. The ascent continues in man unlike the minerals, plants and animals. So the higher step in the evolution is ascent from mind to the super mind. Now the opposite of the ascent also happens. Sri Aurobindo calls it as the descent. That is the descent of the “super mind” in to the mind, life and body. The ascent and the descent make the process complete in every aspect resulting in perfectness in every angle. So the future advancement will many times more perfect than the present day evolution. The result is complete freedom and complete perfection.

The word integral becomes a prefix. His thinking is Integral Philosophy. The yoga is Integral Yoga. The evolution is an Integral Evolution. The Integral Yoga becomes the axis of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. Consequently the objective of the life is to try its own self-advancement.

The spiritual man who can direct human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient thought of the *Rishi*, one who has lived totally the life of man and found the universe of the supra intellectual, supra mental, spiritual truth. He transcended these lower limitations and can see from within; he has the entire inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. Therefore he can direct the world humanly as God guides it divinely because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and at the same time above it.

i. The order of ascent from “mind to supermind” is given below:

Mind, Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind and Supermind.

ii. The order of descent from “supermind to mind” is as following:

Supermind, Overmind, Intuitive Mind, Illumined Mind, Higher Mind and Mind.

The last stage is the descent of the supermind. When this happens, Nature becomes transformed into supernature and human species into Gnostic beings.

Man becomes a super-man with the assistance of the self by the ascent and by the descent. The contrary is nothing but the different angles of the same reality. Such a co-ordination of ascent and descent in the practice of integral yoga is broad based upon the integral conception of advancement as the dynamic self manifestation of the superconscious world-spirit in the material conditions. It is inspired by an awareness of the entire universe as the expression, play or *lila* of the absolute

## II JETIR Integral Yoga

What is *Yoga*? The etymological meaning of the word is union. *Yoga* is derived from the *Sanskrit* root-verb *yuj* implies bind, join, unite, control. It means the connecting or union of the individual consciousness with something higher, something transcendent, something eternal and divine.

The word *Yoga* literally implies union i.e., spiritual union of the individual soul and is used in this sense in *Vedanta*. The *Gita* defines *yoga* as that state in which there is nothing higher or worth realizing and firmly rooted in which a person is never shaken even by the greatest pain. The state which is free from all agony and misery is *Yoga*.

In The “Synthesis of Yoga” and in his “Letters on Yoga”, Sri Aurobindo laid out the psychological principles and practices of the Integral Yoga or *Poorna Yoga*. The aim of Integral yoga is to empower the person who practices it for the attainment of a conscious identity with the Divine, the true Self and to transform the psyche, life and body so they would become fit instruments for a divine life on this Earth.

“The one aim of his yoga is an inner self development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the oneself in all and evolves a higher consciousness that can transform and divinize the human nature.”

“Integral Yoga is a way of complete God-realization, a complete Self-realization, 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.”

*Yoga* self-determined, self-directed advancement towards this life of the divine is the supreme prerogative of man. *Yoga* is the psychological discipline by means of which man crosses the frontiers of his surface awareness and enters into the domain of his inner being which opens to the divine for its descent. So the individual must prepare a leap beyond psyche. The preparation for this leap is called Integral Yoga. It is an elaborate discipline capable of transforming one's mind-set and one's life. So, in this stage philosophy joins with yoga. What philosophy establishes theoretically, we can practically realize through *yoga*. It guides us to open all the doors of our body, life, soul and psyche to the divine light that is coming from above. The specific elements of *Jnana yoga*, *Bhakti yoga* and *Karma yoga* are woven into the texture of Integral yoga thus constituting the basis of its synthetic philosophy.

Aurobindo describes the universe in the integral yoga, in the integral philosophy as three dimensional.

