

Monica Gupta

Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Integral Human Development

Designing a Future Discipline of Study

 Springer

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*For Sri Aurobindo and The Mother
for the revelatory power of the 'Word'
contained in their writings which has
dynamically sustained me through the entire
process of writing this work*

Preface

This work attempts to bring together the developmental insights contained within the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. I have made a conscious attempt in my work to present Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's ideas in their own terms and to avoid unnecessary generalisations. The main aim is to identify key developmental ideas from the *original* works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, and put them together in coherent developmental framework that represents the theoretical and application potential. The main method adopted for collating these insights is not just an intellectual analysis but a more comprehensive Indian method of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nidhidhyāsana*—i.e. listening to or reading the words and meditating on them deeply. I have attempted to practise some of the concepts mentioned in this work in daily life in the past 10 years and to find their verification in experience. Thus, the aim has not been to collect *information* but represent *real living dynamic ideas* that have made deep personal sense to me and have changed the way in which I have lived and experienced life and *its developmental potential*.

[Chapter 1](#) begins with outlining the aim of the work and the need for undertaking this study. It examines the limitations of the current structuring of the discipline of human development and the relevance of studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's perspective on human development and their vision of psychology as a discipline of study in yielding an alternate agenda of human development. In all, there are identified four major lines of development that are explored across chapters—the cosmic, social, individual and the inner-yogic lines of development. The key ideas of individual and social evolution which form the core of Sri Aurobindo's developmental theory are examined in [Chaps. 2](#) and [3](#). [Chapter 2](#) examines the nature and expanse of human personality, the process of forming the human individuality, and the dynamics of its further evolution into a divine individuality. [Chapter 3](#) looks at the broader stages or cycles of social evolution based on Sri Aurobindo's book *The Human Cycle* and also examines the spiral nature of development guided by the principles of progress and perfection as given by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The understanding of stages of collective human evolution forms the necessary backdrop against which the emergence of major metatheoretical perspectives in academic discipline of human development are engaged with in [Chap. 4](#). [Chapter 4](#) investigates the nature of the European

culture within which the contemporary discipline of human development took its first form and its key difference from the psychological perspectives based on the Indian view of spirituality. Two broad perspectives—the Neo-Darwinian and the relational metatheories—largely the products of the rational age as conceived by Sri Aurobindo are discussed further in the chapter, in terms of their ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions and their view on the nature of development. [Chapter 4](#) ends with a comment on the limitations of the dominant metatheoretical perspectives in the discipline of human development and a need for deepening the discourse, in keeping with the emergence of the subjective age as conceived by Sri Aurobindo. [Chapter 5](#) examines the nature of cosmic development and the metatheory of human development based on Sri Aurobindo's perspective on evolution of consciousness i.e. the ontological, epistemological, methodological assumptions and its implications for the nature of development. It revisits the Neo-Darwinian and the relational meta-theoretical perspectives from the integral-developmental perspective and analyses two major psychological theories of development in its light. [Chapter 6](#) attempts to synthesize the key developmental ideas of Sri Aurobindo from across different chapters. It begins by examining the ways in which Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary discourse potentially extends the boundaries of the current field of inquiry and design a future discipline of study. This is followed by a proposal of a new agenda for human development based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works. [Chapter 7](#) is the concluding chapter where application potential of this developmental agenda is outlined for its power of informing practices in the areas of education, parenting, work, human relations and healing.

A few names, terms and usages may need clarification in terms of their usage. This work is based on the yogic vision and writings of both Sri Aurobindo *and* The Mother—who was the spiritual collaborator of Sri Aurobindo. Also, the reference to the academic discipline of 'Human Development' subsumes within it the discipline of 'Developmental Psychology' or 'Developmental Science'. The term 'Human Development' when used from Sri Aurobindo's perspective indicates an *evolutionary* view of development.

I would like to thank Dr. Suneet Varma and Prof. Girishwar Misra for the valuable inputs in this work. I would like to thank my family for their unfailing support, and affection. A special thanks to Shikha for her help at a crucial time. And finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Nirodbaran, Ms. Ameeta Mehra and the Gnostic Centre Family for nurturing my inner growth and progress.

New Delhi

Monica Gupta

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About the Author

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Need for a New Psychology of Human Development

All life is yoga.

(Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 8)

Yoga is nothing but practical psychology.

(Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 44)

Our yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure.

(Sri Aurobindo 1970, p. 101)

1.1 The Aim

Human Development is a key interdisciplinary field of inquiry which aims to study the psychological, sociological and anthropological factors that shape the developmental possibilities of human beings. The current focus of the professionals in this field of study is to understand human development across the entire life span as it unfolds within specific cultural contexts. Specifically, they aim to study the multiple possibilities of life-course pathways as they emerge through the interaction between the individual and collective culture (Valsiner and Lawrence 1997).

The main *aim* of this work is to *re-engage with the disciplinary boundaries* in the field of Human Development and explore the viability of a new agenda of human development based on the works and vision of the Indian seer Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950). The book begins by outlining the process of the individual and social evolutionary perspective of Sri Aurobindo. There is a further attempt to delineate a potential *metatheory of human development* contained within the works of Sri Aurobindo and examine it in the context of the dominant metatheories in the fields of Human Development. For this purpose, the ‘*meta-psychological*’ approach is adopted and there is an examination of the philosophical and psychological assumptions related to human development including the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Sri Aurobindo’s perspective on the *aims of human existence* and the *nature of cosmic, social, individual and inner-yogic development* is examined in detail and implications drawn for creating a new vision of human development as a field of study.

1.2 The Relevance of Studying Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

Sri Aurobindo is a great spiritual master, *Yogi, Rishi* and philosopher par excellence whose life and works are a living inspiration in our times. He along with his spiritual collaborator—Mirra Alfassa or *The Mother* was engaged in creating the new future evolutionary possibilities for humanity through the practice of ‘Integral Yoga’. This yoga is based on a wide synthesis of all the yoga traditions in India but has as its aim not an escape into *Nirvana* or a Heaven but the perfection of human life on the Earth. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (1970, p. 101)—“*Our yoga is not a retreading of old walks, but a spiritual adventure*”. The Mother (2004), in this context says:

It is not a question of repeating spiritually what others have done before us, for our adventure begins beyond that. It is a question of a new creation, entirely new, with all the unforeseen events, the risks, the hazards it entails—a *real adventure*, whose goal is certain victory, but the road to which is unknown and must be traced out step by step in the unexplored. Something that has never been in this present universe and that will never be again in the same way (p. 152).

The study of yoga can be crucial in the field of Human Development as the yogic methods are inner psychological operations that connect the human being to the higher divine consciousness and open to it the possibilities of further development and higher integration of personality. Sri Aurobindo (1999) calls yoga—‘a *practical psychology*’ and his Integral Yoga has as its aim not only for an aspirant to rise out of the ignorant world consciousness into the Divine consciousness, but also to bring the highest Divine consciousness down into the ignorant mind, life and body and transform them to manifest and create a Life Divine on Earth. A key characteristic of Sri Aurobindo’s approach to *yoga* is that he does not reject the earthly life. In his view, ‘*All life is Yoga*’—There “is a vast Yoga of Nature who attempts in the conscious and the subconscious to realise her perfection in an ever-increasing expression of her yet unrealised potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality” (Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 6).

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s works are known to contain a painstakingly detailed map of the psychological make-up of the human being, an understanding of the current problems and crises of humanity, a perspective on the relation between the individual and collective evolution and indicate the next step that humanity needs to take that can catapult it into a new future. It thus becomes relevant to study their writings for they contain a radical and futuristic vision of human development which may have the potential for opening new pathways for the progress for humanity—and have implications for understanding afresh the scope of Human Development as a discipline of study.

1.3 Understanding Metapsychology

The term metapsychology is concerned with the underlying conceptual questions or principles of psychology (Colman 2001). It is the philosophical study of psychology and a systematic attempt to discern and describe what lies beyond the facts and laws of psychology (Online medical dictionary 2000). The term metapsychology has taken on different shades depending on the psychological thinkers who have used this concept. The concept of metapsychology was used initially by Sigmund Freud to denote the most theoretical and abstract elements of psychoanalysis and specifically, it refers to a “psychology that leads behind consciousness” (Masson 1985, pp. 301–302). For Freud, the term ‘consciousness’ was used predominantly to indicate the ‘unconscious’ and ‘subconscious’ aspects of personality and the ways in which they influence the functioning of an individual. The concept of metapsychology has been used in more recent times by the psychiatrist Gerbode (1995), who views it as a discipline that studies the relationship between the “person, mind and the physical universe” (p. 6). Gerbode (1995) has tried to go beyond Freud and used metapsychology to recover the original meaning of ‘Psychology’, i.e. *a study of psyche or the spirit*. Rakover (1990) has used metapsychology as a concept that can include perspectives both from ‘Philosophy of Psychology’ and ‘Philosophy of Science’. In the present work, the term metapsychology examines Sri Aurobindo’s central ideas of re-shaping the discipline of ‘Psychology’ (see Sect. 1.5) and links them to his key ideas on the nature of ‘human development’. Thus ‘*meta-psychology*’ here becomes an understanding of the nature of the highest reality or the ‘Absolute’ that lies *beyond* the psychological principle and becomes the fundamental basis from which ensue all processes of human development. (For details see Sect. 5.4.1).

There is an attempt in this work to specifically delineate the *metatheory* of human development contained in the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

A metatheory is a coherent set of interlocking principles that both describes and prescribes what is meaningful and meaningless, acceptable and unacceptable, central and peripheral, as theory—the means of conceptual exploration—and as method—the means of observational exploration—in a scientific discipline. Theories and methods refer directly to the empirical world, while metatheories refer to the theories and methods themselves (Overton 2007, p. 154).

All theories operate explicitly or implicitly on the basis of a metatheory. It is the metatheory that gives shape to the scope within which a theory operates and also defines the methods of study.

An essential and sometimes unrecognized feature of metatheories, however, is that they emerge and operate at several levels of analysis. Metatheories, which are sometimes also referred to as ‘models’ or ‘paradigms,’ tend to form a hierarchy in terms of increasing generality of application. The hierarchical dimension of any given set of metatheoretical ideas also forms a coherently interrelated system of ideas, and the model operating at the pinnacle of this hierarchy is usually termed a ‘world view.’ World views are composed of coherent interlocking sets of *epistemological* (i.e. issues of knowing) and *ontological* (i.e., issues of reality) principles (Overton 2007, p. 154).

The function of a metatheory is not only to ground, constrain and sustain theoretical concepts but also to guide the methods of investigation or *metamethods* as termed by Overton (2003). A metatheory is a set of rules, principles or a story that sets the boundaries for what is acceptable in a theory and prescribes the conceptual exploration in the domain of Science. Similarly, metamethods too are rules, principles or a story that set the boundaries for the acceptable methods and prescribe the means of observational exploration in a scientific discipline (Overton 2003).

Further, metatheories are broad templates, world views or cosmologies or stories of theory development which drive specific theoretical perspectives (Overton 1998). An aim of this work is to examine the broad world views or metatheories that are dominant in the academic field of Human Development and analyse them with reference to the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. The purpose of this analysis is to explore the potential of the Integral world view of human development and its related methods derived from Sri Aurobindo's works to engage with the dominant metatheories within the academic discipline of Human Development and also uncover new fertile areas and an alternate agenda for the study of development.

1.4 Examining the Current Agenda of the Discipline of Human Development: The Limitations and Unanswered Questions

This section outlines the limitations of the agenda of human development in the current discipline of study and examines the questions that it leaves unanswered which a new agenda of human development based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works can potentially address.

A Limited View of Human Development: Human Development as academic field of study enables engagement with some significant aspects of human development but excludes many other dimensions from its ambit. The present scope of the discipline of Human Development has been significantly circumscribed by the indiscriminate borrowing of the philosophical and the methodological framework from the Natural Sciences. This has resulted in a focus largely only on those aspects of human experience that are 'observable' and can be 'objectively verified' in terms of human behavior. While the criteria of external observation and objective verification may be suitable for the study of natural phenomena, they fail to be a suitable method for the study of the complexity of human subjectivity. Sri Aurobindo (1997c) points out that the limitations of the scope of Psychology as based on Natural Sciences can only be overcome by creating an inner field of observation and verification within the subjective consciousness of the growing individual. This has radical implications for the study of human development which are further explored in this work.

The study of human development in the widest sense can be an exploration of the relation of the Individual with the Cosmos—a synthetic relationship, which can be studied in all its richness of expression. This is a relationship of the individual with the entire creation, i.e. a relationship which includes the plant and animal life and even the material-physical universe. There is a need for a view of human development that can perceive the Unity behind all the process of Nature and does not study the human being in a fragmented manner. In this context, the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are being engaged with, for their potential for providing an alternate understanding of human development, which can overcome both the limitations of content and method in the current academic field and provide a *comprehensive and unified* view of development as *evolution of consciousness*.

Insufficient Engagement with the ‘Why’ of Human Development: The empirically oriented developmental thinkers have largely sidestepped the question ‘Why does development take place in manner that it does’, and are largely concerned with the ‘What’ and the ‘How’ of development. Asking the ‘why’ question can land one in the zone of discomfort for it requires a direct engagement with the *original cause of development*. This brings a theorist within the domain of metaphysics, which is the broad area of philosophical inquiry concerned with conceptual inquiry into the nature, origin and structure of the world (Overton 1998). The metaphysical basis of human psychology has been often been sidelined as a useless exercise for it is viewed by the empirically oriented psychologists as merely an exercise in mental gymnastics or exercising of fertile imagination in a domain which perhaps has no possibility of giving us any definite answers.

To use the metaphor of a *tree*, it seems that use of empiricism has largely limited the study of human development to understanding the nature of the trunk, the leaves, the flowers and the fruits of a tree without really bothering to have a coherent theory about the *seed* from which the tree emerges nor the *sun* from which it draws nourishment and towards which it grows. Developmental thinkers often relegate the issues of the origin of the cosmos, its goal, purpose and sustenance, to the metaphysical realm, as they cannot be investigated through empirical vision. A new vision of human development, based on Sri Aurobindo’s works, can be explored for its potential to engage with the central philosophical questions related to human development based on direct yogic perception of Reality—i.e. a personal engagement with the original cause and the endpoint of development.

A View of the Human Being as the Terminal End of Evolution: Contemporary developmental theories often implicitly view the human being as the end product of human evolution. In Sri Aurobindo’s (2005) view, the human being is still in the process of evolution and the next step in evolution is going beyond the evolutionary principle of the Mind to the emergence of a New Consciousness which will have the capacity of re-creating the entire being of a person. A deeper study of the nature of this ‘New Consciousness’, the dynamics of its emergence and the trajectories of its growth are being attempted in this work.

A Focus on Heredity and Environment as the Primary Formative Factors in Human Development: The twin factors of heredity and environment, in

differing degrees and patterns of interaction are considered to be the key determining influences shaping the human nature by developmental theorists (Cole 1992). In this context, one can ask the question—Is it possible to be *free* of the influence of heredity with which one is born and the environment in which one has grown up? Sri Aurobindo's perspective on evolution of consciousness opens the possibility of a free determination of the self by which one can successfully emerge out of the atavisms of the past and through yoga change the primary nature with which one is *born*—a novel perspective that needs further study.

A Primacy of the Physical-Material Dimension over the Spiritual Dimension of Human Development: The current discipline of human development examines the emergence of the capacities of the mind and emotions and the self as located within the 'physical person', who is often viewed as a result of a mechanical process of evolution. There is a possibility of an exploration of an alternate view based on Sri Aurobindo's perspective of human development which gives primacy to the spirituality as the source and original impetus for development and also reconnects the material and the spiritual realms (Sri Aurobindo 1998).

A Focus on Studying the Development of the 'Other': The focus of the academic discipline of human development is on studying the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, moral and identity-related development that takes place in the 'other'. An alternate view of human development, based on the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, could be to shift from the study of the 'Other' to the study of the 'Self'. The questions that are sought to be answered through their writings are—'Can a person's deeper subjectivity be a powerful tool of facilitating self-growth and for doing research?' A view of human development where the human individual grows through invoking the *higher powers within* and can facilitate one's own development has alternate psychological dynamics that are explored here in depth.

Spirituality as a 'Variable' in Human Development: It is heartening to note that the study of 'religion and spirituality' has recently been accepted as a viable theoretical model for research in Developmental Science as a result of the recent *Positive Psychology* movement (Oser et al. 2006). However, I find that religion and spirituality are still approached as areas of 'intellectual interest'. A majority of existing studies in area of spiritual development are done through empirical methodology using independent and dependent variables and the conclusions are embedded predominantly within the rational discourse. To do justice to the understanding of spiritual development, there can be explored a central shift away from the 'intellectual way of knowing' towards the 'spiritual way of knowing' which is capable of taking us beyond mere *coping* with the challenges of life *in its present status*. Sri Aurobindo's perspective on development is based not only on an ascent to the higher levels of consciousness beyond the mind but also has a potential of *creating life anew* through the descent of higher consciousness that enables the transmutation of consciousness of pain and suffering into the values of Bliss—a higher developmental dynamic that is further investigated in this work.

A Focus on ‘Becoming’ Rather than ‘Being’: Currently the focus of the field of Human Development is on studying the developmental processes and trajectories of ‘Becoming’ as divorced from the ‘Being’ (Sharma and Chaudhary 2009). However, according to the Integral view of Human Development based on Sri Aurobindo’s works, such a division may become untenable—as it is the mutual play of Being and Becoming that is the very basis of development and a new creation of consciousness. This may be a new developmental field—that needs to be understood and explored—based on the mutual play and co-creation of the *Purusha* and the *Prakriti*, the Eternal and the Human self (Sri Aurobindo 1997b).

The limitations of the present agenda of discipline of human development thus stem from its focus on the ‘external’ as compared to the ‘inner’ dimensions of growth which has significantly reduced the scope of study. Sri Aurobindo (2005) points out that the summit of human evolution is not the emergence of the human mind and there are deeper secret forces *within* the human person. A study of these ‘deeper forces’ is being undertaken in this work with an eye on their potential for proving a more comprehensive and unified view of human development.

1.5 Exploring Sri Aurobindo’s Vision of Psychology as a Field of Study

A delineation of new agenda of human development based on Sri Aurobindo’s works can best be done by understanding his vision for Psychology as a discipline of study, for it yields a new set of psychological principles which can become the basis of human development.

The Subject Matter of Psychology: A Science of Consciousness: Sri Aurobindo had some very specific ideas about what could constitute the true subject matter of Psychology. In his view, *Psychology is the knowledge of Consciousness and its operations* (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 305). The study of consciousness in Psychology had its earlier proponents in pioneers like William James but it soon became a discarded concept due to methodological difficulties and the dominance of the behaviouristic school of thought that relegated consciousness to the black box. The study of consciousness has made a comeback through the recent emergence of the field of cognitive psychology, where it is largely considered to be a by-product of the brain and seen as being primarily mental in nature.

In Sri Aurobindo’s view (1997a) consciousness is not a product of the brain but uses the brain as an instrument. With reference to the nature of consciousness, he states:

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. (Sri Aurobindo 1970, p. 236).

In addition, the mind is only one level of the multilevel reality called consciousness. Sri Aurobindo (1970) states:

Consciousness is usually identified with mind but mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all gradations of colour or human hearing all gradations of sound—for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So, there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range with which the normal human has no contact... (p. 234).

The study of the operations of different levels of consciousness that overtly or secretly give shape to the human person is in Aurobindo's view *a subjective science* and only such an 'inner science' can give us a complete understanding of human psychology.

A complete psychology must be a complex of the science of mind, its operations and its relations to life and body with intuitive and experimental knowledge of the nature of mind, its operations and its relations to life and body with intuitive and experimental knowledge of the nature of mind and its relations to ...spirit (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 305).

The Three Major Errors of Modern Psychology: Sri Aurobindo (1998) points out that modern Psychology has made three major initial errors in its stage of inception which have hampered the study of human phenomena and the achievement of profounder knowledge. These are:

...the *materialistic error* which bases the study of mind upon the study of the body; the *sceptical error* which prevents any bold and clear-eyed investigation of the hidden profundities of our subjective existence; the error of conservative distrust and recoil which regards any subjective state or experience that departs from the ordinary operations of our mental and psychical nature as a morbidity or a hallucination,—just as the Middle Ages regarded all new science as magic and a diabolical departure from the sane and right limits of human capacity; finally, *the error of objectivity* which leads the psychologist to study others from outside instead of seeing his true field of knowledge and laboratory of experiment in himself. (Sri Aurobindo 1998, p. 177, emphasis added).

Psychology as a Subjective Science: Sri Aurobindo (1998) writes that “Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others” (p. 177). Sri Aurobindo considered psychology as it was in the first half of the century to be an infant science, rash and fumbling in its approach. The surface personality according to Sri Aurobindo is only a small part of our being which does not yield to us the root and the secret of our character, mentality or our actions. For instance, psychoanalysts view the human personality as deeply influenced by the unconscious and subconscious force. For Sri Aurobindo, the secret root of understanding the human personality lies not in analysing the gradations of consciousness that lie below the mind (the Inconscient and the Subconscient) but in the highest gradation of consciousness that lies above the Mind (the Superconscient). With specific reference to Psychoanalysis, he stated:

This new psychology looks to me very much like children learning some summary and not very adequate alphabet, exulting in putting their a-b-c-d of the subconscious and the mysterious underground super-ego together and imagining that their first book of obscure beginnings (c-a-t cat, t-r-e-e tree) is the very heart of the real knowledge. They look from down up and explain the higher lights by the lower obscurities; but the foundation of these things is above and not below *upari budhna eṣām*. The superconscious, not the subconscious, is the true foundation of things. The significance of the lotus is not to be found by analysing the secrets of the mud from which it grows here; its secret is to be found in the heavenly archetype of the lotus that blooms forever in the Light above. The self-chosen field of these psychologists is besides poor, dark and limited; you must know the whole before you can know the part and the highest before you can truly understand the lowest. That is the promise of the greater psychology awaiting its hour before which these poor groping will disappear and come to nothing (Sri Aurobindo 1970, pp. 1608–1609).

Psychology, as a subjective science of consciousness, deals with a more subtle, flexible and versatile material, as compared with the physical sciences. According to Sri Aurobindo (1997a), its dynamics are more elusive, its processes are more difficult to fathom and to fix but once grasped and verified, its processes and laws are as regular and utilisable as the laws of physical sciences.

The Metaphysical Basis of Psychology: Sri Aurobindo believed that Psychology cannot become a complete discipline if it is divorced from its metaphysical basis. In this context, he noted “self-knowledge has two inseparable aspects, a psychological knowledge of the process of Being, a metaphysical knowledge of its principles and essentiality” (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 307). The metaphysical study yields an understanding of the ‘essential’ laws of the Universe which can then be psychologically utilised by a person for the growth of consciousness.

A Future Psychology and Its Relation to Other Disciplines of Study: According to Sri Aurobindo (1999), ‘All life is yoga’ and the different academic disciplines and their approach towards knowledge is itself a part of a larger yoga. In this context, he states:

There are two kinds of knowledge, that which seeks to understand the apparent phenomenon of existence externally, by an approach *from outside*, through the intellect—this is the lower knowledge, the knowledge of the apparent world; secondly, the knowledge which seeks to know the truth of existence *from within*, in its source and reality, by spiritual realization. Ordinarily, a sharp distinction is drawn between the two, and it is supposed that when we get to the higher knowledge, the God-knowledge, then the rest, the world-knowledge, becomes of no concern to us: but in reality they are two sides of one seeking. All knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of God, through himself, through Nature, through her works. Mankind has first to seek this knowledge through the external life; for until its mentality is sufficiently developed, spiritual knowledge is not really possible, and in proportion as it is developed, the possibilities of spiritual knowledge become richer and fuller (Sri Aurobindo 1999, pp. 512–513, emphasis added).

