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## Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga: A research perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper is about Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo uses the word "integral" as a prefix. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is an integral philosophy. Yoga is an integral yoga. The purpose of integral yoga is perfection. The purpose, aims, principles and the major concepts of Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga are explained in detail in this work.*

**Keywords**— Yoga, Integral yoga, Absolute, Brahman, Ascent, Descent, Mind, Super-mind, Evolution, Matter, Philosophy, Education

*"The ancient dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primaeva longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises to be it's last, - God, Light, Freedom, Immortality."*

- Sri Aurobindo

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo uses the word "integral" as a prefix. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is an integral philosophy. Yoga is an integral yoga. Evolution is an Integral Evolution. The Integral Yoga becomes the central axis of his philosophy. The aim of life is to seek its own self-development and to evolve. The man who guides human life towards perfection is known as a sage or a liberated soul. He lives like a man but is higher to man in his nature.

The *Rishi* is above all limitations and has a great vision. He is knowledge personified and has higher knowledge. He guides the world humanly as God guides him divinely. He is divine in his nature. He is in the world and he is above it.

The purpose of integral yoga is perfection. The path is perfection and it is by *tapasya*. Perfection is attained by the existence of God. The aim is a victory in the process of self-perfection. *Brahman* is the world. The world is God. The world is true. The world is bliss. It is our inability to understand the world by egoist nature and our wrong relation to the world that results in misery. We have to understand every aspect of the world properly. The Divine alone is our object. Everything may fail a man, the Divine may not fail him, if he turns himself to the Divine that is the lesson of life in the world.

### 2. AIMS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

- Integral development
- The realisation of the supermind
- Transformation
- Dynamic union
- Liberation
- The aim of "evolution"

### 3. INTEGRAL YOGA PRINCIPLES

The principles of integral yoga to realise a complete self-integration are:

- Psychic integration
- Cosmic integration
- Existential integration

#### **4. MAJOR CONCEPTS OF SRI AUROBINDO'S INTEGRAL YOGA**

**4.1** Sri Aurobindo was not a supporter of any system. His life philosophy is a result of his own life training, encounters, conditions and thought. He consolidated the ideas from different traditions that helped him and gave a different interpretation to early *Vedic* hymns and to western philosophy too.

**4.2** Sri Aurobindo condemned every ancient school and explained the philosophy that can be traced back to a few schools, especially the *Saiva* and *Sakta Agamas*.

**4.3** Sri Aurobindo used new phrasing for traditional ideas. He also explained a new tenet of the "Superman". Aurobindo's Superman is a "yogi" who understands the Absolute. "All life is either consciously or subconsciously a yoga.

**4.4** Sri Aurobindo writes the creation is a "circular process of descent and ascent." A descent into the matter from the *Brahman*. An ascent of matter to the *Brahman*. Absolute has the nature to express itself in this circular process. The world is not unreal due to "*Maya* and *Avidya*" (Ignorance). Ignorance is one angle of wisdom itself. It is a power belonging to the absolute; nature is Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. The world is from this absolute and Bliss itself. They are the play or *Lila* of the *Brahman*. The Divine comes down from "pure existence" through the game of "Consciousness-Force and Bliss" and the creative aspect of "Supermind" into "cosmic being"; we climb from matter through the creative life, soul, psyche and the illuminating aspect of "Supermind" towards the divine being.

**4.5** The stages of ascent from matter are:

- (a) Matter
- (b) Life
- (c) Mind
- (d) Higher mind
- (e) Illumined mind
- (f) Intuitive mind
- (g) Overmind
- (h) Supermind
- (i) Brahman

The stages of the descent from the Brahman are:

- (a) Brahman
- (b) Supermind
- (c) Overmind
- (d) Intuitive mind
- (e) Illumined mind
- (f) Higher mind
- (g) Mind
- (h) Life
- (i) Matter

Advancement is the ascent from matter. Involution is a plunge from the absolute. The science and technology deals with matter and discovers what is visible, it understands the dimensions up to the psyche.

**4.6** By yoga levels beyond psyche can be accomplished. The yogi transforms into a superman as per Sri Aurobindo on the grounds that he is competent to achieve the higher levels with yoga practice. The *Upanishad* states that from the *Ananda* all are conceived, stay and depart.