1. The first dimension: The vertical and concentric hierarchy
  - i. Faculties: Physical, Vital, Mental and higher domains. (vertical)
  - ii. The Types of the being: The outer being, The inner being, The psychic being (horizontal)

. The vertical and the horizontal components are inter-related to each other. All these faculties and levels are to be transformed by the integral yoga has to transform the vertical and the horizontal components.
2. The second dimension: The Triple Foundation
  - i. The Call and Response
  - ii. The Calm and Equality
  - iii. The Surrender and Aspiration
3. The third dimension: Sadhana
  - i. Sadhana- Work
  - ii. Sadhana- Meditation
  - iii. Sadhana- Love and Devotion

The double liberation (soul and nature), the triple transformation (psychic, spiritual and supramental) and four fold perfection (body, prana, heart and buddhi) are the special features of Sri Aurobindo's yoga. Liberation, transformation and perfection contain progressive departures from the conventional paths of *yoga* and the natural contribution of Sri Aurobindo to the spiritual accomplishments of mankind. They are intended to bring into focus the basic components of the Divine Life which is indicated by Sri Aurobindo as the final destiny of the advancing being of man and advancement of consciousness by stages

Sri Aurobindo declares "It has not been found in experience whatever might have once been hoped that education and intellectual training by itself can change man." The *yoga sadhana* alone can achieve. All would be transformed, the Earth the body and death itself. The progressive change of the individual must spring from an inner source.

This is Sri Aurobindo's guidance and system of practice. He did not try to develop a new religion. He did not try to mix the older religions into a different new religion since it will be a deviation from his aim.

### III

#### Philosophy and spiritual vision

One of Sri Aurobindo's great philosophical achievement was to introduce the concept of evolution into *Vedantic* thought. *Samkhya* philosophy already proposed such a thought earlier, but Sri Aurobindo refused the materialistic inclinations of Darwinism and *Samkhya* and proposed the evolution of spirit along with that of matter and the evolution of matter was a result of the former.

He reveals the limits of the *Mayavada* of *Advaita Vedanta* and solves the riddle of the link between the ineffable Absolute and the universe of diversity by discovering a hitherto unknown and unexplored dimension of consciousness, which he called the supermind. The supermind is the dynamic nature present in the transcendent *Satchidananda* as well in the foundation of evolution: a unitary dimension of which our individual minds and bodies are minor subdivisions.

Sri Aurobindo refused the main concept of Indian philosophy that states that the World is a *Maya* (illusion) and to live as a renunciate was the only way. He says that it is possible to transcend human nature and to transform it and to live on the earth as a free and advanced individual with a dynamic consciousness and a divine nature that can perceive the truth of things and proceed on the basis of inner oneness, inward unity, love and light.

Sri Aurobindo is the original philosopher of modern India. His philosophy is almost similar to original *Vedanta* with new trends. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is integral non-dualism or integralism or synthetic philosophy. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is "negation of two negations of Idealism and Materialism i.e. spirit and matter." Sri Aurobindo stresses that evolution is of the physical forms and also evolution of consciousness. Higher consciousness results in the future evolution of man in to superman.

Sri Aurobindo's thought of evolution of consciousness as the true meaning of the world movement must be noted for different reasons by the broad mind. Spiritual movements are not other worldly, they belong to this world. Sri Aurobindo's vision and content of Life Divine on Earth is not a theory but a clear future reality. So, the Gospel of perfect man in perfect society is no longer regarded as a dream and it is a grand truth.

## IV

**Philosophical Implications of Integral Yoga**

As per Sri Aurobindo the absolute reality is *sachchidananda*. This triune principle involves bliss, force and existence. Transcendent is the final reality. The ultimate reality becomes the world by supermind. Thus super mind is the principle of being and the principle of becoming. In the theory of Sri Aurobindo the being and the becoming are real. The one and the many are the two aspects of the same reality. The Absolute is above multiplicity and unity as it is beyond stability and motion.

## 1. Sri Aurobindo and the Absolute Reality

The absolute reality is Sachchidananda, pure existence, consciousness-bliss. The three aspects of the Brahman are one.

## 2. Sri Aurobindo's Theory of knowledge and Intuition

Aurobindo does not rely on the intellect as an instrument of knowledge. He relies on spiritual intuition. Sri Aurobindo recognises different methods of knowledge to different aspects of experiences. The instruments of knowledge are the five senses vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Also the sixth sense the sense-mind and reason play an important role. The senses and sense-mind are inadequate to know the fundamental reality the Absolute

## 3. Sri Aurobindo's Conception of the Self

The *Brahman* manifests in the form of *purusha* and *prakriti*. The former is lord of the nature and the latter the executive energy. It is responsible for the formation and movements in the worlds. The *prakriti* has three *gunas* and has two natures the lower and the higher. Higher nature is the conscious divine, it is free from ignorance and the lower one is of ignorance, mind, life and matter. The *sachchidananda* manifests the supermind and its power.