Sri Aurobindo points out that currently the academic disciplines are predominantly seeking the lower knowledge but they shall gradually move to recognition of the existence of the higher knowledge. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (1999):

Science, art, philosophy, ethics, psychology, the knowledge of man and his past, action itself are means by which we arrive at the knowledge of the workings of God through Nature and through life. At first it is the workings of life and forms of Nature which occupy us, but as we go deeper and deeper and get a completer view and experience, each of these lines brings us face to face with God (p. 513).

Sri Aurobindo (1999) outlines the further potential of some of the major academic disciplines including psychology as they may attempt to move from the lower to a higher knowledge. He points out:

Science at its limits, even physical Science, is compelled to perceive in the end the infinite, the universal, the spirit, the divine intelligence and will in the material universe. Still more easily must this be the end with the psychic sciences which deal with the operations of higher and subtler planes and powers of our being and come into contact with the beings and the phenomena of the worlds behind which are unseen, not sensible by our physical organs, but ascertainable by the subtle mind and senses. *Art* leads to the same end; the aesthetic human being intensely preoccupied with Nature through aesthetic emotion must in the end arrive at spiritual emotion and perceive not only the infinite life, but the infinite presence within her; preoccupied with beauty in the life of man he must in the end come to see the divine, the universal, the spiritual in humanity. *Philosophy* dealing with the principles of things must come to perceive the Principle of all these principles and investigate its nature, attributes and essential workings. So *ethics* must eventually perceive that the law of good, which it seeks, is the law of God and depends on the being and nature of the Master of the law. *Psychology leads from the study of mind and the soul in living beings to the perception of the one soul and one mind in all things and beings* (Sri Aurobindo 1999, pp. 514–515, emphasis added).

Psychology is currently most often defined as ‘a science of mind and behaviour’. Psychology, with its focus on the external ‘behaviour’ and the ‘mental processes’, can be seen to belong to the realm of *lower knowledge* that relies on the *intellect* to know and study human nature. The discipline of Psychology, if approached from the perspective of *higher knowledge* as conceived by Sri Aurobindo (1999), would seek to know the Truth of existence through direct spiritual experience. Sri Aurobindo (1999) points out that in the evolutionary march of humankind, both these kinds of knowledge are necessary and the development of intellect and capacity for spiritual realisation are both important evolutionary gains.

Thus, the spiritual realisation of the knowledge of the ‘Self’ and the ‘World’ attained on the basis of consolidations of the past evolutionary gains (i.e. the development of the intellect) yields a new vision of psychology. In this vision, the *entire creation—living and non-living*, becomes the field for Psychology and is based on the view that ‘Consciousness’ as fundamental reality pervades the entire cosmos, and ‘*all things and beings*’ from the macrocosm to microcosm, are gradations of this Consciousness. This vision has a capacity to unify and connect the material and the spiritual aspects of the universe and defines the new scope of the study of human development.

1.6 Re-examining the Methods of Studying Human Development

According to Sri Aurobindo, it is '*a true scientific spirit*' that ought to drive our investigations into the complexity of human consciousness and determine its methods. However, we also need to understand that the subject matter of psychology and the study of human development is significantly different from that of the physical sciences—and therefore needs its own special methods of investigation and self-development. Interestingly, such psychological methods were available to the Indian Mind since the times of the Vedas and need to be examined and utilised again for their contemporary value. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (1997a):

When the ancient thinkers of India set themselves to study the soul of man in themselves and others, they, unlike any other nation or school of early thought, proceeded at once to a process which resembles exactly enough the process adopted by modern science in its study of physical phenomena. For their object was to study, arrange and utilise the forms, forces and working movements of consciousness, just as the modern physical Sciences study, arrange and utilise the forms, forces and working movements of objective Matter. The material with which they had to deal was more subtle, flexible and versatile than the most impalpable forces of which the physical Sciences have become aware; its motions were more elusive, its processes harder to fix; but once grasped and ascertained, the movements of consciousness were found by Vedic psychologists to be in their process and activity as regular, manageable and utilisable as the movements of physical forces. The powers of the soul can be as perfectly handled and as safely, methodically and puissantly directed to practical life-purposes of joy, power and light as the modern power of electricity can be used for human comfort, industrial and locomotive power and physical illumination; but the results to which they give room and effect are more wonderful and momentous than the results of motor power and electric luminosity. For there is no difference of essential law in the physical and the psychical, but only a difference and undoubtedly a great difference of energy, instrumentation and exact process (pp. 314–315).

The current methods of study of human development are largely geared towards the study of the development of *surface person*—the mental-emotional-physical complex. The aim of the research and its accompanying methodologies when viewed from an integral perspective is also to look beyond the surface personality and understand the complexity of human subjectivity as a *science of consciousness*.

Further, the aim of research is not just to approach a problem through the mental prism of the intellect and reason, but to mobilize the deeper and higher sources of knowledge that are available, that can help an individual move beyond the contradictions created by a limited and divisive mental consciousness. One of the hallmarks of the new research is its ability to employ a synthetic and unifying consciousness in its study, and combine objective and subjective modes of learning towards a total and integral understanding and perspective. For the human being is not the mind alone. There are levels of consciousness that lie below and above the surface mental consciousness. Similarly, the human personality is a

complex of many parts that continuously influence each other and are often a source of problem for the individual and the collective. The task of understanding and ordering this subjectivity as we engage with life is a science by itself and needs consistent research, understanding and practice based on Integral Yoga Psychology, i.e. exploring new modes of Knowledge and Being and finding ways to apply them in life.

This brings us to a new conception of research which has as its basis the development of the faculties of higher knowledge *by the researcher*—for only through this would the researcher be confidently be able to plumb and experience the inner and higher vistas of human experience. In this context, some of the methods of knowledge based on the Indian Vedantic tradition outlined by Sri Aurobindo can be discussed—for their efficacy of giving us a metaphysical and yogic approach to higher knowledge.

The Methods of Vedantic Knowledge: If we rely completely on the evidence that our external senses give us, we would see this world entirely as a material world with its corresponding phenomenal reality. To be able to look behind the veil of the surface person—we would need to develop and exercise new faculties—the first of which is *pure reason*.

The Pure Reason: The Human Reason has been used as a major faculty to find the laws of human behaviour and give coherence to experience by contemporary researchers. However, the value of the faculty of reason is dependent on the way in which it is utilised—in a *mixed* form or a *pure* form. In this context, Sri Aurobindo (2005) states:

Human reason has a double action, mixed or dependent, pure or sovereign. Reason accepts a *mixed action* when it confines itself to the circle of our sensible experience admits its law as the final truth and concerns itself only with the study of phenomenon, that is to say, with the appearances of things in their relations, processes and utilities. This rational action is incapable of knowing what is, it only knows what appears to be, it has no plummet by which it can sound the depths of being, it can only survey the field of becoming.

Reason, on the other hand, asserts its *pure action*, when accepting our sensible experiences as a starting-point but refusing to be limited by them it goes behind, judges, works in its own right and strives to arrive at general and unalterable concepts which attach themselves not to the appearances of things, but to that which stands behind their appearances... To correct the errors of the sense-mind by the use of reason is one of the most valuable powers developed by man and the chief cause of his superiority among terrestrial beings (pp. 66–67, emphasis added).

Thus, according to Sri Aurobindo the complete use of pure Reason takes a person beyond the physical to the metaphysical. However, the concepts of metaphysical knowledge do not in themselves fully satisfy the demand of our integral being. Through the exercise of pure reason, the knowledge of the inner and higher planes of the being can be revealed but pure reason cannot give us an access to the experience of these planes and their integrality. For “the highest intuitive Knowledge sees things in the whole, in the large and details only as sides of the indivisible whole; its tendency is towards immediate synthesis and the unity of knowledge. Reason, on the contrary, proceeds by analysis and division and assembles its facts to form a whole” (Sri Aurobindo 2005; p. 76)

The Intuition: There is required another faculty which can give us the capacity to perceive and experience through identity of the supraphysical possibilities. Sri Aurobindo calls this the faculty of *Intuition* for want of another word. The Intuition can be unpackaged into several planes of higher consciousness, which we will take up in a subsequent chapter.

With reference to Intuition Sri Aurobindo (2005) states:

Intuition brings to man those brilliant messages from the Unknown which are the beginning of his higher knowledge. Reason only comes in afterwards to see what profit it can have of the shining harvest. Intuition gives us that idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be which pursues man always in contradiction of his lower reason and all his normal experience and impels him to formulate that formless perception in the more positive ideas of God, Immortality, Heaven and the rest by which we strive to express it to the mind (pp. 73–74).

The fact that this faculty exists can be validated from the experience of the mystics, poets as well as scientists, who have received creative inspiration from the intuitive. According to Sri Aurobindo, the problem of intuition is that it works from behind a veil—and that the instruments of the surface personality—(i.e. the unenlightened mixed reason) are unable to fully assimilate its messages. In his words (2005)—“Intuition is unable to give us the truth in that ordered and articulated form which our nature demands” (p. 74). The full flowering of the intuitive capacities can come about only if the surface nature and its faculties are capable of organising and expressing the intuitive knowledge. For this is the function of reason in the surface being whereby it helps us to order our perceptions, thoughts and actions. The rational capacities too therefore need to be refined and developed fully to be able to be a good instrument for knowledge by intuition. In evolutionary terms, this is the reason that the early age of intuitive knowledge represented by the Vedas and the Upanishads has given way to the age of more rational knowledge as the development of both the faculties is essential for complete human development.

In the contemporary world of academics, the dominance of the Reason as a primary faculty of knowledge is evident in the way in which we formally seek and organise knowledge. Our aim is through education to develop systematically the capacities of rational thinking and action. However, having developed these capacities well, we as humanity are still unable to feel a sense of integrality and unity within because we have failed to open our consciousness to the higher faculty of Intuition and express it in our surface being.

This is the challenge of our times and the field of academics needs to respond to this challenge by freely examining the higher possibilities of human development and also developing through yogic practice the faculties that can reveal new dimensions of human development.

1.7 The Contemporary Crisis and Responsibility of the Psychological Sciences

The relevance of psychological sciences to our lives increases tremendously. We live in an age where the complexity of life has increased manifold. An individual is strained with multiple demands from self, family and society, and it takes a tremendous amount of effort to coordinate and integrate these demands and achieve self-coherence. Increasing numbers of persons rely on harnessing the *power of the mind* to create work opportunities and give direction to their lives. There exist in an equal measure forces that can easily derail the developmental agenda through indulgence in vital excesses, physical stagnation and a lack of mental balance.

This is an age where it is imperative that we have a much more conscious control of the subjective forces that influence us. There is a need to develop the inner science of consciousness and psychological methodologies whereby new personality resources can be consciously created in response to the multidimensional demands of contemporary society. Such an inner knowledge of consciousness exists in the yogic and spiritual traditions which have attempted to scan the utmost secrets of the human existence. In this context, Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga potentially provides us with a perspective whereby the inner knowledge can be *practically* created that can break the psychological barriers that impede our progress and create life expressions on earth that are capable of expressing the Divine values.

We can ask the question—‘Why study Sri Aurobindo?’ Sri Aurobindo's psychological ideas written in the early twentieth century I feel remain relevant for psychological investigators even today as they are remarkable in the expanse of human experience that they encompass and their wide secular spirit of inquiry. The pulse of contemporary psychological investigation beats largely to the values of humanism and a free scientific temper of exploration. There is a realisation that the human mind ought to accept only those truths that are to it experiential and verifiable. In investigating the complexities of the subjective and spiritual terrain too we need theoretical perspectives that can help us freely engage with the source of all human values and find a method of internally verifying them. I find it interesting that to engage with Sri Aurobindo one does not have to be a person of religious values—an honest atheist, a materialist or a nihilist is in his own way spiritual according to him and is contributing to the evolution of humanity as is an honest believer of the Divine (Sri Aurobindo 1997a). He notes-

God's negations are as useful to us as His affirmations. It is He who as the Atheist denies His own existence for the better perfecting of human knowledge. It is not enough to see God in Christ & Ramakrishna & hear His words, we must see Him hear Him also in Huxley & Haeckel (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, pp. 498–499).

What is important according to Sri Aurobindo is to have a fearless spirit of inquiry and a mind that is not given to dogmatism and is able to examine all human experience without any prejudice or prejudgement.

I feel that it is a *responsibility* of the field of Human Development to unbandage the eye that refuses to often look beyond the study of external nature and is somewhat sceptic of the higher potential that exists with humanity—the power of the Soul and the Spirit. There is a need to experiment with inner psychological methodologies that make the being more plastic to the touch of the higher force and capable of receiving and expressing the Higher Light. Sri Aurobindo's Integral perspective can be potentially valuable in exploring the inner recesses of the human personality and giving a methodology for the growth of consciousness.

The methodology that I have employed here is to engage fundamentally with Sri Aurobindo and use his perspective to create avenues for inner growth. This is essentially a yogic methodological position whereby you do not understand a perspective by distancing yourself from it as an external observer, but rather use it to transform the consciousness and eventually create the possibility of objective observation (the inner witness self) and the subjective experience *within* the human consciousness. This position demands from the psychologist not only a detailed self-observation but also a capacity for practicing the psychological concepts that are being developed and understood. For the final verification of the value of an idea will lie within—and if the consciousness changes, the results I feel are likely to be perceptible to all who come in touch with this consciousness. I think that it seems fair to state that a psychologist can help others only to the extent that he has grown in understanding of his own self and the world. A practice-based Psychology of Consciousness seems to me the future of psychological theorization and practice.

1.8 Conclusion

To conclude, this work attempts to outline the metapsychological foundations of Sri Aurobindo's perspective evolution and the unfolding of the major psychological lines of human development. Sri Aurobindo (1998) writes:

...in the end the real value of philosophy for man (is) to give him light on the nature of his being, the principles of his psychology, his relations with the world and with God, the fixed lines or the great possibilities of his destiny (p. 244).

The 'great possibilities' of human destiny are examined in terms of an individual's relationship with God and the World, and the method through which these evolutionary 'possibilities' can be realised, is also explored. The developmental unfolding of these lines is examined as a 'science of consciousness and its operations' which can be studied potentially through examining the deep and vast inner tracts of the human 'subjectivity'. One can find in Sri Aurobindo's writings, the human potential for growth approached through multiple lines of evolution, e.g.

cosmic evolution (The Life Divine), social evolution (The Human Cycle), the individual and inner-yogic evolution (The synthesis of yoga; The letters on yoga), the cultural evolution (The Renaissance of India), the political evolution (The Ideal of Human Unity), etc. In this book, human development has been examined predominantly from *cosmic* (Chap. 5) *social* (Chap. 3) *individual and inner-yogic lines of development* (Chap. 2)

Sri Aurobindo has given one of the most complex understanding of the inner subjective tracts and topography of human personality. This perspective on individual evolution together with a theory of social evolution forms the ideas of the evolution of *individual-in-society*. Chapter 2 outlines the process of individual evolution and Chap. 3—the dynamics of social evolution—these two chapters together form the core of the Integral theory of the evolution of *individual-in-society*. It is to these two aspects that we first turn our attention.

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Chapter 2

The Process of Individual Evolution: Moving Towards a Gnostic Individuality

*A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme;
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine.
Our life is a paradox with God for key...*

(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 67)

*A perfect path to Truth has come into being for our journey to
the other shore beyond the darkness...*

(Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 999)

2.1 Introduction

Developmental thinkers over the past two centuries have attempted to map the manner in which the life of *an individual-in-society* unfolds within a single lifetime. The focus has been on the scientific study of the rhythms and patterns of development, the mechanisms of developmental change, different dimensions of development (physical, emotional, moral, cognitive, self and identity) within multiple contexts of development (e.g., family, community, culture). I find that this has yielded a significant body of knowledge that looks at an evolving person largely from ‘outside-in’ with the development of higher cognitive abilities, in effect, as the terminal end of human evolutionary capacities.

According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), the development of the rational and higher cognitive functions is only a step towards the higher evolutionary march of humanity and there is a richness of capacities and faculties latent within us which await the sufficient preparation of the surface nature to be able to manifest permanently in earth consciousness. The aim of this chapter is to explore the expanse and dimensions of human nature as outlined by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother and examine specifically the conditions, attitudes and processes that are needed for the transformation of human nature which can help us *in progressive emergence* of a Gnostic Individual and the Life Divine.

2.2 Exploring the Nature of the Human Person: The Structure and the Expanse of the Being

In this section, the layers of the being of the microcosmic individual and the way it is simultaneously a *fraction* and an *integer* of the Cosmic Divine is explored. In this scheme, each individual reverberates to the wider cosmic forces of which a person is a microcosmic unit. In Sri Aurobindo's view (1997a), each growing individual is essentially divine in essence and a God-in-the-making and carries within the self, the entire cosmic developmental potential. There are layers of human person deeper than can be gauged from an external surface view, and layers of consciousness higher and lower than the frontal waking consciousness. The nether, higher and deeper planes exert a subtle influence on the human person and give an individual a complexity of structure and self-expression.

Sri Aurobindo has described the different planes and parts of the human consciousness in great detail giving us one of the most comprehensive, complex and scientific understanding of the human personality and subjectivity. Although the delineation of the planes and parts of the being have been attempted by other researchers (e.g., Dalal 2001), I have attempted to revisit the central ideas linked to the structure of the human person as its required for drawing implications for human development and also because without it, the story of evolution of human individuality to Divine Individuality cannot be told.

Sri Aurobindo (1970) states that there are two systems that can help us in understanding the structure of the human being:

There are, in fact two systems simultaneously active in the organization of the being and its parts: one is concentric, a series of rings or sheaths with psychic at centre; another is vertical, an ascension and descent like a flight of steps. (p. 251).

2.2.1 The Parts of the Being

The concentric system of the organisation of the human individual is like a series of rings or sheaths, consisting of the outer being, the inner being and the inmost being (Fig. 2.1).

The Outer Being: The outer being is our surface personality and has three parts—the physical, the vital and the mental.

The Physical Being: The outer physical consciousness of the human being is characterised by inertia, resistance to change, mechanical repetitiveness, slow arousal and passivity. It is the resistance to change in the human body that gives it a fixed form and stability. Body consciousness is a part of the physical consciousness and is individualised and unique for each person. “In the physical being, the power of past impressions is very great, because it is by the process of repeated impressions that consciousness was made to manifest in matter...”

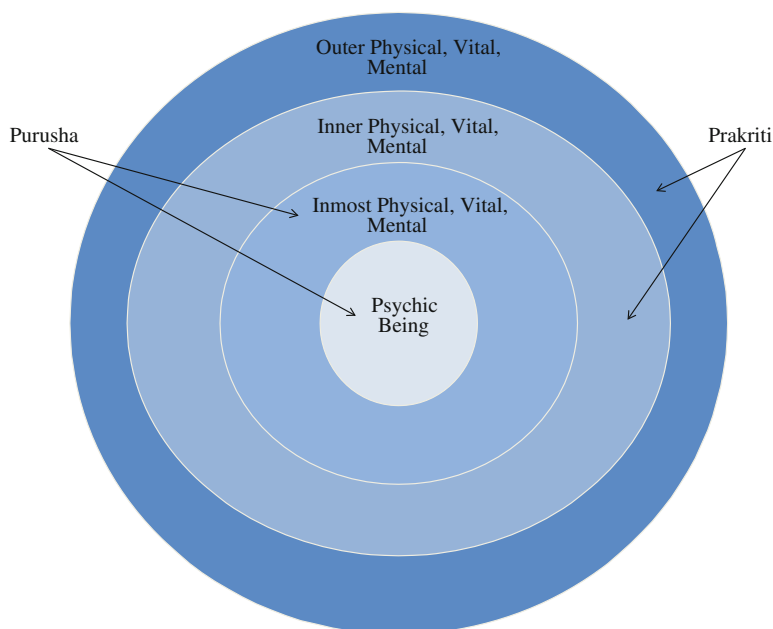


Fig. 2.1 The concentric system—Source Dalal (2001 p. xx). Reproduced with permission from Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry

(Sri Aurobindo 1970, p. 1441). Physical nature exists by constant repetition of the same thing—by a constant presentation of different forms of itself.

The Vital Being: The outer vital consciousness or the life-force contains the desires, feelings, instincts, impulses, passions and ambitions of the human being. It is concerned with self-affirmation, life growth, possession, satisfaction of impulse, enjoyment and satisfaction of all desire. The vital is the storehouse of energy and supports all dynamic human action. Vital is a necessary force for without it nothing can be created in the bodily existence. It revels in the ‘drama of life’ and seeks to enjoy the pleasures and even the sufferings—luxuriating in the ‘touch of tears’ in things. In ordinary life, the vital needs the control of the mind or mental-will, for else it is likely to run amok in its indiscriminate fulfilment of desires and impulses. The collaboration of the vital being is needed for growth and progress, for it is the source of dynamic power within an individual. However, the vital may withdraw its support if it finds a situation undesirable and a person may fall into depression and listlessness. It is a good instrument but a bad master and need not be killed and mutilated but purified and transformed, to be able to manifest the divine life-values.

The Mental Being: The human mind according to Sri Aurobindo (2005) is a preparatory consciousness which does not give us an access to the essential knowledge, as it is only an instrument of analysis and synthesis. It measures, cuts out forms from an indivisible whole and treats them as separate integers. The main

functions of the outer mind are sensation, perception, conception and creative thought. According to The Mother (2004c), the true role of the mind is its *formative and organising function* and even if it were to receive faithfully the inspirations from the higher and inner consciousness and formulate a detailed plan of action for manifestation, it would be fulfilling its instrumental function well. Another main role of the mind is its *controlling function* whereby it can through a purified power of reason and higher intellect, control the unenlightened impulses and desires of the vital being and give a more conscious direction to the process of decision making and choice of life values or ethics.

Interaction Between the Physical, Vital and Mental: Each plane of being—physical, vital and mental has its unique consciousness and qualities which are interconnected and interact with each other. The three, in interaction, constitute the surface nature and our actions and reactions are generally a confused mixture of these three parts of the being.

The Inner Being: Behind the surface or the frontal consciousness of the outer being, there is an inner or *subliminal consciousness* operating at all the three levels of the being—physical, vital and mental. These subliminal layers are: the inner mind, the inner vital and the inner physical. The inner mind is in touch with the Universal mind, the inner vital with the Universal life-forces and the inner physical with the Universal physical forces around us. Whereas the outer being knows things only indirectly from their outer touches as perceived through the senses and the outer mind, the inner being is directly aware of the surrounding universal forces that act through us (Sri Aurobindo 1970). The inner being is connected with the outer through certain centres of consciousness known as the chakras of which we can become aware through the practice of yoga. The inner being supports the outer as though from behind a veil and even a little of the inner consciousness that escapes into the outer consciousness is responsible for higher knowledge, aesthetics, idealism and religious and spiritual inspirations. However, for the most part, this being lies asleep and it is the aim of yoga to awaken the inner being. Yoga immensely expands and widens the range of our consciousness that environs us as a transparent sheath (or the circumconscient) and brings the surface nature in touch with Cosmic Consciousness (Sri Aurobindo 1970, 2005).