**4.7** Aurobindo's vision of life considers:

- (a) The Western culture and Eastern culture
- (b) Material values and the Spiritual values
- (c) Science, technology and Veda, Vedanta

**4.8** Charles Darwin's theory of evolution states that evolution is from aquatic to terrestrial and apes are the predecessors of man. Sri Aurobindo states that the biological theory of advancement is not complete. It deals with the phases of advancement from the matter to psyche and cannot clarify completely due to lack of the "experimental proof" which science requires. The theory can't explain the evolution of psyche from life and matter.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the advancement of forms results in the development of consciousness. The more the forms, the more the advancement of consciousness. He postulates the descent of psyche to matter. So the ascent is the re-tracing of the stages of the descent. But the psyche is not the starting point. In the mind will, activity, knowledge and truth are detached. That is we may but we may not act, we may know from absolute to mind the descent passed through the stages and in the ascent also before reaching the absolute the stages should be passed. Sri Aurobindo states that the evolution of consciousness does not stop with the psyche. It advances further to greater consciousness called truth-consciousness, supermind. The future "emergent evolution" of man into Superman is because of this higher consciousness.

**4.9** The aim of yoga is to reach the highest unity, the *Brahman*. The *Brahman* is an integrality of everything. Aurobindo calls his yoga as Integral yoga. "In the yoga practised here, the aim is to rise to a higher consciousness and to live out of the higher consciousness alone, not with the ordinary motives."

**4.10** It is integral consciousness at the stage of "supernals" and it is extraordinary knowledge. So the individual has to develop an integrality of personality. The term integrality of personality is not a psychological term or an ethical term. It is a unification of all our being diversified into will, cognition, action and reality.

**4.11** Aurobindo proposed his philosophy to be sincere to the original *Vedanta* position and disagreed with Shankara's "*Advaita Vedanta*" on several points. "We come to look at the cosmos from quite another standpoint- the standpoint not of *Maya*, but *Lila*." As per Sri Aurobindo, the descent was an inevitable expression of the power of the absolute. With regard to mankind, he wrote the psychic level isn't the highest level. The individual must prepare a leap beyond the mind into the limit of one's fundamental nature. "The preparation for this leap is called Integral yoga and is an elaborate discipline capable of transforming one's state of mind and one's life. "Yoga is directed towards God, not towards the man."

**4.12** Sri Aurobindo states, it is important to reconcile matter and spirit, man and God, the finite world and absolute reality, the many are one. Sri Aurobindo is an idealist, absolutist and monist. He rejects the view that the world is an unreal illusion.

**4.13** Aurobindo's concept of "circularity of evolution" from the absolute to matter and back again is not new to the Indian thought; it gains significance because he compares it with the tenets of the west. Sri Aurobindo in a discussion on 26-08-1940 notes: "That is not true. I have not read much of philosophy. It is like those who say that I am influenced by Hegel. Some even say that I am influenced by Nietzsche because I quoted his sentence, you can become yourself by exceeding yourself."

**4.14** "The Veda, Upanishads or the Gita to indicate precisely the spirit in which we approach it and what exactly we think we may derive from it that is of value to humanity and its future." What I wrote was the work of intuition and inspiration working on the basis of my spiritual experience. I have no other technique like the modern philosopher whose philosophy I consider only intellectual and therefore of secondary value. Experience and formulation of experience I consider being true aim of Philosophy. The rest is merely intellectual work and may be interesting but nothing more.

**4.15** "At first gathering into it the essential elements of spiritual experience that are gained by the paths of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed till now in India. He passed on in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence-spirit and matter. Most ways of yoga are the paths to the beyond leading to the spirit and in the end away from life. Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to re-descend with its gains bringing the light, power and bliss of the spirit into life to transform it. The mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a super mind or eternal truth-consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of Divine knowledge. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga." "The one aim of his yoga is an inner self-development by which each one who follows it can in time discover the One Self in all and evolves a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature."

The final conclusion is that Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga helps to realize the Supermind and the other realities of this world and that other world. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga helps to realize the metaphysics, epistemology and axiology of philosophy. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is very useful to realize the curriculum, methods and aims of Education perfectly for the welfare of mankind. The Integral Yoga advances the man into Superman and helps in the transformation of the World towards perfection and is an aid in the process of evolution of nature.

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