## 4. Sri Aurobindo's Attitude towards the World

The world is real as per Sri Aurobindo. The divine is hidden in the material world. The divine being arises in the universe as spirit, in mind, in life and in matter. Thus evolution takes place by involution.

## 5. Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Perfect State

*Sadhaka* of integral *yoga* aims at the highest, to possess the fullness of God in every part. The perfection of the human being is the main goal of this *yoga*. As per Aurobindo the perfect state is the supramental gnostic being. The supramental gnostic nature is the consciousness and power of the infinite. When the evolution reaches the supramental level there will be a radical change.



## V

**Education and worldly mission**

Sri Aurobindo conceived of education as an instrument for the real working of the spirit in the mind and body of the individual and the nation. He thought of education that for the individual will make its one central object the growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, for the nation will keep first in view the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its Dharma (virtue) and raise both into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. And at no time will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being. A concept underlying the true and living Integral education. Integrality of education is conceived as a process of organic growth, and the way in which various faculties could be developed and integrated is dependent upon each child's inclination, rhythm of progression and law of development *Swabhava* (inherent disposition) and *Swadharna* (inner nature). Integral education is not conceived as a juxtaposition of a number of subjects and even juxtaposition of varieties of faculties. The idea is to provide facilities for varieties of faculties, varieties of subjects and various combinations of pursuits of Knowledge, Power, Harmony and Skill in works. These faculties are so provided that they could be made use of by each student and the teacher so that a natural process of harmonious development could be encouraged.

## VI

**Educational Implications of the Integral Yoga**

Sri Aurobindo's integral education emphasises on the psychic and mental aspects as denoted by matter and spirit respectively. The inculcation of the aspects love, beauty, power and knowledge is integral education. Beauty is perceived by the physical nature. Power is identified by the control of senses. Wisdom aids to build a psychological preparation of the attentive mind. Adoration is a proper organisation of required emotions and sentiments, which should be directed towards others and the communion with the Divine.

## 1. Three Principles of Teaching

The primary rule of real instruction is "nothing can be taught".

The secondary rule is "the psyche must be counseled in its development".

The tertiary rule of instruction is to "plan from near to far", from what is to what shall be.

## 2. Free Progress System

## 3. Five Aspects of Education:

i. Physical Education, ii. Vital Education, iii. Mental Education, iv. Psychic Education and v. Spiritual Education

#### 4. The Moral Nature

. In the training of the heart and the psyche, the ideal path is to place the student in the correct path. The child should follow the morals not by fear but by love towards morality.

#### 5. The School

The first and final aim of the school is to prepare the future citizens of the country and in the near future they will become living models for their country and the world. The school should function with a good vision and mission.

#### 6. The Teacher

The teacher is a helper and guide. The teacher should give sufficient freedom to the student. The teacher must have three qualities discipline, devotion and dedication towards the teaching profession and responsibility towards the students.

#### 7. The Curriculum

The curriculum has five features of Education. The five features are the “physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual” educations.

#### 8. Teaching Methods

Sri Aurobindo suggests a judicious combination of old methods and new methods based on their usefulness for the benefit of students.

**Conclusion:** Yoga is ancient. Philosophy and yoga are essential to humans next to basic needs. The modern developments are giving many physical comforts and the life is becoming easy but due to the stress and strain of everyday life internal restlessness is also increasing affecting the world peace. This causes various psycho-somatic disorders that are harmful the world. So, yoga makes life meaningful and gives answers to major problems of life. Sri Aurobindo gives a positive picture of the future of humanity and the present man is the middle term in the process of evolution. Master Aurobindo’s Integral Yoga may become a panacea for all problems and difficulties. Integral Yoga has many philosophical and educational implications in many areas of life.

“Yoga is after all primarily a change of the inner consciousness. The object of sadhana can only be to live in the divine consciousness and to manifest it in life.” -- Sri Aurobindo



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