The Inmost Being: This consists of two beings, the Psychic Being and the *Jivatman*. Sri Aurobindo (1970) uses the term ‘psychic being’ also known as the *Chaitya Purusha* for the inmost being which supports the outer and the inner being. The divine presence as a spark soul is present in all things and creatures and supports the manifested universe. This spark soul is undifferentiated to begin with but grows through the manifold experiences of the human being and takes the shape of the individualised *psychic being*. The psychic being supports the mind, vital and body from behind a veil, enriches itself by their experiences and carries the learning forward from one life to another.

Sri Aurobindo (1970) states “the psychic is the inmost being of all; a perception of truth which is inherent in the deepest substance of the consciousness, a sense of the good, true, beautiful, the Divine, is its privilege” (p. 269). It is the very nature of psychic being to turn to the Truth as a sunflower naturally turns to the sun and it

clings to all that is Divine and pure and draws back from all that is false and undivine. The psychic being is the source of the true *svabhava* or the true individuality and is capable of mastering the influences of external nature, circumstances and providing a conscious direction to life and destiny. It is a surer guide than the human intellect and the voice of the psychic needs to be distinguished from the voice of the conscience, i.e. the conventional morality that can err in its attempt to provide a direction to life. The call of the psychic is deeper and is rarely heard but once heard, it is wise to heed it even if one follows it imperfectly, rather than follow the dictates of voice of outer reason and conventional morality, for the path of the psychic is the ‘sunlit path’ capable of taking a person straight to the Divine Truth.

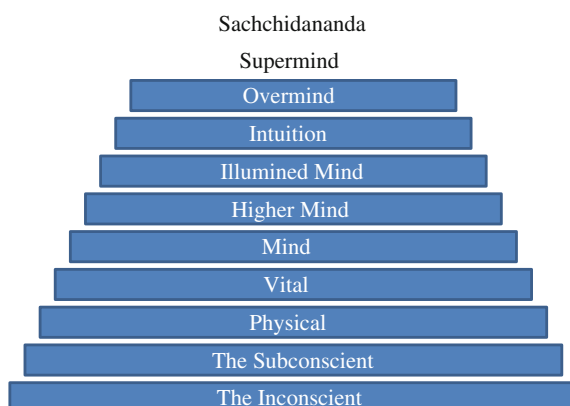
The *Jivatman* or *Spiritual Being*, is the Self-existent and Eternal Being that is seated above manifestation and is superior to birth and death. This Eternal True Being of the individual is also known as the *Jivatman*. While the psychic being takes part in human evolution and is essential for the transformation of the surface instruments, the *Jivatman* is a stable self-concentration of the Divine within us, which does not take part in evolution but supports it from above. The realisation of the *Jivatman* brings with it the experience of liberation and the unity of the Individual Self with the Universal and the Transcendent Self. The *Jivatman* or the *central being* puts forward a representative of itself on each plane of consciousness. On the mental plane it is called the *true mental being*, on the vital plane the *true vital being*, and on the physical plane the *true physical being* (Sri Aurobindo 1970).

Purusha and Prakriti: The first three aspects of the outer being, i.e. mind, vital and body are the aspects of Nature or *Prakriti* and the inmost being, i.e. the psychic being and the true mental being, true vital and the true physical—constitute the *Purusha*. The relationship between the *Purusha* and the *Prakriti* or between the Soul and Nature is the most fascinating and mysterious relations in the cosmos. The relation of the *Purusha* (He) and *Prakriti* (She) is thus described in ‘*Savitri*’:

The Two who are one are the secret of all power,
 The Two who are one are the might and right in things.
 His soul, silent, supports the world and her,
 His acts are her commandment’s registers.
 Happy, inert, he lies beneath her feet:
 His breast he offers for her cosmic dance
 Of which our lives are the quivering theatre,
 And none could bear but for his strength within,
 Yet none would leave because of his delight.
 (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 63)

The *Prakriti*, supported by the passive *Purusha* is restlessly engaged in the act of creation—i.e. names, forms and movements. *Prakriti* creates in essence, for the delight of the *Purusha*. Whatever the *Purusha* sanctions, the *Prakriti* preserves and whatever *Purusha* refuses, it destroys. Whatever the *Purusha* consents to, the *Prakriti* imposes on Him and exults in its mastery but eventually concedes to His

Fig. 2.2 The vertical system—Source Dalal (2001 p. xxi). Reproduced with permission from Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry



final wishes. Their mutual play is both the secret motive and the executive force of all existence in the Universe (Sri Aurobindo 1970). It is this play that leads to the change in nature through yoga or a conscious connection with the *Purusha* within. The *evolution in Ignorance* is converted into the *evolution in Knowledge* as the veil between them thins and the command and mastery of the *Purusha* is directly perceived by *Prakriti* and gladly acceded to—leading to their divine marriage and consummation.

2.2.2 The Planes of the Being

A look at the vertical scheme reveals that the existence of different planes of being is arranged like a staircase, of which our conscious mind is just a single term (Fig. 2.2).

In psychoanalysis, all that lies outside the range of ordinary mental consciousness is indiscriminately known as the ‘unconscious’ (Dalal 2001). However, Sri Aurobindo (1970) differentiates between the layers that lie outside the mental consciousness. The layers below the conscious human perception are the Inconscious and the Subconscious and the layer above is the Superconscious. There is also the subliminal layer of Consciousness which refers to the inner being (see Sect. 2.2.1).

The Inconscious: The Inconscious is sometimes known as the Non-Being or *Asat* and is characterised by darkness, inertia, insensibility, disharmony and disintegration. It harbours forces that are interested in the maintenance of all the negations of the Divine—error, unconsciousness, pain, suffering, obscurity, death, weakness, illness, disharmony and evil. Yet, at the very base of all that, the Divine is involved and is pressing to evolve into Light, Consciousness, Power, Perfection, Beauty and Love (Sri Aurobindo 1970).

The Subconscious: This is the half-conscious part in us. ‘Sub’ means ‘below’ the consciousness. In the Subconscious, there is an obscure mind full of obstinate *saṃskāras*, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations, nervous reactions, a most obscure material that governs much that has to do with the conditions of the body. It is largely responsible for our illnesses. Chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the Subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself on the body consciousness. The Subconscious is the cause why people say that character cannot be changed, and the cause also of constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of forever. All that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of, sinks down there and remains as a seed ready to surge up or sprout at any moment. (Sri Aurobindo 1970)

The Superconscious: The higher levels of consciousness that are above the ordinary mind are known as the Superconscious. These layers in the ascending order are—Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuitive Mind, Overmind, Supermind and the Supreme Reality called *Sachchidananda* (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss).

The ordinary human thinks in a step by step, linear fashion. It is like a camera whose narrow shutter takes one picture at a time. The nature of the human mind is separative and it thinks in terms of contradictions. If a fact is true then its opposite must be false, if something is good then its opposite must be bad. In the higher layers of the mind, the shutter through which one can view reality widens and one can see the past, present and future in a single glance. The contradictions between Truth–Falsehood and Good–Bad are resolved in a higher light where one is able to view Ignorance as a *Truth that is in evolution*. The change of consciousness from thinking through contradictions and paradoxes of the mind to thinking in terms of complementaries, marks the ascension of consciousness. The nature of consciousness progressively becomes more and more *global* in nature. The higher Truth does not cancel the lower truth but fulfils and perfects it and the timeless and the temporal become two complementary aspects of the Divine Play (Satprem 1968).

At each level of the *ascension* of consciousness, there is a *widening* of the field and perspective, an influx of progressively higher light and the entire lower being gets reconstituted, *integrated* and harmonised in its Light. There are *four* main levels of ascension, each with a different grade of substance and energy of the spiritual being (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

For an aspirant of the higher Light, the heightening of the consciousness is like climbing progressive developmental steps to the highest peak—the Supramental Consciousness. These steps are:

The Higher Mind: The first step out of the of obscurity and half-light of the human mind takes us into the spiritual mind which does not think in linear fashion and can combine many different perspectives which may seem mutually contradictory—into an integral-global view. There is a mass-ideation whereby ideas are phalanxed into higher synthesis which opens a new way of knowing and being. Thus, in addition to the aspect of cognition, the experience of life itself changes—joy lasts longer, love

becomes deeper, wider, more unconditional in nature and the body more plastic and ready to resist the suggestion of illness. While opening into this plane of mind is a great leap for the human consciousness, from the perspective of the still higher stages, the light of higher mind seems to be a little cold and its knowledge is based on a few points of light which can be consumed or lost, when logicised and converted into ordered knowledge.

The Illumined Mind: The next gradation of mind is the illumined mind—where one emerges into a wide calm spiritual light. Mind here moves beyond the realm of thought and does its work through the agency of spiritual vision or sight. There is a downpour of inwardly visible light which brings down with it the ‘enthusiasmos’ or the spiritual energy which reconstitutes life and body in its light-body and its cells become more open to receiving the spiritual light, and life-force opens to a new rapture and a new peace.

The Intuitive Mind: The Higher Mind and the Illumined Mind depend for their action on the next gradation of mind which is the Intuitive Mind. The intuitive knowing is closer to Knowledge by Identity whereby through the identity between the subject and the object is born a swift intuitive insight as a vibration of Truth. Intuition here has *four powers*—the power of revelation through Truth—seeing, the power of Truth—hearing or inspiration, the power of Truth—touch or the capacity to seize the Truth immediately and the power of immediate discrimination of the exact relation of truth with truth. These flashes of intuition are much more transparent than the action of the Higher Mind and are in us like a gaze or a projecting blade of the Supermind. The action of intuition is that of Truth—revelation—it is like a memory of a Truth—a memory of a Reality which we have not as yet seen.

In the human consciousness, a flash of intuition breaks into the realm of Ignorance. This flash of intuition is often incapable of being sustained because of the infrarational aspects of the mind which open it to misinterpretation and distortion.

Yet all that can be sustained takes the form of poetry, high philosophy or inspiration for seeking religious-spiritual truths. A stable ascent to the intuitive plane gives an individual the capacity to respond to the mass of intuitions which can effectuate the swift transformation of the very substance of the mind, life and body. However, as the Intuitive Mind is only a delegate of the Supermind, it does not as yet have the capacity of transforming the Subconscious and the Inconscious and its action is hampered in these nether realms of consciousness.

The Overmind: The next step of the heightening of the consciousness is that of the Overmind where the aspirant taps the Cosmic Consciousness. The descent of this consciousness can make a person lose the sense of individuality and ego. There is also the possibility that instead of a sense of diffusion of identity, a person retains the sense of individuality and yet has the experience of seeing the entire universe *in the self* and *as its own self*. This is the summit of the spiritual ascent in the lower hemisphere—its nature is Cosmic but its action still not Integral in nature as the Cosmic Consciousness has as its base the play of all the multiple possibilities—each of which is worked out in its *own separate line of fulfilment*.

All the different religions and spiritual faith are multifarious expressions of the Divine in this consciousness. In this consciousness, which widens to Infinity, there are all possibilities of Divine Play—i.e. of sporting with the cosmos in Delight.

While the Overmental consciousness can enter, dynamise and widen the conscious being of a person, its action still remains obstructed in decisively transforming the Inconscient—for there remains a tendency of the old nature to return to its older ebb and tides—the older habit patterns of aggression and other deformations of nature. For this, the aspirant needs to make another tremendous leap—a leap that takes a person even beyond the spiritual transformation afforded by the Overmind—to the Supramental Consciousness.

The Supermind: The ascension of the consciousness to Supermind is the journey of the aspirant of Truth to look beyond the darkness of Ignorance and Falsehood inherent in ordinary human consciousness which manifests as suffering and pain. While the aspirant encounters the Truth at each level of ascension and can reconstitute its being in its Light, the powers of the Nescience cannot be victoriously overcome without an ascension to the highest Supramental consciousness. The Supramental consciousness contains the highest power of Love which can penetrate even the darkest resistance of material nature and can be the saviour of consciousness. This is possible as the Supramental consciousness is of the nature of Consciousness-Force or *Chit Shakti*—i.e. it has the power of immediate effectuation of all that can be divinely conceived. This is the nature of the *Gnostic* Consciousness that will become the basis of a future Gnostic Life or a Life Divine on earth, as it has the capacity to join the material and the spiritual—the union of which has the capacity of even overcoming death (Sri Aurobindo 2005; Satprem 1968).

According to The Mother (2004c), the Supramental Force manifested in the earth consciousness on 29 February, Aurobindo and Mother 1956, and has been working since to create new developmental pathways in individual and collective consciousness, building a New Future. The work is silent and may be apparent only to aspirants who are integrally committed to attempt this divine adventure—and more and more children of Future arrive who have their eye only on the Highest Light that will usher in a greater dawn. Sri Aurobindo (1997a) saw a vision of the children of the Future:

I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality. (pp. 343–344).

These are the hero-children who will forge the new developmental pathways. They will not be scared—and like warriors will be able to fearlessly examine their own human weaknesses that are a result of Ignorance and Falsehood and will overcome them with the power and the intensity of their aspiration, will and calm.

They will be open within their being to new possibilities of a Divine Creation—and their consciousness will be the *House of the Spirit* where the power of Love ever creates new ways of relating and being.

I find that the need for self-knowledge and self-control has become stronger in a significant section of contemporary youth who look for deeper ways to integrate their personality and yearn to find within them the personal resources that will help them give a conscious direction to their lives. A new vision of human development based on Sri Aurobindo's understanding of humanity discussed above, can provide a framework through which one can understand and facilitate the need for conscious self-growth of humanity.

2.3 Developmental Implications of Sri Aurobindo's Perspective on Personality

Sri Aurobindo's conception of the structure and expanse of the human person has a capacity to act as the base to develop a new perspective of development. The main implications of this perspective are:

2.3.1 A Comprehensive and Complex Understanding of Human Nature and Its Development

Sri Aurobindo's view of the planes and parts of the being is sketched on wide, deep and multi-layered canvas that encompasses all aspects of human experience. There is no part of human experience that it ignores as a part of the Divine Creation. It attempts to locate each aspect of human experience in its legitimate place, to provide a comprehensive view of human nature. It is a vision of *a complete psychology* which demands the mastery and perfection of both the inner and outer realms of experience.

The understanding of surface nature—i.e. the outer physical being, the vital being and the mental being—have dominated the academic discipline of Human Development. Sri Aurobindo's perspective pushes beyond the outer fronts of the external nature and reveals to view the complexity and richness of inner realms which influence the surface nature from behind the veil. In terms of dimensions of development, it provides the understanding of the dynamics of *deepening* the consciousness through the agency of the psychic being, *widening* it to the Universal and the Cosmic Consciousness and *heightening* it progressively through different planes of consciousness to the Supramental heights.

While many of the currently popular developmental frameworks use the society as the ultimate macrocosm within which the individual is located (e.g. Ecological theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner and Socio-historical theory by Lev Vygotsky), the

development of the individual when viewed from Sri Aurobindo's perspective unfolds within the Cosmic dimension. While an individual is a unit that contains the society and is created by it according to socio-historical theories, the individual in Sri Aurobindo's view contains within the self the entire developmental potential of the cosmos which that person can experience and *be* through ascension to the higher stages of consciousness.

The conception of the psychic being is unique and extremely valuable as it acts as inner psychological centre that has the capacity of unifying and harmonising the different parts and planes of the being. Sri Aurobindo's framework thus moves beyond just enumerating the different aspects and dimensions of development but provides powerful psychological tools or levers through which a person can aid development (For details see [Sect. 2.5](#)).

The detailing of the different planes and parts of the being are done with a minuteness and complexity attained through the direct vision and yogic perception of Sri Aurobindo. For instance, the detailing of the different planes of consciousness and the way in which each level reconstitutes the being of a spiritual aspirant through the developmental principles of ascent, widening and integration, is in my view unparalleled as a vision of higher development even within the yogic literature. Further, as this perspective is based on direct experience and veridical perception of Reality and not a derivative of the intellectual mind, it becomes more powerful in providing a framework through which we can attempt to make sense of the complex influences that shape our lives.

2.3.2 *A Developmental Science of Human Subjectivity*

Not only is this perspective comprehensive in nature in terms of the aspects and dimensions of development, but also stunning in its exactitude as a yogic-psychological developmental science. Each part and plane of the being represents a particular quality and concentration of the evolving Divine Consciousness—which makes psychology essentially a science of studying the operations of *consciousness on consciousness*. The entire process of human development from birth to death, from birth to birth and future potential of Life Divine on Earth can be viewed as a science from this perspective.

Sri Aurobindo (1970) in his 'Letters on Yoga' has commented on the complexity with which the different planes and parts of the being interact with each other. For each individual, the method of taking the next step of development can be decided based on the comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence us so that we can find a way forward that is conscious in nature, higher in its synthesis and uniquely suited to our needs. Thus, ascension of consciousness to a higher level is a key method whereby a higher grade of consciousness is invoked to purify and integrate a lower form of consciousness.

The characteristics of the mental (*sattva* or light), vital (*rajas* or kinetic energy) and (*tamas* or inertia) in the surface nature are for instance in continuous play with

each other with the mind as a higher power that can control the recalcitrant wishes of the vital and inertia of the physical being through its calm light of reason. For example, a person who has diabetes and craving for sweets may listen to the calm voice of the mind which can explain to the vital instincts patiently as to a rebellious child that indulgence in such desire can only lead one to the verge of disaster.

However, the calm light of reason has a limited sphere of action and can help a person only *cope* with the forces of the nature to which that person is subject. A deeper level of *consciousness* needs to be invoked—the psychic being which can free a person from the limitations of outer mechanical nature and transform it. The psychic being is the guiding star within that can lift a person to its higher destiny by freeing a person from the shackles of mechanical temperament, past formations, habits, inclinations, preferences. It gives the outer nature a higher truth which is its own—a *true* mental vital and physical created through a deepest Divine interplay of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Through this interplay, the *tamas* or inertia get replaced by a divine peace and repose which act as solid matrix capable of sustaining the play of action and knowledge. *Rajas* is replaced by self-possessed power which retains its force even in the midst of even the most intense action or opposition which does not disturb the block of peace that has come to occupy the entire being of the person. *Sattva* gets converted into spiritual illumination and bliss that springs from the soul and brings to the mind direct and authentic knowledge sourced from the Omniscience of the Divine (Sri Aurobindo 1999b).

Thus the method of transformation is through *operations of consciousness on consciousness* through which an individual attempts to understand the subjective nature and mobilises the divine forces lying latent within the self that can give the limited personality the possibility of achieving cosmic dimensions and a transmutation into a nature Divine.

2.3.3 Ascent as a Basis of Descent of Divine Consciousness

In Sri Aurobindo's developmental scheme, the darker and unrefined portions of the self that lie repressed within the subconscious or cause us distress by bursting into our consciousness as uncontrollable feelings rage, aggression, anxiety and depression in their mild or more serious manifestations, need not be confronted directly in order to fathom their source and to heal them. The method of direct confrontation is not likely to work as the being of the person has not created sufficient higher resources within itself that have the force that can dissolve these weaknesses. This is the reason that Sri Aurobindo (1970) found Psychoanalysis to be an incomplete system of thought and healing for it attempts to heal the unconscious through the limited resources of the surface ego. The surface ego does not have the capacity to take the bull by the horns and strike at the root of the problem eliminating it from the very being of the person. For this, one needs to ascend progressively to higher states of consciousness and create in the being receptivity for the descent of the Truth-Light and Truth-Force which can penetrate

the problems and transform the Nature. Viewed from this perspective, even a person with manifold problems need not lose heart by continuously contemplating them but needs to keep his eye constantly on the Light which when it becomes dynamic within the being can give a person the most valuable tool through which that person can confront and throw out the problems.

Even the ascent to the Higher Mind brings with it the capacity to view the problem through the exercise of the inner detachment, a more global understanding of the nature of the problem and dynamic ways of dealing with it. The ascent to still higher grades of consciousness is likely to progressively free the person from the mechanical rounds of nature and the highest Supramental consciousness has the capacity to eliminate the problem from its Inconscient roots and make the entire being a sea of bliss and peace that can remain ever in the Divine Consciousness.

2.3.4 Development Through the Connection of the Spiritual and the Material

The main implication of Sri Aurobindo's conception of the human person and its developmental possibilities is that it connects the realms of the spiritual and the material which have been sundered apart not only by western psychological thought but even by the eastern approaches which view the body as an unpurified outer cover that has to be discarded by the soul in order to attain *mukti* or liberation. According to Sri Aurobindo (1997a), the material body too has the capacity of containing and *remembering God* and the very nature of cells of the body can be infused with the powers of Love, Peace, Light and Force of the Divine Consciousness. The organisation of material life—in its values of both simplicity and richness of artistic expression—is essential for a life based on divine values. It is the psychic being which holds the key to the connection between the spiritual and the material realms for it is the psychic being which contains the capacity for the highest Divine Love that can with its Force even spiritualize matter. Thus it can be said—“*Consciousness is indeed the creatrix of the universe, but love is its saviour*” (The Mother 2002 p. 65).

In human terms, this means that the body must not be mutilated or ignored but its capacities need to be developed to their fullest such that it progressively becomes the ideal *adhaar* or base which is plastic and malleable, capable of manifesting the values of Divine Consciousness and capable of holding the descent of Bliss and Power of the Divine Consciousness.

2.3.5 Human Being as the Divine-in-the-Making

In Sri Aurobindo's developmental scheme, even the ordinary human consciousness is a major evolutionary achievement and a part of the hidden plan contained within the Supermind that guides the evolution of the human species. It is the development of the capacities of the Mind that have been the defining step forward for human consciousness distinguishing it from the animal consciousness. The challenge for humanity now is to consolidate the gains of emergence of the mental principle in evolution and recognise the limitations of functioning through this plane of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's (1970) conception of the planes and parts of the human person reveals the frontiers of the Infinite and Eternal consciousness that need to be conquered beyond the mental consciousness.

The main characteristic of this journey is that all that is valuable and useful in the ordinary human consciousness is not to be discarded but purified and integrated into a higher stage of consciousness. All effort that is sincere in this scheme of things is bound to be preserved as a possibility of future divine manifestation. This is an endeavour where a person needs to shake off from the self all the weaknesses of fatalistic thinking and boldly attempt to give shape to destiny. For if there is a Divine guidance in evolution, then we are ever safe in lap of the Divine even though life when viewed through limited resources of the mind may seem unjust and unfair to the outer eye. There is a need to persevere and have faith and aspiration in such dark periods, for when we are lifted above the clouds of doubt and despair, we may find clearer and brighter skies that we never imagined existed. All human struggles to challenge its own limitations are Divine (religious and secular) and the entire field of life in this sense is a vast yoga of Nature.

2.4 Moving Towards a Divine or Gnostic Individuality: Developmental Aspects and Dynamics

In the Integral perspective, growth through Ignorance and Knowledge are both aspects of divinely guided process of evolution (for further details see [Chap. 5](#)). This has implications for understanding the way in which we can understand the process of formation of individual being based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's evolutionary perspective. The Human and the Divine are the two-players-in-one whose mutual sport leads to the emergence of the Divine Individuality:

A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:
His nature we must put on as he put ours;
We are sons of God and must be even as he:
His human portion, we must grow divine...
(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 67)

The Human and the Divine are bound to each other in a deep mutual debt. The Divine paid its debt in Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary plan by its original sacrifice or

holocaust through which it involved itself in the deepest Inconscient in an act of deep Divine Love. The debt of the human individual is paid when the Divine is discovered within the depth of its own being and surrenders its being to the power of its Divine Love—to be reconstituted in its Light as a Divine Being, a True or a Gnostic Individuality.

2.4.1 From Human Individuality to Gnostic Individuality

The Mother (2004b) states that the formation of the human Individuality is the *first victory*, the *second victory* is to offer this individuality to the Divine and the *third victory* is that the divine takes possession of the human individuality and transforms it into its own image to form a Divine or True or Gnostic Individuality. We cannot hope to become Divine Individuals, if we have not developed the human capacities to their fullest or having developed the human individuality, if we fail to offer it to the Divine.

Most of the traditional yogas stop at this second step of offering the individuality to the Divine and attaining to liberation from all human bondages as a consequence. According to The Mother (2004b), this is an incomplete story, for the act of offering of human individuality can be a precursor to the third step—i.e. transformation of human nature and a new creation of its being as a Divine Personality.

2.4.1.1 The Growth of the Individuality

The formation of the human individual is subject to many forces and the consciousness of an individual gets its first form through the prenatal influences—i.e. *even before birth* (The Mother 2002).

Prenatal Development: The first crucible within which the consciousness of the child gets formed is the consciousness of the mother. The intensity of the aspiration of the parents has a capacity of bringing to them just the soul that they are meant to nurture and help grow. During the pregnancy, the influences that the mother opens herself to are the first formative influences for the child. An atmosphere of beauty, harmony and positive imagination in the mother can help the consciousness of the child in its initial blossoming.

The Mother (2004a) points out that the task of *true maternity* is the:

...conscious creation of a being, with the willed shaping of a soul coming to develop and utilise a new body... To bear a child and construct his body almost subconsciously is not enough. The work really commences when, by the power of thought and will, we conceive and create a character capable of manifesting an idea. (p. 157).

The *samskāras* given by the parents remain with the child, embedded within the Subconscient and the Inconscient and pose a major challenge for the future

transformation of human nature. The more conscious the process of the creation of the child, the lesser is the number of mechanical *saṃskāras* and atavisms that the child has to overcome in order to attain to a Divine Individuality.

The Emergence of Capacities: The child, according to Sri Aurobindo (1997b), is a soul meant for growth. The child is not the property of its parents to be moulded, trained and cut into a shape that the parents, teachers or the society wish it to be, in accordance with their own limited ideas. Each child comes to the world with its own unique potential and it is the task of the parents and teachers to give the child an environment where it can find its own special place and work in the world, in line with its own inner divine nature (Sri Aurobindo 1997b). The soul or the psychic quality is very dominant in a young child. It can be seen in the intensity with which children can fathom other people's feelings, in their capacity to spontaneously tell the truth based on the direct perception reality, their innocence and their illimitable capacity for wonder. However, the development of the mental capacities creates a veil which can cover this psychic quality (The Mother 2003a). While the emergence of the capacities of the mind is a great evolutionary gain, there is a need to keep alive this inner psychic flame, for only it has the capacity to overcome the limitations of the mind and take the evolutionary step forward.

In addition to keeping the psychic flame alive, it also is important to perfect the outer instruments—the physical, the vital and the mental so that they become fit to become the instruments of the Divine.

The Development of the Physical: The physical being of the child has to be made plastic and malleable and imbued with the qualities of good health, strength, balance and beauty. For this, a method of physical culture needs to be evolved that can help in controlling and disciplining the body, a harmonious development of all the different parts of the body and an early correction of defects and deformities of the body. The body needs to overcome all fear and be able to repel the attacks of illness. The habits of food need to be oriented towards nutrition and an attitude cultivated of eating for one's need and not for greed. Adequate periods of rest and sleep too have to be made available to the child. The ideal of the physical is the ideal of beauty—a love of beauty not for the sake of seeking admiration from others but for the sake of beauty itself (The Mother, 2002).

The Development of the Vital: The development of the vital is the task of refining the life energy through which we operate in the world. The vital operates generally on the principle of desire and seeks opportunities to fulfil those desires. The problem here is that seeking of happiness is likely to create a shadow where our desires are not met—a shadow of suffering. The vital being needs to be convinced slowly and with much perseverance that the satisfaction of desires or happiness is not the aim of life—the aim of life is found in the *delight* that is experienced when we are able to detach ourselves from desire and offer our being to a higher truth. The refinement of senses and conscious development of the aesthetic capacities has a way of ensuring that a person is spontaneously able to respond to all that is noble, lofty and healthy and rejects all that is vulgar, base and perverse.

Further, the *character* that we are born with is not fixed and can indeed be changed and ways need to be found to make a detailed observation of one's own character and change its propensities consciously, wherever required. The capacity of *will* is of key importance in change of character. The Mother (2002) states that the capacity of will can be developed methodically, just as we develop our muscles. The optimum development of the vital presents the most difficult challenge which has to be accepted if one hopes ever to be master of oneself—capable of manifesting the Divine Will within one's own being.

The Development of the Mind: The optimum development of mind generally is limited in our education system to the development of the capacities of memory and analysis. However, according to The Mother (2002), there are five phases in development of the human mind which not only help in the flowering of all its capacities but also make the mind an instrument for seeking the true purpose of life. The *first* phase is the development of the capacities of concentration and attention for with the help of this capacity, a person becomes capable of penetrating, understanding and resolving the difficult problems of life. The *second* phase is that of widening the mind and exposing it to the richness and complexity of varied perspectives. Once the person has developed both the capacities of concentration and the wideness of the mind, it reaches the *third* phase, where it is in the position to choose for itself the highest and the most luminous ideal that can organise all the different and contradictory perspectives and give a sure direction to life and action. The role of the mind does not end here. The *fourth* phase demands a consistent rejection of all the distracting thoughts which can take one away from one's chosen goal or ideal. The *fifth* phase requires the development of the capacity of silence and perfect calm for only through mental silence can one hear the whispers of the Gods.

The Development of the Moral and Ethical Nature: Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo and Mother 1956) points out that there are three aspects to the development of a person's moral fibre—the emotions; the *samskāras* or the fixed habits and associations; and the *svabhava* or the inner nature. The best way to develop the moral nature is to encourage the child to feel spontaneously the noblest emotions, follow the best mental, vital and physical habits that are in harmony with its essential *svabhava*. The way is not through exerting pressure of externally imposed rules but through personal example and influence; not through commanding and imposing but through suggesting and inviting.

In evolutionary terms, one may classify the *human conduct* according to four ascending levels (Sri Aurobindo 1999b). On the *first level*, human action is largely guided by personal need, preference and desire. The *second level* is the operation through the principle of the good of the collectivity. The *third level* is the conduct based on the ideal ethic that has been constructed by the mind and the *fourth level* is the conduct based on the inner adherence to the highest divine law of nature.

In the process of evolution, the first two levels are the guiding levels for a vital and physical-animal human being. The person pressing towards a separate identity initially operates by the principle of desire and preference. However, as it cannot assure the satisfaction of its needs except in conjunction with others in the society,

there emerges a need also to consider the good of the society in which a person lives. The law of the social good, however, remains external to a person's being as it is a law of necessity and a person is not impelled to follow it. When a person decides to operate through the mind and follows its higher light in terms of determining the conduct, there emerges the internal law of the ideal ethic which is based on qualities of "justice, righteousness, love, right reason, right power, beauty and light" (Sri Aurobindo 1999b p. 198). The discipline here is no longer socially imposed but self-imposed. The ideal ethic ennobles and elevates the consciousness of a person but it does not deliver him to the Truth, for it operates on the basis of the limited light of the human mind and its ideas. Moving beyond the realm of the mind, into the higher realms of spiritual and Supramental realities, the mind's limited moral formulas disappear in the white flame of direct experience of the Divine Law of Being. This law is based on the perfection of relation between one being and all other beings in Nature's varied and essential Oneness. It is at once an imperative law which the human aspirant cannot but follow in absolute freedom.

The operation of the first three levels of human conduct mark the developmental trajectory of the human individualisation process, the fourth level is the leap into the Divine individuality.

2.4.1.2 The Challenges of Individualisation

The progressive emergence of the capacities the physical, vital, mental and moral-ethical being, optimised and facilitated by able teachers and parents can help a person achieve the first victory—the victory of having attained to a formed individuality.

The Mother (2004d) points out that this is a major achievement as most of us are not even sufficiently individualised. Our consciousness is often like a public square through which pass many varied influences which invade our being without us even being conscious of it. We can feel nervous, moody or sad even without knowing the reason why. We are not the creators of our own being but just reactors to these external influences and our personality is a loose conglomeration of these reactions. In The Mother's (2003c) words—"One needs years of very attentive, very careful, very reasonable, very coherent work, organisation, selection, construction, in order to succeed simply in forming, oh, simply this little thing, one's own way of thinking!" (p. 258). The capacity to remain individualised within the inferior consciousness of mass collectivity and even to form consciously one's own way of thinking is the challenge of individualization—a challenge that requires years of consistent and conscious work. When one can listen to anything, read anything, hear anything without changing, then we can say that such person has become a well-knit organised individuality. Only when this work of individualization is complete, one is in a position to offer it to the Divine.

The Paradox of Life: In the process of individualization, the very aspects of personality that have helped us grow can after a certain point become a hindrance in further development. To the mind, this appears as a paradox—i.e. two mutually

contradictory ideas—both of which have a certain truth in the evolutionary journey. Some of the paradoxes of life (Sri Aurobindo 1998) which can only be resolved through offering of one's consciousness to the Divine *in my own understanding* as based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works are:

Ego was the Helper, Ego is the Bar: A fundamental paradox of the human situation is the paradox of the human ego. Ego is needed for the evolutionary emergence of the human individuality at a particular stage and becomes a hindrance to our progress at another stage of evolution. It is the human ego comprising of a combination of the mental, vital and physical characteristics that at the level surface consciousness gives shape to the personality of a growing individual—i.e. a sense of self, our likes, dislikes, psychological characteristics, etc. This sense of identity essentially emerges through a process of social comparison whereby there is an attempt to see oneself as similar to and different from the others. The tendency of the ego-based consciousness is to view one's own self as the centre of one's existence. This consciousness creates the category of the 'other' whereby all other individuals are seen as fundamentally separate from one's own self and can be known only imperfectly through the human means of communication. This creates a world where all human relations are marred by a sense of strife, of defining and redefining the boundaries of our ego, as we struggle with our expectations from each other. It is our ideas, our preferences and our favoured modes of being and relating that makes 'us' or the 'ego' and it seems impossible for us to let it go—for in doing so—would we not be letting go of our own self—our own very individuality. It is in this context, that Sri Aurobindo says—

When we have passed beyond individualising, then we shall be real Persons. Ego was the helper; Ego is the bar (Sri Aurobindo 1998, p. 199).

For paradoxically, there is another deeper aspiration in the human being—a need to reclaim the fundamental unity with all human beings. In my view, an examination of the highest aspirations of different cultures reveals this to be a fundamental aspiration towards which the humanity as a whole aspires. It is when such an aspiration is face to face with the ego-based identity that an individual experiences the latter as hindrance in growth—and there is an aspiration for something more—a greater love, a greater power to govern one's being, rather than the limited circle of the human ego. It is here that begins the aspiration for the reversal consciousness. This however is not possible as long as the guiding light for human progress comes from the mental consciousness.

Reason was the Helper, Reason is the Bar: The ego-based individuality is rooted in functioning of the human mind. To reiterate the words of Sri Aurobindo (2005):

Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as an integer...It conceives, perceives, senses things as if rigidly cut out from a background or a mass and employs them as fixed units of the material given to it for creation or possession... Mind may divide, multiply, add, subtract, but it cannot get beyond the limits of this mathematics. If it goes beyond and tries to conceive a real whole, it loses itself in a foreign element; it falls from its own firm

ground into the ocean of the intangible, into the abysses of the infinite where it can neither perceive, conceive, sense nor deal with its subject for creation and enjoyment. (pp. 173–174)

The emergence of the human mind is the result of an aspiration in evolving physical and vital consciousness to know its own self and emerge out of unconsciousness and obscurity. Its process of knowing is to cut out something from the vague unknown and then examine it within the delimited boundaries through a process of measurement. This is the scope of human reason and the scientific thinking that is based on it. However, the mind does not *really know* for it can only know the parts and their relation to each other but does not know the nature of the whole from which it has cut out those parts. It is here that it collapses under the weight of its own reason. Yet it has an important evolutionary function to fulfil according to Sri Aurobindo (2005):

The utmost mission of Mind is to train our obscure consciousness which has emerged out of the dark prison of Matter, to enlighten its blind instincts, random intuitions, vague perceptions till it shall become capable of this greater light and this higher ascension. (p. 136)

However the mind is a passage, it is not a culmination of the evolutionary process. We can see how the mind aids the emergence of the ‘self’ through a process of self-representations and self-constructions and helps the consciousness to emerge out the largely instinctual consciousness with which it was born. It helps in giving the emerging external individuality form by equipping it with a power of self-direction and self determination and helps it overcome and emerge out of the subconscious and the Inconscient forces and give a definite shape to an ‘identity’. This is the way in which the power of mind and reason help and assist the evolutionary movement of the consciousness.

However the limits of the mental consciousness often become glaringly apparent when the power of reason is not able to resolve any of the fundamental questions of human existence related to our origin and the true purpose of our being. The ‘reasonably constructed’ universe collapses and one is forced to examine the limits of the mental boundaries within which we know our own selves. The mind knows its own ‘constructions’ and ‘representations’ to be based on an unsure ground for the human mental consciousness can analyse and synthesise but it does not have access to the essential knowledge which is indivisible in nature. It can ‘construct’ an understanding of situations based on its ‘representations’ of experience but there is no surety that these constructions tap the Truth. It can separate and weave together strands of data in different permutations and combinations and arrive at the best probability—however this probability is not necessarily the essential Truth. It is here that the evolving human consciousness either temporarily falls back disenchanted by failure of the limits of human reason into a feeling of self alienation and inherent meaninglessness of its own life and cosmos or else it aspires for a greater Light which can give it access to a sense of purpose in life and one’s place in the cosmos.

At the collective level, all disciplines of knowledge too arrive at this point—where there is a realisation that their self-delimited fields of enquiry leave the fundamental questions unanswered. Unable to deal with these questions with the help of mental consciousness, most ‘scientific’ disciplines today sidestep these fundamental questions by holding the position that these questions lie within the realm of ‘metaphysics’ which is often perceived as an exercise of fertile imagination and mental construction. The human mind cannot break out this circuitous and often self-destructive reasoning and the status quo remains—the conclusion being that we can only know reality within the boundaries that we have delimited for our own selves. The possibility that the human mind can evolve further and a new equilibrium is possible through a reversal of consciousness that can give a direct and intuitive access to the nature of Truth and Reality is not as yet widely accepted in the mainstream collective disciplines of inquiry and a door still remains shut. The way forward, according to Sri Aurobindo (1998), is

Transform reason into ordered intuition; let all thyself be light. This is thy goal (p. 199).

Desire was the Helper, Desire is the Bar: The ego-based personality is also rooted in the vital being which is essentially based on the principle of desire or the external desire soul. The vital is the source of power and is the basis of all our effort and willings. In the evolutionary scheme, the movement of desire helps the individual to self-affirm and enlarge its own self. It helps defeat the inertia in the being through a ‘will to be’ rather than a ‘will not to be’. In Sri Aurobindo’s (2005) words:

The attempt of the individual, the living atom, to maintain and aggrandize itself is the whole sense of Desire; a physical, vital, moral, mental increase by a more and more all-embracing experience, a more and more all-embracing possession, absorption, assimilation, enjoyment is the inevitable, fundamental, ineradicable impulse of Existence. (p. 206).

However, this impulse is not something that can possess securely the object of its desire. Desires on being fulfilled only multiply and what remains is a feeling of hunger that devours or consumes. It is the law of nature of the physical world that what devours is in its turn devoured and thus hunger of desire is marked by incapacity to possess and is marked by a feeling of perpetual strife and an eventual death through exhaustion of the vital impulse. This is a fundamental problem of human life and, Sri Aurobindo (2005) states that the only thing that can help us fulfil our desires is the desire for the Infinite. “Desire too can only cease rightly by becoming the desire of the Infinite and satisfying itself with a supernal fulfillment and an Infinite satisfaction in the all-possessing bliss of the Infinite” (p. 207). We can move towards this state only by transforming the Law of devouring or possession to a Law of Love or mutual self-giving.

Thus the task here is to untangle the paradox called life—separate the divine from the undivine, the true from the false, the egoistic from the non-egoistic, the ephemeral from the Eternal and the relative from the Absolute.

2.4.1.3 The Unification and Harmonisation of the Individual Being

Once the individual has taken a decision to offer its being to Divine, there is required the effort of making a shift from an ego-based individuality to an individuality that has the psychic being as its centre. The task of unification of the being has two major steps according to The Mother (2004f):

(a) Becoming aware of one's psychic being and (b) Putting before the psychic being, as one becomes aware of them, all one's movements, impulses, thoughts and acts of will, so that the psychic being may accept or reject each of these movements, impulses, thoughts or acts of will. Those that are accepted will be kept and carried out; those that are rejected will be driven out of the consciousness so that they may never come back again. (p. 414).

Developing Consciously: There are many psychological creases in our being and it takes a constant and a relentless effort to root out what is false, impure and ignorant within us. We may struggle with a problem in our nature and it may seem to disappear for a while only to make a re-entry in another form. Our untransformed nature is a battleground—where we have to be ever-vigilant of the ambushes of the hidden desires, ambitions masquerading as aspiration and ego driving the sacrifice. Many a war may have to be fought again and again till the time when very seed of the Falsehood which is responsible for the perversion of the Truth is removed from our nature. At times, we may seem to progress, then stop or even apparently seem to move backwards. The need here is to keep alive the faith that with a sincere and constant effort one would be able to effect a decisive change in consciousness whereby the Divine, in form of the psychic being, can come forward and be the leader of our being.

Organising the Multiple Sub-personalities: According to the Mother (2003b, 2004d), the task of the unification of the being is not easy as a person is a conglomerate of many sub-personalities, each having its own determinism, creating heterogeneity of the being. Sri Aurobindo (1997b) in this context notes:

...there are in our being many formal, frontal, apparent or representative selves and only one that is entirely secret and real; to rest in the apparent and to mistake it for the real is the one general error, root of all others and cause of all our stumbling and suffering, to which man is exposed by the nature of his mentality. (p. 44)

The 'formal, frontal or representative' selves may be the sub-personalities that have been externally constructed in response to the demand that society places on us and our own effort to fulfil these extraneous demands. The Mother (2003b, 2004e) states that these multiple sub-personalities may be ten or even twenty in number whereby a person behaves differently in different moods, situations, circumstances and with different persons. It often happens that we may do a significant amount of work within our being with the help of a sub-personality of a higher consciousness, and in a moment of unconsciousness, another lower sub-personality comes to the front and spoils all the work that has been done and one has to begin all over again. All the different sub-personalities have different determinisms and varied destinies which need to be organised for a person to be able to function as a single homogeneous being. The best method of organising the

being would be to gather and keep the consciousness at its highest summit at all times so that the highest destiny manifests, guided by our own psychic truth. In The Mother's (2004e) words:

The art of living would then consist in maintaining oneself in one's highest state of consciousness and thus allowing one's highest destiny to dominate the others in life and action. So one can say without any fear of making a mistake—be always at the summit of your consciousness and the best will always happen to you. But that is a maximum which is not easy to reach. If this ideal condition turns out to be unrealisable, the individual can at least, when he is confronted by a danger or a critical situation, call upon his highest destiny by aspiration, prayer and trustful surrender to the divine will. Then, in proportion to the sincerity of his call, this higher destiny intervenes favourably in the normal destiny of the being and changes the course of events insofar as they concern him personally. (pp. 288–289).

The complexity of human nature in its multiple aspects is, by itself, not a drawback. On the contrary, an individuality with highly developed multiple aspects is much superior to a person who is not sufficiently widened and lacks the complexity of perspective. A person who lacks the wideness of perspective is like a simple musical instrument on which only four or five different notes can be played but a fully developed individual is like a keyboard on which all the notes can be played or like a magnificent orchestra with hundreds of musicians. Such an orchestra may be difficult to control and organise but if such a person manages to consecrate and unify the self around the psychic being, it increases the richness of the Divine or the True Individuality (The Mother 2003c).

The Key to Divine Individuality: The Psychic Being: The key to moving beyond the ignorant surface consciousness lies in hearing the quiet voice of the Divine within—the inner guru or the psychic being which is capable of providing us a sure basis of discriminating the true from the false and opening to us to the possibility of a consciousness that can know through Identity the Truth of a phenomena. The Divine gives each person its own unique way of self-expression which is revealed as its divinely individualised nature and is manifested at all three levels—the Individual, the Universal or the World Personality and a unique relationship with the Transcendent Divine. With the emergence of the psychic consciousness, a *radical reversal* takes place and the boundaries of ego truly disappear. Through a process of progressive psychicisation, spiritualisation and supramentalisation of the consciousness, there emerges the possibility of the experience of the True Integral Unity—which our limited mental consciousness cannot conceive or experience.

2.5 The Transformation of Consciousness: Methods and Processes

Sri Aurobindo uses the word 'transformation' in a special way. This word is used to refer to a strong, assured and irreversible step forward in human evolution which brings a new principle of evolution in action. It refers to a change as radical

in terms of its significance as the change that took place when the mental beings first evolved from the animal-vital consciousness. The step forward in evolution beyond human mental consciousness is taken through the three radical reversals of consciousness, the triple transformation—i.e. psychicisation, spiritualisation and supramentalisation of the being. This transformation can be brought about by inner psychological levers of change which are yogic in nature.

2.5.1 The Integral Yoga and the Psychological Levers of Change

2.5.1.1 The Integral Yoga

Unlike the past yogas, the way of *Integral* yoga is not to deny life, and have an ascetic shrinking from it as an illusion or seek liberation from it. Its aim is to affirm life and accept the value of cosmic creation as a reality which can be divinised and perfected. For this, there needs to be surrender of the entire mental, vital, physical being to the highest ‘Truth Consciousness’ in whose Light, Power and *Ananda*, the entire being of an aspirant can be transformed. Most of the past *yogas* in Sri Aurobindo’s (1970) view have focused only on the ascent into higher consciousness, whereas the aim of Integral Yoga is to effectuate the descent of higher consciousness to transform the entire lower being. The integral *yoga* is not done for the personal gain of transforming the individual consciousness but *for the sake of the Divine*, i.e. for divinising the earth consciousness.

While there is no set method through which this transformation can be achieved, *yoga* Sri Aurobindo points out is ‘practical psychology’ and practice of certain inner psychological attitudes can help us in persevering in our search for the Divine and reach the point of reversal of consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo (1999a), the way forward is through “a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme Grace from above that answers” (p. 1) where “the personal effort required is a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender...” (p. 9)

The Role of Divine Grace and Aspiration in Evolution: It is the Divine Grace and Love that lies at the very root of this evolutionary universe. The Divine Consciousness in an act of original sacrifice involved itself into the Inconscient base of the cosmos and it is this same consciousness that provides an impetus for the progressive evolution of consciousness. In the process of evolution whenever there is *an aspiration* in the evolving consciousness for a change, the *divine grace* answers and helps the consciousness to emerge out the limits of the Inconscient and the Subconscient. So has the physical matter emerged from the Inconscient, the vital has emerged from the physical and the mental from the vital. At each point there has been a decisive reversal of consciousness—with the emergence of a completely new kind of consciousness. For long, this change was effected by

aspiration of universal Nature. However, in humans this aspiration becomes a very *conscious* tool for effecting a further reversal of consciousness (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

The need for change is often felt by the human consciousness when it is unable to resolve its problems and find ways to overcome the pain and suffering while functioning through an ego-based consciousness guided by the light of mind. It is the need for a greater light that makes a person aspire ardently with all its being. According to Sri Aurobindo (1999a), if this aspiration is vigilant, continuous and intense, the Divine Grace answers its call and a new opening becomes possible in the being of the person through which that person becomes more and more aware and receptive to the leadings of the divine within.

Rejection of the Movements of the Lower Nature: The aspiration alone does not suffice. Along with it there has to be constant rejection of the obscure habits of the mind, vital and the physical that help in extending the term of ignorance and falsehood in the ego-based consciousness.

The Integral Surrender: The entire self of the person—must be given in the attitude of complete self-consecration to the Divine so that the Divine may take up all that obscure in us and convert it into the Divine Consciousness. This surrender to the Divine power and its workings must be there in all the part and planes of the being—it must be an Integral surrender. This surrender is likely to bring in an attitude of a wide *equality* in the being that remains calm, open and surrendered to the divine in the conditions of success or failure, praise or blame, good fortune or ill-fortune.

The constant practice of the triple psychological attitudes of aspiration, rejection and surrender create in the being an intensity of consciousness and an imperative call to the Divine which can win from the Divine the answering call of the Divine grace.

The Four Aids in Yoga: There are four aids or instruments that have traditionally helped a *sadhaka* or an aspirant move towards *yoga-siddhi* or yogic perfection.

There is, first, the knowledge of the truths, principles, powers and processes that govern the realisation—*śāstra*. Next comes a patient and persistent action on the lines laid down by this knowledge, the force of our personal effort—*utsāha*. There intervenes, third, uplifting our knowledge and effort into the domain of spiritual experience, the direct suggestion, example and influence of the Teacher—*guru*. Last comes the instrumentality of Time—*kāla*; for in all things there is a cycle of their action and a period of the divine movement. (Sri Aurobindo 1999b, p. 53, emphasis added).

Each of these aids has its own special meaning when used for the practice of Integral Yoga.

The Supreme śāstra: For a *sadhaka* of the Integral Yoga, the written *śāstra*, however great its authority or the largeness of its spirit remains a partial knowledge of the Eternal. A *sadhaka* may use the scripture as an aid but never binds himself to any set method or system for finding the Truth. The Supreme *śāstra* lies in the very heart of the *sadhaka*—it “is the eternal *Veda* secret in the heart of every thinking and living being” (Sri Aurobindo 1999b, p. 53). The eternal knowledge

lies like a closed bud within the heart of each individual and opens and blooms in response to the intensity of aspiration in the being of the *sadhaka*. The *sadhaka* who yearns to live in the Infinite is answering a call of the inner Divine within. Sri Aurobindo (1999b) states—“He who chooses the Infinite, has been chosen by the Infinite” (p. 53). The call of the Infinite has to be personally heard and answered and an Absolute liberty of experience and knowledge is needed to create a self-formation that is a unique expression of the Divine.

The Utsāha: There is an intense personal effort or *utsāha* that is required to effectuate a change from an ego-based consciousness to Divine Consciousness. It is the power and force of the will, the capacity to persevere in the face of difficulties, the concentration of the mind on the goal, the eagerness or *vyākulāta* of the heart to meet the Divine that creates the intensity of being—a zeal which can break the limits of the ego and burn its impurities in its fire. Sri Aurobindo (1999b) states that the intensity of aspiration should be such that a *sadhaka* can say—“My zeal for the Lord has eaten me up” (p. 58). The more the intensity of the zeal, the greater is the rapidity and the amplitude of the transformative change.

The need for personal effort is much greater in the beginning phases of the *sadhana* when the initial contact with the Divine is being established and there is, as yet, a lack of sustained identity with the Divine Consciousness. However, as the *sadhaka* learns to surrender more and more of the being to the Divine and can live in constant communion with the Divine, the charge of the yoga is taken up by the Divine Lord himself—who becomes both the *sadhaka* and the *sadhana*, and the purified being of the *sadhaka*, a direct instrument of the Lord for action in the world.

The Guru: The supreme guide in Integral Yoga is the inner guide or the World-teacher (*Jagad-Guru*) who lies hidden in the secret recesses of our heart. The leadings coming from this inner teacher follows ‘no method and every method’ and cannot be bound by any rule or prescription. For instance, the *sadhaka* of Integral Yoga can dispense with all external aids or use any aid that helps him on the path to divine transformation, provided that person is not egoically attached to the aid.

There are *sadhakas* who may need the form of the external Divine to forge a living relationship with the Divine. The *avatara* and the prophet fulfil this need as the Incarnations of the Divine who have taken birth in human form—e.g. Buddha, Krishna Christ, Mohammad. The presence of the *avatara* may be used as a teacher and aid on the path but at no point should the presence become a bondage of the ego in a sectarian or a fundamentalist spirit—as in ‘My god, My guru, My *avatara*’. In fact, the *sadhaka* of Integral Yoga will not stop until that person has unified and harmonised the truth of all forms and names. Further a mere external *bhakti* or worship to the Divine form is not enough for the practice of Integral Yoga, especially if these Divine forms do not reveal themselves inwardly to *sadhaka* and become living and dynamic realities within.

There are still other *sadhakas*, for whom the presence of the *avataras* of the past is not enough and who need the guidance of a living person or a guru to help them on their way. A person, who represents to the *sadhaka* divine wisdom and can

convey something of the divine ideal, can be such a teacher. There are three instruments through which a guru can help a learner—*instruction, example and influence*. Under no condition should a teacher of Integral Yoga impose his own world-view or opinions on the passive mind of the learner. The task of instruction is to not to teach the wisdom that the teacher has gained in life but to awaken the learner to the truth of his own being and source it to give shape to personal life-values. More powerful than instruction is the living example set by the teacher for it is not just words but the life and character of the teacher that inspires the learner (Sri Aurobindo 1999b). Even more powerful than example is the influence of the teacher.

The influence of the teacher creates its impact through inner means and contact, i.e. by the nearness of soul to soul through which a guru infuses his knowledge into the being of the disciple, even in silence. A teacher of Integral Yoga does not don the mantle of guruhood but adopts the poise of being a child of the divine who is leading other children.

The Kāla or Time: “Time presents itself to human effort as an enemy or a friend, as a resistance, a medium or an instrument. But always it is really the instrument of the soul.” (Sri Aurobindo 1999b, p. 68) To the ego, Time is a force of resistance for it obstructs the adequate fulfilment of one’s desires. The *Kāla* in the phase of personal effort in *sadhana* may appear as an enemy for time slips by and one still has not attained to the object of one’s *Yoga*—the Divine Lord. When the personal effort and the divine workings combine together, Time appears to be medium and a condition of the fruition of divine’s will in action. When the Divine Lord becomes the sole doer of the works within the being of the *sadhaka*, Time becomes a friend, a servant and an instrument of the Divine. The ideal attitude of the *sadhaka* towards time is to have an attitude of infinite patience as though the Lord has made all eternity available to him and at the same time develop an intensity of consciousness and aspiration that can evoke answering divine grace which is capable of transforming the being of the *sadhaka* in Divine Light.

These four aids thus become a light on the path that a *sadhaka* follows to attaining Divine transformation. The first step in this transformative process is the psychicisation of the being.

2.5.2 The Psychicisation of the Being

The first conscious partial reversal takes place when one part of the consciousness comes in touch with the psychic being through a deep and constant aspiration and changes irreversibly. This becomes the basis of effecting other reversals in the different planes and parts of the being by assiduously bringing them into constant touch with the psychic consciousness. The aim here is to become a multifaceted, complex and a *unified* being that is open only to the Divine Consciousness, organised around it and a conscious instrument of the Divine (The Mother 2004c). All that is false, ignorant and obscure must be consistently rejected and this is done

with an attitude of a wide equality to all results and the consecration of the being in its entirety to the Divine. The mental, vital and physical parts of the being once purified open to the influence of the psychic and become psychicised. There is the reversal in all the parts of the being whereby through a process of psychicisation the true nature of all the parts of the being is revealed. In addition to the attempt to shift away from ego-based consciousness, one must also make an effort to purify the being. The effort at purification of the being involves a constant aspiration for a higher consciousness, a rejection of all that is false and ignorant and a central surrender to the Divine—who is invoked to come forth as the sovereign leader of the being. These psychological attitudes help a person through a period of preparation where a person becomes more and more open to the Divine Consciousness. In the words of The Mother (2003a):

This change of consciousness and its preparation have often been compared with the formation of the chicken in the egg: till the very last second the egg remains the same, there is no change, and it is only when the chicken is completely formed, absolutely alive, that it itself makes with its little beak a hole in the shell and comes out. Something similar takes place at the moment of the change of consciousness. For a long time you have the impression that nothing is happening, that your consciousness is the same as usual, and, if you have an intense aspiration, you even feel a resistance, as though you were knocking against a wall which does not yield. But when you are ready within, a last effort—the pecking in the shell of the being—and everything opens and you are projected into another consciousness. (pp. 18–19).

The Mother (2004b) also points out that there are alternate periods of horizontal and vertical progress in the unfolding of the new consciousness. Each step taken higher is an ascent of consciousness or *vertical progress* where one breaks into a new way of being and this gives the impression of a revelation and is accompanied by a great joy. However, there is a long period of slow *horizontal progress* that precedes vertical progress and is necessary for successful development. Horizontal progress is a period of continuous growth at a particular level that consolidates the gains of the previous ascent and establishes the evolutionary gains in the being of the person through inner psychological change and its translation into action. When the Light of the previous ascent has pervaded the being of a person, it is time to make another ascent and emerge into a new reality.

In process of psychicisation, as the outer crust of ego-personality cracks, the separation of the inner nature is removed and the inner light streams through and influences the mind which becomes more subtilised and purified. Once this central change is effected, there are psychic experiences that reveal the nature of the psychic being—the true soul personality which is capable of giving direction to one's life. With the emergence of this consciousness, it becomes possible to make a decisive shift away from the ego-based personality. This inner psychic light can then be used to purify and harmonise all that is obscure in our nature—instinct, habits, mental confusions, self-deceptions and puts them in a spiritual order. The emergence True Mental, True Vital and the True Physical becomes a possibility as more and more of our nature opens to this inner Divine Consciousness.

The mind becomes like a clear mirror that is capable of reflecting the Divine's Will without any distortion. It is the Intuitive capacity of the mind that is brought in front for the Intuitive Mind has a capacity to be a link between the ordinary human mind and the Supermind. This capacity is achieved by developing the power of concentration through which the dispersed movements of the thoughts and will are made quiet and through a one-pointed concentration on the Divine. The focus of the concentration in the psychic light is on the values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness and a constant and a living relationship with the Divine *Purushottama* or the Supreme. At the same time, there is cultivation of the silence within our consciousness. This may be achieved by separating the normal consciousness from the impersonal witness consciousness and locating ourselves within the latter. With the silencing of the mind, we get an access to the inner mind from which knowledge streams in—in the form of not only static but dynamic intuitions which are suprarational in nature and are capable of influencing the mind, vital and body.

This central awakening also influences the vital being deeply. The movement of an unenlightened consciousness is that of desire which becomes the basis of selfish formation of individuality. With the emergence of the psychic being, the central movement of the vital being is of total self-consecration to the Divine—a purified will that acts in the world as a faithful and illumined servant of the Divine. It moves beyond seeking pleasure and has as its nature a calm, equal Divine Love and Delight that extends to all creations of the Lord. This is the true vital—that is open to the Divine Consciousness alone and to no other influence. The physical too feels the influence of the central opening and aspires to be a strong, stable, and illumined base—to become a purified temple for the manifestation of the Divine Consciousness.

2.5.3 *The Spiritualisation of the Being*

The psychicisation of the being prepares ground for the next stage of the triple transformation of the being—the spiritual transformation. The consciousness here develops the capacity to live in the Overmental heights and the being of the aspirant is invaded by the Cosmic Consciousness. Through the new light of spiritual realisation, the consciousness of the aspirant embraces the entire creation, feels the Unity of self with all beings and lives in the high tracts of the Eternal and Infinite consciousness. The spiritual experience of the Infinite breaks the limitations of the being and immortality is no longer an idea of the mind but a reality of direct experience. The older writing of the being is erased and the being is re-created and written anew in this great effulgence of spiritual Light and Delight.

Without the initial preparation through psychicisation, the aspirant is only capable of making temporary ascents to the spiritual consciousness. If the outer being remains sexually impure or untransformed in terms of having vanity, ambition or any other aggressive form of lower self, it becomes incapable of bearing the descent of the spiritual consciousness. There is a danger that the body

may be like an unbaked vessel that breaks under the impetus of the Spiritual Force and the *soma* or the Divine Delight be spilt and wasted. The sufficient preparation of the individual being consecrated and organised around the psychic centre ensures that an aspirant is capable of receiving within the being the forces of cosmic proportions and confirming and new-forming the being within it.

2.5.4 The Supramentalisation of Being: The Gnostic Individual and the Life Divine

In this highest stage of the triple transformation of consciousness, there is an overpassing of the Overmental consciousness and emergence into the Supramental consciousness (also see [Sect. 2.2.2](#)). The emergence of the Gnostic Being is likely to be the consummation of the process of evolution with a person's being confirmed in the Truth-Consciousness. The process that began with the psychicised emergence of Divine Individuality finds its supreme consummation in the emergence of a *Gnostic Individuality* which has the capacity of manifesting the highest Divine values on Earth:

The gnostic individual would be in the world and of the world, but would also exceed it in his consciousness and live in his self of transcendence above it; he would be universal but free in the universe, individual but not limited by a separative individuality. The true Person is not an isolated entity, his individuality is universal; for he individualises the universe: it is at the same time divinely emergent in a spiritual air of transcendental infinity, like a high cloud-surpassing summit; for he individualises the divine Transcendence. (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 1008).

The Individual, the Universal and the Transcendent are then the three simultaneous poises through which a Gnostic Being experiences the Truth and Reality. The Gnostic Individual lives through effectuating the Highest Divine Law of nature—in Absolute freedom determined by its imperative commands. There is freedom from all lower dharmas, all constructed truths of mind as in the command of the *Gita* “Abandon all dharmas, all standards of rules of being and action, and take refuge in Me alone” (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 1038). The Gnostic being is a free and blissful instrument of the Lord through whom He does his wondrous works in the world. In the Gnostic Being, the play of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* is not no longer in conflict or unbalanced—the soul and nature are ever intertwined in mutual play in the deepest Delight. The Gnostic Individual has the Power of knowing the Self and the World through Identity, in all its play of relations. Knowledge and Will cannot conflict with each other—what one knows, one has the power of willing and effectuating in action. The dragon Law of the Inconscient can be victoriously undone by the deepest power of Love inherent in the Gnostic Consciousness and the Gnostic Being becomes a flow of Divine Consciousness from one sea light and delight to another—in the deep unity of spirit and matter.

There is in Life Divine a complete reversal of the present law of human consciousness and life which is based on Consciousness of Ignorance and operates

through the agency of the ego. The Gnostic Being finds herself not only in fulfilment of its own self but in the fulfilment of others. The Mind, Life and the Physical being of the other is felt as one's own through Identity and results in a deep soul harmony that becomes the basis of the Collective Divine Life. The life of Gnostic beings is bound freely by an inner unity, mutuality and harmony—a Life Divine, True and Beautiful.

2.6 Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo's perspective on the evolution of the Divine Individuality spans the nature of development from the prenatal period to the supreme possibility of attaining the highest Gnostic Individuality. In the writings of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, there is a focus on finding ways of optimising and *perfecting* the development of the complete being of the individual. The development of the prenatal consciousness; physical being; vital being in its aspects of character development, refinement of senses, development of will power; developing the mental being as an able instrument of Divine Consciousness, the development of the moral-ethical being and the development psychic-spiritual consciousness culminating into the possibility of the manifestation of the Supramental Gnostic Individual and Collective lays out a blueprint of present and future developmental possibilities which is unparalleled in my view, in scope, synthesis and grandeur.

The conception of a True or a Gnostic Individuality and Collective as the aim of human development is a unique possibility which is made possible in terms of its yogic manifestation by the life and works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The aim here is no longer to seek liberation from the worldly ties and attachments that are the basis of pain and suffering but through an inner-yogic evolution eliminate the very seeds of pain and suffering from human consciousness. The aim is to prepare the Individual being for a descent of the Infinite Delight, Power, Love, Joy and Beauty—to be manifested in earth consciousness through a decisive reversal and transformation of consciousness.

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Chapter 3

The Process of Social Evolution: The Human Cycle

*An endless spiral of ascent and fall,
Until at last is reached the giant point,
Through which his Glory shines for whom we were made,
And we break into the infinity of God....*

(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 24)

3.1 Introduction

The study of human potential and its developmental possibilities is not a new endeavour. Thinkers, philosophers, sages have across historical periods, spiritual traditions and cultures have engaged deeply with the questions like—‘What is it that makes us uniquely Human?’, ‘How we are different from the rest of the creation or conversely what is our link with the rest of the creation?’, ‘What is the goal of human existence?’, ‘What is our potential for growth and how can we achieve it?’ ‘What is the relation between the Human and the Divine, the Individual and the Transcendent, the finite human existence and the Infinite?’

In India, for instance, the ancient *Vedas* dealt in a symbolic manner with many of these questions to which the Vedic *Rishis* attempted to find answers through the use of spiritual-psychological yogic methods. These questions have been re-engaged with across different historical phases and through different approaches, e.g. the high spiritual-philosophical approach of the *Upanishads* or the practical—spiritual approach of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Similarly, other cultures too have attempted to engage with these questions largely through different spiritual and philosophical traditions.

Sri Aurobindo’s (1997b) perspective on social development suggests the cyclical or a *spiral* nature of societal evolution and reveals a deeper spiritual impetus which has shaped the structure of society across ages, and influenced the way in which we *know and experience* the self and the society. This provides the social-historical evolutionary context within which one can locate the evolving person and also explains the emergence of the contemporary disciplines of knowledge creation, including the discipline of Human Development.

3.2 The Psychology of Social Development: The Cycles of Society

Sri Aurobindo (1997b) in his book ‘The Human Cycle’ examined the inner meaning of the psychological stages of social development proposed by the German thinker Lamprecht who believed that the human society progresses through certain distinct psychological stages which he termed as the *symbolic, typal, conventional, individualist, subjective and spiritual* stages, respectively. These stages according to Sri Aurobindo are indicative only, as any strict classification is “likely to err by rigidity and to substitute a mental straight line for the coils and zigzags of Nature. The psychology of man and his societies are too complex, too synthetical of many-sided and intermixed tendencies to satisfy any such rigorous and formal analysis” (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 6).

Having sounded that note of caution, let us look at the broad analysis of these stages done by Sri Aurobindo with the purpose of revealing their inner meaning and value for the understanding the hidden evolutionary impetus that drives the societal forms and its modes of knowing, experiencing and relating. These stages are:

3.2.1 The Symbolic Stage

Sri Aurobindo (1997b) states that the earliest stage of civilisation in the cycles of society has a strongly symbolic character. A symbol in Sri Aurobindo’s view is “something which man feels to be present behind himself and his life and his activities,—the Divine, the Gods, the vast and deep unnameable, a hidden, living and mysterious nature of things” (p. 7). All life in this stage is organised symbolically—whether it is the understanding of the relation between the individual and the cosmos, the social and religious institutions or the different phases of life.

In India, Vedic period was the symbolic age. The dominance of symbolism can be seen in the way in which the society was conceived. For instance, in the *Purushasukta* of the *Veda*, the four orders of society are symbolically represented as having sprung from the body of the creative Deity, i.e. from his *head, arms, thighs and feet*. For the *Vedic* seers, these were the four aspects of the Divine:

...the Divine as knowledge in man, the Divine as power, the Divine as production, enjoyment and mutuality, the Divine as service, obedience and work. These divisions answer to *four cosmic principles*, the *Wisdom* that conceives the order and principle of things, the *Power* that sanctions, upholds and enforces it, the *Harmony* that creates the arrangement of its parts, the *Work* that carries out what the rest direct (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 10, emphasis added).

We today know these broad principles as the *brahmin* (head), the *kshyatriya* (arms), the *vaishya* (thighs) and the *shudra* (feet)—all parts of the body of the Divine. In the *Vedic* period, the symbol of the four orders represented the psychic

and temperamental types in individuals and further indicated their ethical nature and work in society. All four aspects in this symbol initially had an equal importance as each was seen as necessary for the smooth function of the society.

Further, these were not rigid classifications (like the present caste system) and were not based on heredity and family status but represented a psychological—social function of an individual based on their own self-determined *Dharma*. In a *spiritual-symbolic* sense, the different orders represent the four ‘divine principles’ that represent and govern this cosmos and the individual’s relation to it.

In the symbolic age, the faculty of imagination is not used to weave fanciful ideas but to tap and represent the deep truths of the cosmos (as in the example given above). For the *Vedic* seers:

...imagination (was) no dancing courtesan but a priestess in God’s house commissioned not to spin fictions but to image difficult and hidden truths; even the metaphor or simile in the Vedic style (was) used with a serious purpose and expected to convey a reality, not to suggest a pleasing artifice of thought (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 9).

The image was for the *Vedic* seer a revealed symbol that touched the body of the unrevealed and gave access to the higher spheres of spiritual experience which the human mind or intellect could neither fathom nor express.

3.2.2 The Typal Stage

While the symbolic age is predominantly spiritual and religious in character with the psychological ethical, economic aspects of life subordinated to the high spiritual ideal or principles, it is followed by a *typal* stage where it is the *ethical and psychological* aspects that dominate. This stage creates great social ideals whose stamp remains for a long time and the main idea that predominates here is that of the ethical-social *honour*:

...the honour of the *Brahmin* which resides in purity, in piety, in a high reverence for the things of the mind and spirit and a disinterested possession and exclusive pursuit of learning and knowledge; the honour of the *Kshatriya* which lives in courage, chivalry, strength, a certain proud self-restraint and self-mastery, nobility of character and the obligations of that nobility; the honour of the *Vaishya* which maintains itself by rectitude of dealing, mercantile fidelity, sound production, order, liberality and philanthropy; the honour of the *Shudra* which gives itself in obedience, subordination, faithful service, a disinterested attachment (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 11, emphasis added).

However, with time, the *typal* stage loses its inner connection with the psychological ideal and remains but as an outer convention, leading humanity to a conventional stage of society.

3.2.3 The Conventional Stage

In the conventional stage, the outer social forms lose their inner meaning. They become rigid, petrified and fixed and are followed as a mere convention. Sri Aurobindo states (1997b):

...the tendency of the conventional age of society is to fix, to arrange firmly, to formalise, to erect a system of rigid grades and hierarchies, to stereotype, religion, to bind education and training to a traditional and unchangeable form, to subject thought to infallible authorities, to cast a stamp of finality on what seems, to it the finished life of man. (p. 13).

The caste system as we know it today is a good example of the conventional mentality. We find that the four high spiritual ideals have been bound into a rigid form and the freedom of an individual to choose on the basis of spiritual—psychological nature has become hostage to the factors like birth and heredity. The central idea is lost and in its place is a system which is a mere caricature of the high symbolism that was initially vested in it.

3.2.4 The Individualistic Stage

When the gap between the convention and the Truth widens too much and becomes unbearable, there is likely to be an intellectual revolt against the formalisms and mechanical falsities of the conventional system. Sri Aurobindo points out (1997b) in such conditions:

...the men of intellectual power arise, the great “swallowers of formulas”, who, rejecting robustly or fiercely or with the calm light of reason symbol and type and convention, strike at the walls of the prison-house and seek by the individual reason, moral sense or emotional desire the Truth that society has lost or buried in its whited sepulchers (p. 14).

The quest in this stage is essentially individualistic in nature as it is the stagnation in the collective mind that an individual questions. This is the age of the reform, the age of reason, the age of free and independent thinking that explores, questions, tests and validates its own truths rather than blindly follow an authority or mechanical custom. In the West, this age is can be represented by the recent period of European Renaissance (14th–17th century A.D.)—which was the effort made by society to emerge out of the conventional medieval age. In India, the individualistic age initially came about through an influence from the west whereby social reformers questioned the petrified mechanical conventions (e.g. caste system, role of women in society) in the nineteenth century. In my view, the individualistic age still struggles to fulfil its agenda in contemporary India as one can see the constant battle of the traditional conventional mindset with the emergent individualistic rationality. However, this drama is played out against a backdrop of an everyday spirituality that still remains alive and dynamic in the lives of people.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, in the recent cycles of world history, it is the Renaissance in Europe that has in the most definitive manner questioned and comprehensively shaken the society out of the mechanical conventionalities and ushered in a new age of individualism and rationality. It opened the human mind to a possibility of fresh examination of the truth through free questioning and critical inquiry. According to Sri Aurobindo (1997b), "A temporary reign of the critical reason largely destructive in its action is an imperative need for human progress" (pp. 26–27), as only it can have force the requisite force to break the petrified conventions.

There has been an attempt in European Renaissance to reconstruct all aspects of life in the light of rationality—including science, art, philosophy and society. The result has been an inception of disciplines of science based on an objective and disinterested search for truth and a focus on truths that have a utility in reconstruction of a post-conventional society. (Sri Aurobindo 1997b). More specifically, there is a focus on physical sciences and discernment of the laws of the physical universe as they are based on objective observation and verification and using the resultant knowledge to create technology and to re-structure economics and society.

It seems to me that all academic disciplines of study, in their present form, are offspring of this rational-individualistic age and are marked by aspiration for an intellectual freedom and a scientific temper-including the discipline of Human Development. It is the rational imperative that has definitively circumscribed the scope of many disciplines of study, as it is the dominant Time-spirit of the present age. The specific nature of the intellectual crucible in which the discipline of human development took shape is discussed in [Chapter 4](#).

While the individualistic age with its focus on rationality is an inevitable step in human progression, it is limited in its scope by its very nature. Sri Aurobindo (1997b) notes that the full use of the rational capacity and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge is difficult for humanity, as we are not the mind alone. The mental ideas are often tarnished by the irrational influences that emanate from the unilluminated parts of our personality. The human vital passions and instincts often make the thought process prejudiced and coloured by vested interests. Further, a person often uses reason not to arrive at some agreement with his fellow beings, but to enforce his own understanding through conflict and struggle on others and seeks self-affirmation in competition with the life of others.

Even if a person were to construct a mental idea or an ideal and it were to succeed, it still leads to disillusionment, doubt and disappointment, for time reveals the success to be at best partial, and at worst false, invalid and unreal. Thus while the right exercise of the intellect can give us a greater objective understanding of ourselves and the world, it takes us only part of the way for we do not have an understanding and control over the subjective forces that influence our thoughts and our actions.

An area where the confirmed rational mind finds itself completely at sea is the realm of faith and religion. There are likely to be two possible responses to these realms of a rational intellect, both eventually shallow and erroneous in their

conclusions. The first attitude is that of the dismissal of all reference to religion as mystical nonsense, superstition and a remnant of crude barbarism. There also may be a patronizing attitude towards religion whereby its very presence is explained away.

The second attitude tries to correct the superstitions, crudities and absurdities of religion and purify it in the light of rationality. If religion is allowed to remain, it is only for its utility in giving the masses a morality that is used to keep them in order.

The challenge for the rational age is how not to throw the spiritual baby out with the bath water. While rationality has its valid use in purifying the religion of its blind conventions, challenge oppressive ideas and institutions that constrain the development of a person from within and without, and question other infrarational accruments, there needs to be a realisation that there is a spiritual core to all religions and that spiritual needs of people too need a space for free flowering and development. In words of Sri Aurobindo (1997b):

The love of God is an infinite and absolute feeling which does not admit of any rational limitation and does not use a language of rational worship and adoration; the delight in God is that peace and bliss which passes all understanding (p. 131).

In evolutionary terms, reality is always complex and multilayered and a society may struggle as it attempts to simultaneously work out different agendas that are expressed as multiple voices. The emergent discipline of human development in my view is located in an academic culture that struggles as it attempts to comprehend the multiple views on religion and spirituality predominantly within the limited rational discourse.

Overall, the strength of the human intellect is its potential for disinterested action and pursuit of knowledge which Sri Aurobindo (1997b) writes “leads man to the gates of a greater self-consciousness and places him with unbandaged eyes on that wide threshold where a more luminous Angel has to take him by the hand” (p. 114). There may be a need for a higher and deeper consciousness felt by humanity at this juncture that can usher in a new age—the *subjective age*.

3.2.5 The Subjective Stage

The need to understand the hidden complexities of human nature which cannot be fathomed by the human reason and intellect becomes the occasion for the emergence of the subjective age. This is in fact the crisis of the contemporary society that is disillusioned by an external view of things, which has given humanity a power to control and manipulate the physical world but not a capacity to harness the inner potential of human growth. The reliance on rational capacities may give us an ordered world of ideas but does not have a capacity to make them dynamic in life by development of the capacity of self-knowledge or techniques of self mastery and self-control. The moment a person turns the gaze within, there is discovered:

...the soul in himself and the soul in the world and find it to be an entity so profound, so complex, so full of hidden secrets and powers that his intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and a fumbling seeker: it is successfully analytical only of superficialities and of what lies just behind the superficialities. The need of a deeper knowledge must then turn him to the discovery of new powers and means within himself (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 29).

The discovery of these new powers lies not in the method of destructive self-criticism based on rationality but largely in the reconstructive power of human aspiration, consciousness and imagination. The cycles of society have spiraled back to an era that can have again as its focus the symbolic and the imaginative and has, in this journey, developed a sound rational mind and possibility of a purified will, which can act as an instrument for manifesting the Divine within.

While the academic discipline of Human Development is still engaged in consolidating the gains of the rational age, there are schools of psychology that have attempted to examine the nature of human subjectivity with an emphasis on lower-unconscious aspects (e.g. Psychoanalysis) or the inner possibilities of personal integration (e.g. Humanistic Psychology). The rational age is based on a divide between the objective and subjective realms of experience and many current perspectives on the development of the self (e.g. Kegan 1982; Csikszentmihalyi 1993) aim at bridging this divide.

As the subjective world is multilayered in nature, the search for the possibility of a true higher integration requires us to look beyond the superficial view of self and discover the source of the deep and true subjectivity—which is the *psychic being* of the individual. The psychic being is the soul within, a portion of the divine, the inner *Veda* or the guru that is capable of leading a person to the true purpose of life on earth. As a person becomes more open to its influence, the “rationalistic ideal begins to subject itself to the ideal of intuitional knowledge and a deeper self-awareness; the utilitarian standard gives way to the aspiration towards self-consciousness and self-realisation” (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 29).

Sri Aurobindo (1997b) views the journey through the subjective age as having the capacity to take us forward into a spiritual age and tap and give expression to the spiritual fount within. However, the success of this endeavour depends on the way in which this step is taken, and there are two alternate possibilities—the emergence of a *true subjectivism* or a *false subjectivism*. An individual who is seeking the law of his being can safely discover the way forward if that person realises *two major psychological truths*. The first truth is that *the ego is not the true self*. It is essential that the aspirant for Truth learns to discriminate between the *false* leadings emanating from the egoistic mental ideas or vital self-will and the *true* inspirations that come from the psychic being. The second psychological truth is that only by realizing a solidarity and *unity with our fellow beings* can we hope to fulfil our true self—the psychic being.

The trap of false subjectivity lies in becoming a hostage to an egoistic consciousness that constrains the essential freedom of the individual to think and to be. In a society that has organised itself around such a false consciousness, the individual may be seen only as a cell of the state or an ideology and must comply

with an external authority unquestioningly to assure its survival. The way forward in such a society may be based on the maxim that it is the survival of the best that is the highest good of the mankind and the survival of the best is secured by the elimination of the unfit in society. This is conceived to be the way to the perfectibility of society. The colossal error made by Nazi Germany in attempting to eliminate the Jewish race is the apt exemplar of this kind of false subjectivity according to Sri Aurobindo (1997b).

For the growing discipline of Human Development, these very events of the twentieth century have posed the most crucial questions about the nature of the human being and the extent to which we can create suffering for our own self and the others. It seems to me that the contemporary problem of terrorism across the world today is also emanating from the false consciousness that celebrates collective ego of a community or a religion and is based on the separative consciousness that divides and hates.

A possibility for true solution to these crucial problems of human development depends on the extent which we are able to identify their very root within the human subjectivity. The solution cannot be found by making outer cosmetic changes in the social fabric if the essential nature of humanity remains untransformed. There needs to be a free and fearless examination of the complexities of human subjectivity, purge it of all that is irrational and obscure—a task that can be most victoriously attempted only if we have access to the Highest consciousness within—a consciousness of Light, Wideness, Purity and Love. This task cannot be attempted by merely shining small torch lights of the rational mind into the infrarational or unconscious aspects of our beings, for the mind itself is essentially separative and analytical in its action. An aspiration for an inner consciousness that is essentially based on Unity can only have the capacity for reconciling the apparent contradictions into a highest harmony.

This is the leap of consciousness that humanity must attempt—to understand all that is *infrarational* in humanity, develop the *rational capacities* which can act as secure base for a leap into the *suprarational* consciousness.

The Infrarational, Rational and Suprarational: A continuum along which Sri Aurobindo has viewed individual and societal evolution is the progression from the infrarational to rational and the suprarational. The story of human cycle according to Sri Aurobindo (1997b) is the journey between the two extremes of the infrarational and the suprarational consciousness with the human reason and intelligence as a mediator between the two.

In the infrarational age, the actions of humanity are guided by instincts, impulses, vital intuitions, spontaneous ideas and are a response to a need, a desire or a circumstance. It is possible that in this age, a small minority of individuals are open to the higher spiritual and symbolic consciousness and can for a time attempt embody these ideals in society (e.g. the *Vedic* period). However, this momentum cannot be sustained as the large masses of humanity are not open to the leadings of the higher spiritual light and fall back into Ignorance and a life based on mechanical customs and conventions.

This is followed by the rational age in which the individual is able to challenge, question a mechanical life and consciously recreate the life's aim and ideas in the light of rationality. According to Sri Aurobindo (1997b):

...finally, if our analysis and forecast are correct, the human evolution must move through a subjective towards a suprarational or spiritual age in which he will develop progressively a greater spiritual, supra-intellectual and intuitive, perhaps in the end a more than intuitive, a gnostic consciousness (p. 184).

The *Gnostic Consciousness* is a consciousness that has the capacity of reconciling all contradictions in the highest light of seeing and in unified Self-knowledge and World-knowledge (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

Sri Aurobindo (1997b) points out that the rational age in India as compared to the West is likely to be short as India has kept alive her spiritual wisdom, which will easily shine forth again once rational mind has comprehensively questioned and rid the Indian psyche of the dross of dead conventions, superstitions and obscurities.

In my view, the world of academics in India, including the discipline of human development is attempting to fulfil this very rational agenda and is currently deeply influenced by the west in its focus and its scope. As it grows as a discipline, it needs to examine its own scope for the aspects that it has left out of its purview because a default delimitation of a rational agenda. It needs to consciously define for itself a scope that will widen and deepen its base and give a more comprehensive view of the human subjectivity and its developmental possibilities.

3.2.6 The Spiritual Stage

It is the limitation of the capacity of the rational mind to give a lasting solution to life's problems that motivates the growing soul of humanity to look within again. It is a yearning for the Absolute in the relativities of the life, the Infinite in the finite, the Eternal in the apparent transience and temporality of life and Unity in face of multiplicity, differences and divisions that opens an individual to the higher suprarational and spiritual realms. The search for the Divine within is also the seeking for the "highest, truest, fullest, largest self" (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 146). The growing soul of humanity approaches this through an aspiration for a higher Truth, Beauty and Goodness—the values derived from which an individual attempts to express in creating anew his own life and the society in which that person lives.

In the spiritual age, it is the search for knowledge and the aspiration to live by the eternal principles of *Truth* that becomes the aim of Science and Philosophy. The search for *Good* becomes the aim of Ethics. The role of ethics is to help an individual grow into her Divine Nature and not merely to internalise the socially imposed standards and appear blameless in the eyes of the society. It is to grow in Light of the Divine towards a greater harmony and discover the values of Absolute Right, Absolute Purity, and Absolute Love and self-giving within one's own being.

The search for *Beauty* and aesthetics is no longer satisfied by creation of outer forms, mental ideas or emotions of beauty but is completed by a seeking that makes the life and the very being of an individual from within—a composition of Beauty. Beauty that is created through a deep engagement with the Divine within, can bring the individual in touch with the Absolute and the Infinite reality and impart a higher significance to the slightest or the greatest of things—a word, an idea, an emotion, an event, the beauty and power of a character, a brushstroke, a flower or the colours of a sunset (Sri Aurobindo 1997b).

A prerequisite for the emergence of spiritual age is the essential *freedom* for all capacities of humanity to have an opportunity to flower to their fullest potential. Science, Philosophy, Ethics or Aesthetics according to Sri Aurobindo (1997b) cannot be forcibly made to admit and adhere to a religious or a spiritual ideal as the Absolute values of Truth, Beauty and Goodness cannot be imposed from without but must be dynamically experienced within. A person, a society or a discipline of study must be given the essential freedom to examine for its own self the nature of the Real. Any attempt to constrain this essential freedom can result in missing steps in evolution which will eventually need to be retraced in the human cycle. There may even be a place for a phase of atheism in the social evolutionary ladder where, for a while, the very existence of the Divine is denied in order to freely understand the nature of oneself and the world.

It is only when a society has sufficiently developed the rational capacities and freely turns to exploring to deeper subjective and higher spiritual realities based on a true inner need can we expect the time to be ripe enough for the advent of the Spiritual age. Also, unlike the symbolic stage (e.g. the Vedic stage) where the larger mass of people may not have been ready to embody the symbolic-spiritual consciousness because of the lack of a sufficiently developed rational, vital and physical base, in the spiritual age this very base has been prepared through cycles of free human development and as a result, the possibility of being spiritualised is open to a large mass of humanity.

In a spiritual society, all individuals are likely to be deeply free—there is the possibility of the emergence of a ‘spiritual anarchy’ where each person lives is not bound by any arbitrarily imposed external societal law but is bound by the very law of the inner being which is the Divine Law. Such a ‘*spiritual person*’ has been liberated from all shackles of the ego and will by its nature live for something greater—the Divine in the Self and the Divine in the Universe (Sri Aurobindo 1997b).

3.3 The Ideal Law of Social Development

The task of evolution according to Sri Aurobindo (1997b) is to understand the past but to live in the future. As a person or a collective attempt to look forward to their unfolding spiritual destiny in the cycle of ages, there is a Law that may act as a beacon of Light. Sri Aurobindo (1997b) calls it the *Ideal Law of Social Development*:

That law is that all things are one in their being and origin, one in their general law of existence, one in their interdependence and the universal pattern of their relations; but each realises this unity of purpose and being on its own lines and has its own law of variation by which it enriches the universal existence (p. 63).

While at present this law has not as yet been realised by the humanity at large, the way to its realisation lies in the inward turn, which may reveal to us the vast potential of the inner subjective experience. The eventual spiritual realisation of the deep unity of mankind and the uniqueness of each individual's being depends on the essential freedom given to an individual and the collective to initiate and guide its own development, according to the evolutionary imperative of its age.

3.4 The Dimensions of Human Perfection: The Relation Between the Individual and the Collective

In the evolutionary journey, there are three principle dimensions which the aspiring humanity has attempted to perfect in different phases of its growth. There are:

... three principal preoccupations of our idealism,—the complete single development of the human being in himself, the perfectibility of the individual, a full development of the collective being, the perfectibility of society, and,...the perfect or best possible relations of individual with individual and society and of community with community (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 1083).

The perfection of the evolving relation between the individual and collective is a main keynote of Sri Aurobindo's thought. Sri Aurobindo (2005) writes that in different ages of society and also across cultures, there is a differing emphasis vis-à-vis the three above-mentioned themes. For instance, there may be a focus in a particular culture on individual perfectibility and the role of the society is to support and give opportunities for the physical, vital, mental and spiritual growth of the individual.

Alternately, in another culture, there may be a focus on the perfectibility of the social organisation and the role of the individual is perceived to be that of a cell of the social machinery whose purpose of existence is to further the broader societal goals. There may also exist cultures that try and find a balance between the individual and the collective goals and still others that have as their focus the social and ethical relations between individuals or communities.

In terms of developmental dynamics of progress, it is important according to The Mother (2002) to make progress in the individual collective realm *at once*. In words of the Mother (2002).

In this effort to improve human conditions, there have always been *two* tendencies, which seem to be contrary but which ought to complement each other so that progress may be achieved. The *first* advocates a collective reorganisation, something which could lead to the effective unity of mankind. The *other* declares that all progress is made first by the

individual and insists that the individual should be given the conditions in which he can progress freely. *Both are equally true and necessary*, and our effort should be directed along both these lines *at once*. For collective progress and individual progress are interdependent. Before the individual can take a leap forward, at least a little of the preceding progress must have been realized in the collectivity. A way must therefore be found so that these two types of progress may proceed side by side (pp. 39–40, emphasis added).

It is in final analysis, the decisive realisation of the higher spiritual and integral consciousness, that creates a true Unity and harmony at the individual and collective levels—as its very source is the Divine within.

3.5 The Nature of Human Progress

Sri Aurobindo (1998) points out that the tasks of *knowing* and *being* differ at varied points in the evolutionary journey of the collective humankind towards higher perfection. Perfection is not a static state or an end but an ever-progressive journey of human development. In Sri Aurobindo's (1998) view "Progress is the very heart of the significance of human life, for it means our evolution into greater and richer being" (p. 187). Further, human progress does not take place in a straight line or a blind circle and the end point of human development is not deterioration that ends finally in a downward lapse. Progress is a story of an advance and a relapse, of night and day, of periods of great illumination and of darkness. However, through a play of these alternating periods, the humanity advances as a whole and this is *true for both individual development and the development of the collective*. In his words:

Human progress is very much an adventure through the unknown, an unknown full of surprises and baffling obstacles; it stumbles often, it misses its way at many points, it cedes here in order to gain there, it retraces its steps frequently in order to get more widely forward. The present does not always compare favourably with the past; even when it is more advanced in the mass, it may still be inferior in certain directions important to our inner or our outer welfare. *But earth does move forward after all...* Even in failure there is a preparation for success: our nights carry in them the secret of a greater dawn. This is a frequent experience in our individual progress, but the human collectivity also moves in much the same manner (Sri Aurobindo 1997c, p. 81, emphasis added).

The fact that human progress moves not in a blind circle or a straight line but in a *spiral* movement has been discussed by The Mother (2003b) in a very interesting manner. In her view, human progress can be seen as spiral in nature where there may an achievement or a progress in a particular age that recedes for while but may be re-attempted at higher level, often at the same point in the curve of the spiral, at a later period of time. Further, human progress consists of many intersecting spirals and human consciousness, at any point in time, can be visualised as a sphere within which these intersecting spirals are located. In The Mother's words (2003b):

She (Nature) evidently has a plan, and herself goes towards a certain goal which is very clear to her but quite veiled to human consciousness... It is very interesting. If one could construct something like that, it would give an idea of a globe made of intersecting spirals of different colours, and each representing one aspect of Nature's creation. And these aspects are made to complete one another—but so far they are rather in competition than collaboration, and it seems she is always obliged to destroy something in order to make another, which makes for a terrible wastage, and a still greater disorder. But if all this were seen in its totality, it would be extremely interesting. For it is an extremely complex criss-crossing, in all possible directions, of a *spiralling ascent* (p. 335, emphasis added).

In The Mother's (2003b) view, there are as many spirals as human possibilities. From the outside view, the criss-crossing spirals give an impression of a completely chaotic development and are a source of many contradictory movements in evolution. An example that comes to my mind is that the independently developing spirals of 'ethics' and 'aesthetics' in an individual or in the collective may find their agendas to be in contradiction with each other. Ethics is a movement to create character and self-discipline through an exercise of will, where as the aesthetic movement is dependent on engagement with values of beauty and its expression in freedom and apparently the two are opposite movements. There may be periods in individual-ontogenetic and collective-social history where one movement is developed and emphasised at the cost of other aspects of human possibilities. However, the eventual goal of Nature is to develop all the human possibilities in a higher harmony through *conscious evolution*. In The Mother's words:

...when one evolves consciously, one does not forget one thing in order to do another. What is bad at present is forgetfulness; it is that when following a certain activity for a realisation, one forgets all the others or they go into the background, they have no longer any intensity. But this is a human shortcoming which can be corrected—it ought to be corrected The Mother (2003b, p. 334).

This is the goal—a conscious evolution where the chaotic movements of the Nature within an Individual and Collective can be brought into the highest possible harmony. It is a process of mutual reconciliation of contradictions through receptivity and self-offering to the Highest Consciousness—and this indeed is the Integral Yoga.

It is the point at which different spirals *intersect* that greatest progress takes place The Mother (2003b). An example here can be the spiral movement of rationality as it unfolded in the West (e.g. Greek philosophy revived again during European Renaissance) and its intersection with the Indian Spirituality during the colonial period in India. As Sri Aurobindo was well-versed with the cultural achievements of both the East and the West, I think his works represent an intersection of the spiral of the flowering of the rationality in European Renaissance and the spiral of deep spiritual traditions of India that he rejuvenated in contemporary times. The result is a view of human evolution that is integral and opens pathways to conscious new creation of the future.

3.6 The Relation Between Progress and Perfection

The Mother (2003a), states that we often have a mistaken view that perfection is an apex point towards which progress is aimed. However, the correct way of viewing the relation between progress and perfection is that—in the very process of progress there may be points of perfection, and that perfection is not just the penultimate state towards which progress is aimed. In words of The Mother (2003a) “*Progress is rather an ascent. Perfection is a harmony, an equilibrium.*” (p. 14). She also states that *perfection is not a static state, it is an equilibrium. But a progressive, dynamic equilibrium.*

Viewed from the perspective of the evolutionary movement, often when evolution of Nature reaches the point of extreme and maximum possibility, it becomes a point of limitation for her where she can stir no further and she is obliged to destroy itself and begin again. The state of maximum possibility where the Nature is impelled to destroy and begin again cannot therefore be called a dynamic equilibrium, for it is a static equilibrium which is broken because of lack of progress.

The Mother states (2003a) that as ‘Man is a transitional being’, we have not as yet attained a dynamic perfection as a race. The existential crises of humanity characterised by pain, suffering and death are markers of the inherent lack of a dynamic equilibrium. The human race has a possibility of achieving dynamic equilibrium and perfection if it aims for emergence of a *new consciousness*. There needs to be a fundamental *reversal in consciousness* whereby the human individual and the collective is not required to go back to the lower rung of evolution in order to recover its forgotten selves but are confirmed permanently in a new state of higher evolution. Here, progress proceeds not from state of imperfection to perfection but evolves from *a state of perfection to perfection*. According to The Mother (2003a), the way to the new consciousness is a dynamic and conscious collaboration between the human aspiration that calls from below, and a Divine Grace that answer this call from above. In her words:

We may say that perfection will be attained in the individual, the collectivity, on the earth and in the universe, when, at *every moment*, the receptivity will be equal in quality and quantity to the Force which wants to manifest. *That is the supreme equilibrium*. Hence, there must be a perfect equilibrium between what comes from above and what answers from below, and when the two meet, that is perfect equilibrium, which is the Realisation—a realisation *in constant progress*. (The Mother 2003a, p. 16).

It was Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s endeavour in their own yogic practise to help humanity prepare itself to take a step forward in evolution and creation of the ‘Life Divine on Earth’. In this context, The Mother (2004) states—“*What Sri Aurobindo represents in the history of the earth’s spiritual progress is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a mighty action straight from the Supreme*” (p. 4, emphasis added).

In sum, it can be said that Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s perspective opens us to a complex view of human development—it gives us an understanding of the phases of human cycle across ages and how these phases may be expressed in

varied spirals across cultures. It gives us an insight into the key differences between cultures and also the potential of enrichment when different cultural spirals intersect with each other. Each culture and each phase of human development in this view can be seen as a point in progress with a possibility of perfection or equilibrium at its own stage of development. This holds true whether Nature takes a leap forward in evolution or back-tracks its steps to recover a forgotten aspect of human potential. Overall, the earth moves forward and the story of human development does not move in a blind circle but in an ascending spiral. Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's perspective also gives an overarching view of the developmental potential of humanity that as an entire race has not achieved a dynamic equilibrium as it is still in a state of transition. The way forward is to be re-born into a new consciousness or a higher dynamic equilibrium in the Divine Consciousness.

3.7 Conclusion

To end, I feel that the task of evolution as conceived by Sri Aurobindo seems to be an ever-ongoing Divine March towards the Future. The spiritual realisation at one rung of evolutionary ladder seems to opens to view more and more opportunities of higher perfection. The being of the aspirant is born and reborn in the spiritual flame and is created ever-new in the light of the higher spiritual realms that are revealed to view. It is interesting to note that that from Sri Aurobindo's perspective the emergence 'spiritual communities' can help in this ascent of consciousness may act as strong nuclei that can help and inspire more and more people to attempt the adventure of a higher spiritual birth and the ever-progressive perfection of life on earth (Sri Aurobindo 1997b).

Of the stages of social development outlined by Sri Aurobindo, it is the *individualistic-rational* age that I feel has predominantly shaped the agenda and the emergence of dominant metatheories of human development within the academic field of human development. The next chapter explores these metatheoretical perspectives, the context within which they have emerged and the need to explore a new metatheory of human development that can take us beyond the knowledge perspectives of the rational-individualistic age.

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Chapter 4

The Contemporary Discipline of Human Development: The Dominant Metatheories

*As climbs a storeyed temple-tower to heaven
Built by the aspiring soul of man to live
Near to his dream of the Invisible.
Infinity calls to it as it dreams and climbs;
Mounting into great voiceless stillnesses
It marries the earth to screened eternities.*

(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 98)

4.1 Introduction

Sri Aurobindo views the march of humankind as an evolutionary journey—an ascent of consciousness which reveals to view ever greater vistas of knowledge and power as we move from one scale of consciousness to another. At each stage of human evolution, the human being—its self-view and its powers are re-created anew through a descent of the divine consciousness. In this view, our attempt in the present times, to know our own selves, understand our human problems, potential for growth and development are also steps in this evolutionary ladder of consciousness.

This chapter examines the manner in which Sri Aurobindo has viewed the nature of human development in the European and the Indian cultures. It traces the initial shaping of Human development as a discipline of inquiry, as an offspring of the *European culture* in the nineteenth century. It specifically examines the manner in which ‘development’ and ‘evolution’ have been conceived within this field of inquiry and the dominant metatheoretical perspectives that give a broad understanding of the contemporary self-view of Human Development as a discipline of study.

4.2 Sri Aurobindo on Human Development in Indian and Western Cultures: Implications for Knowing and Being

It would be useful here to examine some specific lines of collective cultural progress that have influenced the way in which we currently look at the study of the conception of human life, knowledge creation and its implications for

understanding our own evolving human possibilities and avenues of dynamic perfection in life.

The movement towards progress can be seen in the way in which the current disciplines of knowledge have constituted themselves. Based on the view of human cycle given by Sri Aurobindo (1997b), we can infer that the way in which knowledge is created may itself be a result of the consciousness that marks different periods of social evolution. An instance of the evolutionary nature of knowledge can be seen by the way in which the ‘*conception of human life*’ and ‘*true knowledge*’ or ‘*true science*’ have been variously viewed in different cultures and across different historical ages and the implications it has for the structuring of life, and possibilities of human development.

According to Sri Aurobindo (1997c), to be able to judge the life-value of a culture, one must assess it in terms of *three powers*. The *first* power is the original conception of life in a culture. The *second* power is the forms, types and rhythms that it gives to life and the *third* is the vigour and force with which the cultural inspiration manifests in the life of the community. Sri Aurobindo (1997c) summarises the major characteristic differences between Indian and Western-European progressive cultural spirals—especially in context of their approach to human life and development as they have been re-expressed in the contemporary times. A study of these cultural differences has the potential of providing an insight into the current conceptualisation of the discipline of Human Development as it took shape in the European milieu of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and its key difference of perspective from the Indian view of human development. In Sri Aurobindo’s words (1997c):

...the Indian believes that the ultimate truths are truths of the spirit and that truths of the spirit are the most fundamental and most effective truths of our existence, powerfully creative of the inner, salutarily reformatory of the outer life. To the European the ultimate truths are more often truths of the ideative intellect, the pure reason; but, whether intellectual or spiritual, they belong to a sphere beyond the ordinary action of the mind, life and body where alone there are any daily verifying “tests of values”. These tests can only be given by living experience of outward fact and the positive and practical reason. The rest are speculations and their proper place is in the world of ideas, not in the world. (p. 113).

4.2.1 The European Cultural View

The key theme of the Western-European culture recently has been to view the conception of human life as essentially rooted in the material universe (Sri Aurobindo 1997c). Its two predominant cultural preoccupations have been the free development of the individual ego and the will for an organised and efficient national life. These two tendencies are in opposition or in harmony with each other responsible for the cultural vividness of the European culture. On the one hand is the tendency to enjoy life to the fullest and vital satisfaction of giving expression to egoistic passions, and on the other hand is the tendency to govern human life

through the power of reason, ethics, science, art—with an aim to restrain and harmonise human energies and their expression. In different ages, different powers have dominated and taken a lead in defining the European cultural tones and the conception of life.

It seems to me that the two characteristic conflicting tendencies of European culture delineated by Sri Aurobindo can be seen reflected in the manner in which the discipline of Psychology took shape in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries and influenced the perspective on human development. On the one hand, there was the birth of Psychoanalysis—a school of thought that had as its focus the freeing of the vital energies and on the other hand was the formal birth of the psychology as a ‘science’, which attempted to study the human psyche in an objective fashion.

The latter view prevailed in defining the scope of the academic Psychology that is based on the ‘scientific approach’ and treats the outward—surface human life as an arena for the ‘test of values’. The aim of such a Psychology is to be able to predict and control human life scientifically and all references to psycho-spiritual forces above, below and deeper than the ordinary range of human consciousness are relegated to the world of ‘ideas’, if they are not observable to the rational mind or held practical in their utility in everyday life.

4.2.2 *The Indian Cultural View*

The keynote of the tendency of the Indian conception of human life is to begin at the spiritual centre and then attempt the expression of this deeper view in different external forms and rhythms of cultural expression (Sri Aurobindo 1997c). The vigour of the external cultural forms depends on the extent to which the societal forms have been able to express the central spiritual idea across different cultural periods. The *chaturvarna theory* discussed in Chap. 3 and the *ashrama-dharma theory* of Hinduism which structures different phases of human life and the duties therein based on a higher spiritual ideal are apt exemplars of this tendency. When the external societal forms become corrupted, rigid and mechanical and lose touch with the original spiritual truth that inspired their inception (e.g. *Chaturvarna theory* in recent times), the only hope is to reconnect with the original spiritual force and create new forms, in step with the evolutionary time-spirit.

The Indian view of knowledge creation, i.e. the Indian view of science too is based on this view. The search for Truth in the Indian tradition begins with the realisation that there are ranges of deeper and higher consciousness beyond the rational mind—it opens to this higher truth of the suprarational ranges of consciousness through yoga—that according to Sri Aurobindo (1999) as mentioned earlier is nothing but *practical psychology*. Sri Aurobindo (1997c) states that the methods of yogic science are not different from the scientific ‘test of values’ found useful by the European rational Mind. These methods of ordinary science—*experience, experimentation, analysis and synthesis, intuition*—are also the

methods of the yogic science except for the fact that ‘test of values’ are applied to explore the truths of the *Soul* and *Spirit* and look into the higher realms of existence and higher possibilities of being and their practicality of being manifested in human life (Sri Aurobindo 1997c).

There have been attempts in the past decade by Indian psychologists to explore the rich vistas of the yogic tradition and its relevance to understanding the human psyche (e.g. Cornelissen et al. 2010; Dalal and Misra 2010; Joshi and Cornellsen 2004; Rao et al. 2008). The yogic perspectives can also be studied for their potential to extend our current understanding of human development and ways of facilitating developmental change. The present work is one such effort in this direction.

4.3 Human Development as a Field of Inquiry: A Historical View

The very notion of ‘development’ and ‘evolution’ in the academic discipline of Human Development is an offspring of the nineteenth century European cultural milieu in which it took birth. When viewed from Sri Aurobindo’s (1997b) perspective on the Human Cycle, the dominant metatheoretical themes in field of human development can be seen as largely a result of the *rational-individualistic* stage of social development. There are more recent developmental perspectives that are attempting to move beyond the individualistic to the *subjective* stage. However, these perspectives are in my view mostly confined to an exploration of the surface subjectivity as they do not reach the higher and deeper aspects of the human subjectivity as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo.

It would be useful here to examine the issues that were considered important in the *foundational period* of forming the discipline of Human Development and find out the themes have endured in keeping with the dominant *rationalistic* agenda of the age and which themes have moved into the background.

4.3.1 The Issues of the Foundational Period

The early developmental thought in the nineteenth and early twentieth was varied, spanning diverse disciplines and not yet organised into a coherent systematic enterprise. According to Cairns (1998), some of the main issues foundational period of Human Development (1882–1912) were:

1. The ontogeny of consciousness and intelligence.
2. Intentionality and correspondence between thought and action.
3. The relationship between evolution and development.
4. The nature–nurture debate.

5. The effects of early experiences and when development ceases.
6. Moral development. (p. 57).
7. How the science may contribute to the society.

In an analysis of the contemporary advances made in the field of Human Development, Cairns (1998) notes that while the discipline has become more systemized, the approaches to development still remain varied and diverse. There needs to be a deeper understanding on some of the above-mentioned issues (e.g. relationship between brain processes and cognitive activity) and certain issues still remain controversial, e.g. the nature–nurture debate. The issue of the endpoint of development is largely focused on the collecting data about the normative and experimental change across different domains and periods of development. Though the issues related with morality and perfectibility of human beings have been one of the earliest in human development as a field of inquiry (e.g. Tetens 1777, as cited in Cairns 1998), they have been not been given sufficient attention by the developmental thinkers and this domain is likely to come to the forefront in the future given its centrality to the human condition.

Thus, we see a trend in the discipline of human development to move out of the philosophical realm—i.e. ‘the world of ideas’ and side-step questions like the perfectibility of the race and endpoint of human development beyond the immediate material reality and focus more on the observable patterns of human life as they are expressed in interaction with society. This omission, when seen from Sri Aurobindo’s philosophical–spiritual perspective, is likely to prove ineffectual in giving any lasting understanding of the issues that plague humanity the most—pain, suffering and death. The most often-asked existential questions by humanity are—*What is the aim and purpose of human existence? Is there a divine plan guiding the universe or are we the result of blind, random chance circumstances? What are the possibilities of further growth and evolution of individual human consciousness and the society? Is there a possibility of achieving a stable state of higher harmony within one self and the collective?* The answer to these questions as well issues related to the ‘nature of consciousness’ or ‘correspondence between intentionality, will, thought and action’ can be more adequately be sought by widening the frame through which we look at human development. From Sri Aurobindo and The Mother’s perspective, only an integral view of the human potential and its higher developmental possibilities can provide a theoretical and practical base to grapple effectively with these existential questions and issues.

In this context, it also becomes important to examine the manner in which the very notions of development and evolution have been historically conceptualised within disciplines of human development and contemporary trends. Further, it would be useful to examine the broad metatheories that have defined the scope of contemporary field of human development and link these metatheories with the potential of Sri Aurobindo’s writings in providing a useful alternate perspective on human development (Chap. 5).

4.3.2 The Concept of ‘Development’ and ‘Evolution’

There are numerous ways in which developmental thinkers define ‘development’ and understand ‘evolution’. The only consensus is that development and evolution are both about *change*. The contemporary developmental theorists draw inspiration from the works of early developmental thinkers ranging from philosophers to embryologists to biologists. Two core ideas from the nineteenth century biological thought have shaped the discipline of human development. These are (a) K. E. Von Baer’s concept of the ‘Developmental Principle’ and (b) C. R. Darwin’s Evolutionary Theory (Cairns 1998).

The noted embryologist Karl Von Baer (1828–1837) gave a concept of the *developmental principle* that is very influential in explaining the ontogenetic change. He states: “Development proceeds, in successive stages, from the more general to more specific and relatively homogeneous states to increasingly differentiated hierarchically organized structures” (as cited in Cairns 1998, p. 28).

This idea of development competed with two other views that vied for prominence in the nineteenth century—Preformism and Epigenesis. The concept of preformism was based on the idea that the essential characteristics are preformed at the beginning of ontogenesis and the child is in a sense a miniature adult and it is only the size and the relations of the parts that changes in development. There was no reference to the concept of developmental transformations. This view of development was later dismissed for the lack of support by developmental thinkers (Cairns 1998).

The other major idea of this period was epigenesis that looked at development as a series of transformations with the possibility of emergence of new or novel features at different stages. The central question asked by the epigenetic thinkers was—‘What accounts for the sequential and orderly nature of developmental change and its endpoint?’ The developmental thinkers in nineteenth century were hesitant to use teleological vitalistic concepts like Aristotelian entelechy—as it was non-observable. A theory of that era that became popular as an explanation for development came from *Naturphilosophie*, a significant philosophical movement in Germany. The recapitulation theory was proposed by Ernst Haeckel who stated that ‘*ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny*’ and that organisms in embryogenesis experience a fast-forward replay of the evolutionary history. An interesting feature of this theory was that it looked at development as a predictable and orderly process with novel features added at the terminal or mature phases of development (Cairns 1998).

These ideas became the centre of a debate with Von Baer emphasising development as a continuing process of differentiation and organisation and the fact that *novelties could be seen at each stage of development and not merely the terminal phase*. The early debate on development was thus dominated by the biologists and embryologists and their formulations influenced the way in which the later developmental thinkers conceived development. The ideas of Sigmund Freud and G. Stanley Hall were influenced by the recapitulation hypothesis and

theories of Heinz Werner, James Mark Baldwin and Jean Piaget by the ideas of Von Baer.

Heinz Werner extended the developmental principle of Von Baer to propose the *orthogenetic principle* that states that “whenever there is development it proceeds from an initial state of relative globality and lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation and hierarchic integration” (Werner 1957, p. 126).

Another account to explain the directionality of development came from the works of Charles Darwin in the second half of the nineteenth century with the concept of evolution of the species. The two key concepts of his theory were *natural selection* and *survival of the fittest*. Although evolutionary thought predates Darwin (e.g. Early Hindu and Greek thought; Jean Lamarck, Herbert Spencer), most often the term evolution within contemporary discipline of Human Development refers specifically to the Darwinian concept of biological evolution. While the term development is largely used to refer to changes in ontogenesis or individual development, the term evolution is classically used to denote changes in larger aggregates and refers to the phylogenetic change (Cairns 1998).

However, there is also a parallel trend within academic field of human development to use the principles of evolution to explain ontogenetic development of biological, cognitive and even social and personality processes. In this sense, evolution is often understood as a type of developmental process. For instance, William Stern in the first half of the twentieth century presented a framework for developmental in which evolutionary and individual developmental processes were tightly interwoven: “In the concept of development lies not merely a bare sequence of states and phases, but evolution; preparation, germination, growth, maturation, and recession as a meaningful process that is by nature of an organized kind” (Stern 1938, p. 30 as cited in Overton 2006, p. 40). This conception of ‘development as evolution’ is organised and its patterns of growth and decline are meaningful. It is very different from studying development merely as change resulting from additive gains or losses across the life span (e.g. Baltes et al. 1998).

One significant developmental thinker from the foundational period who influenced later theories was James Mark Baldwin. Baldwin’s theory of development is not only significant because he further influenced the works of developmental theorists like Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, G.H. Mead and Lawrence Kohlberg but also because his ideas have been resurrected in contemporary times (by biologists, philosophers, developmental and evolutionary psychologists) as having important implications for understanding the process of evolution. Baldwin was concerned about the fact that Darwin’s theory may not give the mind a significant role in evolution. He attempted to demonstrate that organism through its own clever activities could hasten the process of evolution of the species. He proposed that the ‘accommodations’ that an individual in his life makes could be passed on to the next generation in form of ‘adaptations’. This became known as the principle of *organic selection* or the *Baldwin effect* whereby the individuals by solving problems in their own lifetime would change the conditions of competition for their children and increase the possibility of the same problem being solved in

the future (Dennett 1995; Cairns 1998). Baldwin was looking for a developmental mechanism that would supplement the concept of natural selection. In human ontogeny, he proposed a hierarchical theory of evolution that comprises five stages. It is interesting to note that while Baldwin wrote about the mechanical aspect of evolution, he also believed in the *role of consciousness to guide the process of evolution*.

Baldwin believed that the highest stage of development is marked by the experience of cosmic consciousness and of unity which brings together the highest morals, aesthetics and the highest science (Wilber 2000). Although one may find numerous references to Baldwin's theory in contemporary field of Human Development and Evolutionary Psychology, the spiritual aspect of his theory is not emphasised.

4.3.3 The Contemporary Conceptualisation of Development

The most popular conceptualisation of development among the contemporary developmental thinkers is that it refers to the '*changes in observed behaviour across age*' (Overton 2006, p. 22). An analysis of this definition can yield insight about the focus areas and problems of conceptualising development.

The focus on *observable human behaviour* is in keeping with the demands of the scientific method which emphasizes observable, objectively verifiable units of analysis. The informed common sense understanding points to the fact that human psyche is complex and all human experience cannot be reduced to an observable behaviour which is objectively verifiable. Further, there are many experiences that cannot be directly observed by the 'other' (e.g. higher states of consciousness). An alternative method is to tap into subjective experience as source for understanding development with exploration of the possibilities of introducing internal rigour to order subjective experience and observations. This possibility has not been explored with sufficient seriousness by developmental theorists.

Another issue relates to the fact that development is about *change*. What kinds of *changes* can really be considered developmental for not all change is necessarily developmental change? Developmental change entails five necessary defining features according to Overton (2010): "(1) *organization of processes* (also termed *structure and system*), (2) *order and sequence*, (3) *direction*, (4) *epigenesis and emergence*, and (5) *relative permanence and irreversibility* (p. 4)".

According to Overton (2006) a broad, inclusive understanding of development can be based on an understanding of two types of changes—transformational change and variational change. *Transformational change* involves changes of pattern, form and organisation. This kind of change brings in novel forms in the process of development. The complexity of forms increases with change and this complexity is that of pattern rather than of a linear additive of the complexity of elements. *Variational change* deals with the degree to which a change varies from an assumed standard. The complexity of the change that is variational is additive in nature.

A typical example of the transformational change is embryological changes where through a process of differentiation and integration, the embryo changes from a single-celled zygote to a highly organised system in a fully developed foetus. In the cognitive domain, the action of the child may undergo transformations to become a novel possibility of symbolic thought which further develops into reflective symbolic thought (e.g. Piaget's Theory).

The variational change in the cognitive domain on the other hand refers to the variants of thought (e.g. different thinking styles). While the transformational change is identified with the concepts like discontinuity, irreversibility, sequence and directionality, the variational change is concerned with concepts of continuity, reversibility and cyclicity. When change takes into account both life forms and physical systems, the transformational change is identified with what has been called the '*arrow of time*' and variational change with the '*cycle of time*' (Overton 1994a, Overton 1994b; Valsiner 1994).

There is a trend in discipline of human development to view developmental change from either/or split framework. The split frame looks at either the transformational change *or* the variational change as the 'true' change. Some of the other dimensions that have been cast into the split frame are—Is nature more important in development or nurture? Is development continuous or discontinuous? Is development universal or particular/cultural? Is development directional/irreversible or reversible? Is developmental change mechanistic or vitalistic in nature? The central question here is—*which one* these poles is the true pole of development? In research, often the empirical data is interpreted in order to support one pole of development and this restricts the process of enquiry. Overton (2006) writes about the need to heal this split through a relational framework that considers the complementary contributions of the different dimensions to explain the totality of developmental change. Here, the value of theoretical perspectives that can recognise the complementarity of different dimensions of development and assign it to their respective place within the totality, are emphasised.

Another dimension of developmental discourse is based on the conceptualisation of *successful* development. Some contemporary life span theorists look at development from the perspective of developmental gains and losses. The focus here is to look for patterns of stability and change in human ontogeny. These theorists define successful development as a process involving maximisation of gains and minimisation of losses (Baltes et al. 1998).

In sum, it can be said that the discipline of human development is rich with the varied conceptualizations of development and evolution. However, some of the earlier conceptions of development have viewed development in a much larger frame (e.g. Baldwin) as compared with the later theories which scan only the surface development of an individual or the species. For instance, one of the widest frames in contemporary theories is provided by Lev Vygotsky who looks at development as comprising of four lines of developmental change—e.g. phylogenetic change, socio-cultural change, ontogenetic change and microgenetic change (changes that take place over small periods of time). The entire dimension

of deeper inner change (related to soul and the spirit) and the wider cosmic story of development is missing from this conceptualization of development.

As regards the nature of the process of developmental change, it is interesting to note that many of the developmental ideas (e.g. Baldwin, Werner, Stern, Overton) are partially in sync with the Integral—evolutionary thought of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. However, the scope of study of developmental change is radically different as the Integral—evolutionary perspective taps a wider scope of study than has traditionally been attempted within discipline of Human Development.

The conceptualization of development and evolution discussed above is implicitly guided by the philosophical assumptions of the dominant metatheories which provide the frame through which one can view the developmental processes.

4.4 The Dominant Metatheories in Human Development

A global understanding of the way in which the discipline of Human Development approaches knowledge building can be understood at a metatheoretical level of discourse that engages with reflective understandings. This section examines theoretical contributions of the contemporary developmental philosopher—Willis. F. Overton. The work of Overton have been chosen for analysis as he looks at the field of human development in terms of the broad philosophical lines of development and facilitates a good in-depth understanding of the key forces and ideas that have given this discipline of inquiry its current form.

Overton (2006) has made an interesting analysis of the dominant metatheories within the discipline of Human Development. Metatheories are broad templates, worldviews or cosmologies or stories of theory development which drive specific theoretical perspectives.

The two dominant metatheories within the discipline of Human Development are the *neo-Darwinian metatheory* which represents the scientific-empirical approach based on objectivity in studying the developing individual and the *relational metatheory* that attempts to heal the divide between the subjective and objective aspects of human development.

4.4.1 The Neo-Darwinian Metatheory

This is the most dominant metatheory within the field of and is also known as the *modern synthesis*. It is being used by Psychology, Philosophy and other fields as grand model that can explain the nature of developmental change. Modern synthesis was born in the 1940s by bringing together two theories in a single framework—i.e. the classical Darwinian Theory and the genetic theory of Mendel. The synthesis is based on the Darwinian principles of random variation and natural

selection and makes a rigid split between the inner and the outer factors as they influence development.

The Ontological Assumptions: According to this world-view, the terrestrial reality is the only reality and there is no divine reality. The process of evolution is a wholly naturalistic phenomenon and there is no cosmic guidance in evolution. The process of evolution is wholly non-purposive, non-progressive, amoral and meaningless (Griffin 1999).

According to Overton (2006), this metatheory includes theoretical positions that split ‘nature’ (genetics, biology) which is seen to be the ontological Real *inside*, and is distinct from ‘nurture’ (environment, culture) which is the ontological Real *outside*. It was Descartes (1596–1650) who introduced the concepts of Splitting and Foundationalism as the key themes in the story of scientific knowledge. ‘*Splitting* is the formation of a conceptual dichotomy—an exclusive either-or relationship—and *foundationalism* is the claim that one or the other elements of the dichotomy constitutes the ultimate Reality or the bedrock of certainty’ (Overton 2003, p. 18).

The result was that under the influence of Cartesian epistemology—form and matter, nature and nurture, subject and object could be *split-off* into competing alternatives. The idea of foundationalism is based on the concept of the *Real* and defined as that which is not dependent on something else—that which cannot be reduced to something else. The split foundation in the Modernity discourse was not a vantage point, or a point of view but the Absolute, final and fixed bedrock which could not be negotiated or questioned. The Split neo-Darwinian metatheory thus views the “*ultimate nature of the universe, and hence the nature of the psychological subject, as reactive, uniform, and fixed*” (Overton 2006, p. 30).

The early effect of the split can be seen in the way in which the concept of ‘science’ was conceived. According to Overton (2006), the empiricist branch of modernity (e.g. Hobbes) split observation from interpretation and thinkers like Locke, Berkeley and Hume further suppressed the human subjectivity, to create the concept of *objectivism*—a view that the material reality exists independent of the mind of the knower. The reality therefore needed to be investigated independent of the human subjective impression or thoughts. It also split the body from mind and matter from the spirit and identified *materialism* as the base of the ultimate foundational *Real*.

In a split metatheory, *matter* and *form* become a dichotomy, i.e. either matter *or* form is seen to be real and the other is reducible to it. If we say that the split matter is Real, we subscribe to a *materialist ontology* which emphasises that form, pattern and organisation are appearances that are reducible to their individual elements and components, i.e. matter. For instance, the nervous system in this ontological position is reducible to neurons and a community is seen as an aggregate of individuals (Overton 2006). On the other hand, if we assert that split form is Real, then we subscribe to an *idealist ontology* where elements and form achieve identity only in context of the system pattern or form of the Real. For instance, community would be foundational and individuals would be the expression of this form. In Modern Synthesis, it is the *materialist ontology* which is emphasised.

The Epistemological Position: Knowledge is created by the human organism through the process adaptation. The rigid separation of the inner and the outer by the geneticists and the Darwinian evolutionists are knowledge creation perspectives that emphasise a *unidirectional* causation. The key to the process of change for the neo-Darwinian theories lies in the genetic makeup of the individual whereby the genes through a one-way linear outflow causes phenotypes by supplying ‘information’, ‘instructions’ or ‘programs’. The internal genetic aggregate therefore produces *random variation*. The phenotype constitutes the way in which this variability can be observed and expressed. The environment operates on this variability as an *independent* agent to ‘select’ those characteristics that help in survival (Overton 2006).

The Metamethod: According to Overton (2003), the metatheoretical themes of Modern period define the metamethod of the neo-Darwinian metatheory. These are—*splitting, foundationalism, materialism, objectivism* and *empiricism* which characterise a completely exclusive metamethod called *mechanical explanation*. This method had variously been called neopositivism and later instrumentalism, conventionalism and functionalism. This metamethod splits the scientific enquiry into two discrete compartments—*description and explanation*. There are three steps in mechanical explanations—the first is descriptive and the other two explanatory. These are:

Step 1. Reduction-Description: The first step of mechanical inquiry is to reduce the commonsense object of inquiry into objective, fixed, unchanging foundational elements or atoms—an approach that has been characterised by terms like reductionism, elementarism, atomism, analytic attitude, etc. According to Overton (2003), for a long time such atoms were the concepts of *stimulus* and *response*—in more contemporary times it could be *neurons, behaviours* or *contextual factors*—all that can be reduced to the observable, the visible and the material.

From the perspective of the reductionist approach, concepts like stages of development, mental organisations or any dynamic systems that change as a part of development are suspect as they are seen as derivative and not directly observable. The recent popularity of the microgenetic method (e.g. Kuhn et al. 1995; Siegler 1996) is in fact based on this broader metamethod where cognitive development is studied through an intensive trial-by-trial analysis that reduces the notion of development to the molecular bedrock of visible behavioural differences.

Step 2. Causal Explanation: The second discrete step of mechanical inquiry is *causal explanation* which is an attempt to find a relation between the elements described in step 1. More specifically, it looks at the antecedents of behavioural change and identifies the causes that meet the criteria of necessity and sufficiency. This constitutes the *explanation* (also called mechanisms) within this metamethod. The nature of causes that are used in the split metatheory are based strictly on the observable efficient and the material causes and do not look at the broad dynamic features of the psychological systems.

Step 3. Induction of the Interpretation-free Hypotheses Theories and Laws: The third step is based on the assumption that ultimate explanations in scientific inquiry must be based in fixed unchanging laws and these must be derived

inductively as empirical generalisations from repeated observation of the cause–effect relations (step 2). The weak generalisations from step 2 become interpretation-free *hypotheses* and strong generalisations become the interpretation-free *theories* and the strongest inductions become the *laws*. These empirical generalisations further become the basis for the deductive arguments.

Overton (2003) points out that the assertion that mechanical description and explanation can give us an access to certainty in understanding the laws of human development is now widely questioned by developmental philosophers. However, the hold of this metamethod remains strong on a majority of empirical researchers as these methods are passed down the generations of unreflective researchers who have been encouraged not to delve into philosophical–metatheoretical realms and have an attitude towards research that can be represented by the motto—*Don't think, find out*.

The Nature of Development: The neo-Darwinian framework is a story of *variational change* which has eliminated the possibility of transformational change from its script altogether. The changes in *form* and *organisation* of thought, personality, emotions, etc., are excluded out of the theoretical conceptualization. In this theory, 'nature' provides the variational base and the 'nurture' winnows or shapes the variation. The main feature of this change is *adaptation* or *adjustment* to the external environment where the context (socio-cultural factors) creates the choice for the best fit—the survival of the fittest (Overton 2006).

Representative Theoretical Perspectives: In the neo-Darwinian metatheories, the nature of causation is unidirectional with a focus *either* on the (surface) inside story (specifically biological determinism) or on the outside story (social determinism). For instance, the inside story puts forth the argument that the real capacity for violence is contained in the human genes and that the environment acts merely as a trigger. *Sociobiology* as field of study is based on the 'biological grounding' of human nature and represents the (surface) inner story.

On the other hand, the outside story would emphasise that as there exists sufficient variability for gentleness and violence in the human behaviour, it is the socio-cultural factors that influence the expression of violence. The most dominant outside story is the *Behaviouristic* approach to human development. The work of B. F. Skinner traces its roots to the assumptions made by the neo-Darwinian story. In his theory, the random behavioral variability operates on the environment and gets selected through the consequences of action. The *Behavioral Ecology* framework of Urie Bronfenbrenner also gives primacy to socio-cultural context in shaping human behaviour and is an exemplar of the outside story (Overton 2006).

The information processing approaches often subscribe to variational change rather than transformational change. For instance, Kuhn's Theory of knowledge acquisition strategies in children, consider developmental change to be variational in nature. While many different combinations of the theoretical approaches mentioned above are used to study development, a fact that remains same for all theories is that they adopt a split framework to understand development as variational change by asking the question—*which one* of the factors (biological/socio-cultural) causes developmental change.

To sum, the neo-Darwinian theoretical frameworks I feel make the following assumptions about the nature of the developmental process (Griffin 1999; Overton 2006):

- The ultimate nature of the universe, and hence the nature of the psychological subject, is reactive, uniform and fixed.
- There is no cosmic guidance in evolution.
- Evolution is wholly naturalistic.
- Random variation and natural selection are the factors influencing evolution.
- There are no qualitative jumps in evolution.
- Evolution is wholly non-purposive, atheistic, amoral, non-progressive and meaningless.
- There is a split in biological and socio-cultural domains and they do not co-evolve.
- Change is understood as a variational and not as a transformational process.
- There is a focus on positivism and materialism.

4.4.2 The Relational Metatheory

The relational-developmental theoretical framework has more recently become popular with developmental thinkers. This newer conceptual scheme is inclusive in nature attempts to heal the Cartesian split between inside and outside, subject and object, biological and socio-cultural, form and process, nature and nurture. These bipolar dimensions are not seen to be independent and isolated units but represent alternate points of view on the same whole. These bipolar concepts are interpenetrating and interdependent and have a dialectical relation.

The Ontological Position: The relational metatheory views the “*ultimate nature of both universe and persons as active, organized, and changing*” (Overton 2006, p. 30). The relational metatheory rejects splitting, foundationalism and atomism. The reality is no longer defined by extreme either or Cartesian splits but moves to a centre or a ‘middle kingdom’ position where entities and ideas are represented not as pure forms, but rather as *forms that flow across fuzzy boundaries*. Instead of a bedrock foundations of certainty, there appears the concept of ‘groundings’ which are contextual and analysis is about creating categories, not about cutting nature at its joints.

To sum, according to Overton and Ennis (2006) the ontology of relationism is not a substance ontology but *process ontology* based on the ontology of *becoming*. In contrast to exclusive categories of substance, fixity, stability, uniformity found in split ontologies, the relational ontology emphasises process, activity and change.

The Epistemological Position: Overton (2006) notes that “understood relationally, epistemology is a narrative about how we know what is Real, and ontology is a narrative about the Real as we know it” (p. 54). The relational

epistemology is based on *reason, observation and understanding* and puts an emphasis on replacing the split and exclusive either/or categories of knowing with inclusive categories. The inclusive categories are achieved in this metatheory through the apparently paradoxical task of establishing both the identity between the opposite categories, while at the same time retaining the opposite quality of the categories, as two moments in analysis. The paradox is resolved by moving to a new higher synthesis that is capable of resolving the contradictions. Overton (2006) points out that this view is based on the concept of the dialectic as given by Hegel (1770–1831). For Hegel, history was a necessary dynamic process of growth, and change was defined by the dialectical process through which concepts of a system *differentiate* and move towards *integration*. The dialectical movement consists of three aspects. These are—the *thesis* or the affirmation of a position, the *antithesis*—the negation of the thesis that is inherent within it and the *synthesis*—a new unity and integration that coordinates the thesis and the antithesis. These three moments that define the process of knowing are, i.e. the identity of the opposites, the opposites of identity and the synthesis are briefly discussed below.

The Identity of the Opposites: According to Overton (2006), the dialectical relation can be illustrated by the example master–slave relation given by the Philosopher Hegel. In the master–slave concept, it is impossible to understand the freedom of the master, except in context of the bondage of slavery and conversely, it becomes impossible to understand the constraint of slavery independent of the freedom of the master. It is not possible to understand either the concept of freedom or the concept of slavery, in absence of each other. Hegel referred to this relational flow of categories as the ‘flow of the opposites’.

The bipolar concepts can be likened to this image for it is useless to ask which hand is drawing and which hand is being drawn. Both are drawing each other and their relation is not additive but mutually constitutive. In Hegelian terms, it represents the ‘Identity of the Opposites’. Some of the fundamental dichotomies that have characterised the field of developmental enquiry and can be viewed relationally have been compiled by Overton (2003). These are: Subject–Object, Mind–Body, Biology–Person, Culture–Biology, Person–Culture, Person–Situation, Intrapsychic–Interpersonal, Nature–Nurture, Stability–Change, Variation–Transformation, Reason–Emotion, Form–Matter, Universal–Particular, Transcendental–Immanent, Analysis–Synthesis and Unity–Diversity.

The Opposites of Identity: While the concept of the ‘Identity of the Opposites’ gives an understanding of the way in which the bipolar categories mutually constitute each other, it does not provide the opportunity for serious empirical work. According to Overton (2003), though the relational metatheory rejects the absolute realism of modernity, it also does not subscribe to the absolute relativism of postmodernism. The postmodernism celebrates interpretation and values it to the exclusion of observation. This leads to a complete relativism where there is no neutral territory to decide between your judgment and my judgment and all knowledge is presumed to be purely subjective and hence relative. The relational metatheory is based on the view of ‘relative relativism’ and attempts to avoid the chaos of absolute relativity and establishes sufficient stability in order to make

empirical inquiry possible and meaningful. Thus, the relational terms can also be viewed as the opposites in a moment of analysis and assert their own unique identity that differentiates it from other identities. These differential qualities provide the relatively stable platforms for empirical inquiry which can be seen as *standpoints*, *points of view* or *lines of sight* as they do not represent absolute foundations. The implication of this view is that human development can be understood when viewed from diversity of multiple interrelated lines of sight.

Synthesis—The View from the Centre: In the concept of the opposites of identity, the resolution to the contradiction of polarities is not to be found by collapsing one of the polarities to the other but by moving above the conflict and finding a novel system that has the capacity to coordinate the polarities and resolve the conflict. For instance, the conflicting demands of ‘Biology’ and ‘Culture’ may be coordinated within the ‘Person’ as a developing organism or the conflicting positions of the ‘Person’ and ‘Biology’ may be reconciled through ‘Culture’ as developing system (Overton 2003).

The Metamethod: The relational metatheory attempts a re-approachment between the modern and postmodern methods by transforming the traditional dichotomies of observation versus interpretation into relational bipolar dimensions. The concept of interpretation that is emphasised by Overton (2006) is based on hermeneutical thinker Dilthey’s method of using interpretation as a method that results in *understanding*. In relational metamethod, the modernist ‘mechanical explanation’ and the postmodernist ‘hermeneutic understanding’ become integrated in the following manner:

Step 1. Relational Analysis—Synthesis Replaces Split Reductionism: The atomism of mechanical explanation and its split reductionism is replaced by the concept of a holistic integration that is based both on analysis and synthesis.

Step 2. Relational Conditions Explanation Replaces Split Causes: The characteristic feature of mechanical explanation and hermeneutic understanding have been the reliance on ‘causes’ and ‘action patterns’, respectively. In the relational metamethod, these two become integrated. Rather than inquiry into interpretation-free analysis of causes of behaviour or development (as in mechanical explanation), the relational metamethod looks at the *conditions* that are associated with development. For instance, if we talk of development of a plant, then food and water are necessary conditions for the plant to grow, but they do not *cause* the development of a plant. Similarly, nature and nurture factors are seen to be conditions that affect human development rather than being the causal factors. Thus, the relational metatheory in its non-foundational stance leaves open the question of the cause and has as its focus the *mechanisms* through which the development takes place (Overton 2003).

Step 3. Abductive Logic Replaces Split Induction and Deduction: Instead of the split induction and deduction, the relational metamethod introduces the abduction logic as the synthesis of the opposite identity of theory and data. It was originally described by the pragmatist philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce and was termed as *inference to the best explanation*. In this method, all *observation* under consideration and all *background theoretical ideas* are arranged in the two Escherian

hands. The coordination of the two is attempted by asking the question—‘What must be assumed or inferred which can constitute the best explanation for the phenomenon under observation?’ This then becomes the best explanation of the phenomena under study and constitutes a novel synthetic feature in the study of the phenomenon under consideration.

For instance, in Piaget’s Theory, children around 6–7 years of age are observed to be able to understand that concepts maintain same quantity despite the changes in qualitative appearances (i.e. conservation) (O) then Piaget from a theoretical background of relational framework can form the abductive inference that the best explanation (E) of this observation is that a certain system of cognition with features of reversibility of thought (concrete operations) must be available to children of that age. By this logic we can have a conditional statement—‘If (E) concrete operational system, then (O) conservation is expected’. Thus, given the (O), conclusion is that ‘concrete operational structure explains the understanding of conservation’ (Overton 2003).

The Nature of Development: The relational metatheory views change as both transformational and variational in nature and views these two dimensions of change not as competing but as interrelated features of development. Within the dialectical context, thesis-antithesis represents the cyclical dimension of change. These cycles are however never closed, as they would then form a circle. Thus, when a circle is opened a bit, it does not return precisely to its starting point and with the continuation of activity forms a *spiral* (the synthesis or integration). The spiral nature of development is coordination of both the ‘cycle of time’ (variational change) and the ‘arrow of time’ (transformational change) perspectives. It is with the repetition of spirals that a *directionality* is given to developmental change for the synthesis represents a new dynamic action system—a *new thesis*. Thus, begins a new growth cycle of differentiation and integration.

The Representative Theoretical Perspectives: The developmentally oriented dialectical theories of Jean Piaget, Heinz Werner, James Mark Baldwin, William Stern, Erik Erikson; the attachment theory of John Bowlby and object relations theories Henry Stack Sullivan and Donald Winnicott are according to Overton (2006) exemplars of the *relational person standpoint*. Antonio Damasio’s (1999) work on the biological basis of psychological self is an illustration of the *biological relational standpoint*. The works of Jaan Valsiner (1998) on social nature of human psychology and the works of Boesch (1991) are representative of the *relational culture standpoint*.

To sum, some of the key assumptions I feel of the relational metatheory about the Human development are:

- There is a focus on ontology of Becoming and the ultimate nature of both universe and persons is seen as active, organised and changing.
- Change is both variational and transformational in nature.
- Change processes are dialectical in nature and can be characterised by the process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

- In addition to adaptation, it looks at a progressive organisation as an essential part of the change process.
- Development is directional and spiral in nature coordinating the concepts of the arrow of time and the cycle of time.
- The personal, cultural and biological domains are not separate but tend to interpenetrate and interdefine each other.

4.5 Conclusion

The philosophical works of Willis. F. Overton give us a comprehensive understanding of the metatheoretical perspectives that are dominant within contemporary field of Human Development. When seen from Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's perspective, these metatheoretical perspectives give us an understanding of the *progress* that has been made within this discipline of inquiry as well as some of the *limitations* that constrain the complete study of the potential of human development. (See Chap. 3 for nature of progress, [Sects. 3.5](#) and [3.6](#)) The dominant metatheoretical perspectives through which the discipline has progressed may be considered to be the state of a *static equilibrium* (The Mother 2003) gained for a time within the field of psychological inquiry which is likely to be broken as there are many aspects of human development that these perspectives have partialled out of their scope of study and whose understanding is essential for writing the comprehensive story of human development.

The progress that has been attempted through the *neo-Darwinian metatheory* is in essence the attempt of the Western-European Mind to find light in rationalised knowledge and a rationalised view of human life. Sri Aurobindo (1997c) states that in the European view:

an ordered knowledge of the powers, forces, possibilities of physical Nature and of the psychology of man as a mental and physical being is then the only true science. An ordered use of that knowledge for a progressive social efficiency and well-being, which will make his brief existence more efficient, more tolerable, more comfortable, happier, better appointed, more luxuriously enriched with the pleasures of the mind, life and body, is the only true art of life (p. 67).

The fact that according to Overton (2006), the neo-Darwinian framework has as its key ideas a focus on *materialism* and *objectivism* is in consonance with Sri Aurobindo's understanding of the European culture in which this metatheory initially took shape. The limitation of this metatheory can be summarised well by referring to the three basic errors (also mentioned in [Chap. 1](#)) that plagued disciplines of psychological thought in their formative period according to Sri Aurobindo (1998):

...the *materialistic error* whereby psychologists identify the study of mind with the study of body...The *skeptical error* which prevents any bold and clear-eyed investigation of the hidden profundities of our subjective existence...The *objective error* which leads the psychologist to study others from outside instead of seeing his true field of knowledge and laboratory of experiment in himself (p. 177).

The hold of the theoretical perspectives representative of the neo-Darwinian metatheory remains strong even in contemporary discipline of human development where the majority of the research is conducted in the empirical tradition that subscribes to the objective study of split variables through the mechanical explanation metamethod. The focus on objectivity and materialism has severely constrained the study of the richness of the human subjectivity in the initial formative period of discipline of Human Development.

The error of objectivism and materialism have been to some extent been addressed by the developmental theories representative of the relational metatheory. However, the subjective gaze of this metatheory is not deep enough and scans only the superficial aspects of human subjectivity. It is not able to fathom the profundity of the deeper levels of consciousness nor have a complete view of the complexity of the forces that shape the human person and his evolutionary potential. The yogic science perspectives based in the Indian culture are a rich source of deeper knowledge of human subjectivity and need to find a greater legitimate space within the academic psychological disciplines.

Thus, from the perspective of the view of 'Human Cycle' or the stages of social development given by Sri Aurobindo, we can say that the discipline of Human development has taken its first step towards the *subjective age* by attempting to study the aspects of human subjectivity without being constrained by the objectivist view of science. However, the relational metatheory in its philosophical assumptions is still embedded within the limitations of rationality. According to Sri Aurobindo, reason is not the highest light but a necessary and crucial step in human progress as it helps us refine the mental crudities—the superstitions, the pre-judgments, the prejudices and obscurities of processes of thought. In Sri Aurobindo's words "Science is a right knowledge, in the end only of processes, but still the knowledge of processes too is part of a total wisdom and essential to a wide and a clear approach towards the deeper Truth behind" (Sri Aurobindo 1998, p. 186).

The relational metatheory with its process-oriented ontology of 'Becoming' leads to this view of science. According to Sri Aurobindo (1998), this conscious delimitation in ignorance attempted at the cost of alternative aspects of the wide truth may in fact be useful as it may be the demand of our developing imperfect mental nature for a while, but its usefulness in wider evolutionary scheme is dependent on the condition that this willed self-limitation is impelled to disappear, when its utility is exhausted. It seems to me that given the current evolutionary crises of humanity, the rational mind has made progress but is reaching its limits in terms of providing decisive solutions, the existential problems of humanity. It is an opportune time for the academic discipline of human development to explore a deeper perspective with alternate ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that can open to view a new relation between the human and divine, provide a deeper, wider and higher understanding of the richness of the human subjectivity. A perspective is needed that is capable of integrating the varied

developmental spirals that are part of rich texture of human development—body, emotions, mind, ethics, aesthetics, culture, soul and spirit—into a higher Integral synthesis—in theory and in practice.

It is to such a perspective given by Sri Aurobindo that I turn my gaze next, in an attempt to explore the potential of the Integral-Evolutionary frame to function as an alternative metatheory and give a future direction to the study of human development. To reiterate a central idea:

There are two kinds of knowledge, that which seeks to understand the apparent phenomenon of existence externally, by an approach from outside, through the intellect—this is the lower knowledge, the knowledge of the apparent world; secondly, the knowledge which seeks to know the truth of existence from within, in its source and reality, by spiritual realization. Ordinarily, a sharp distinction is drawn between the two, and it is supposed that when we get to the higher knowledge, the God-knowledge, then the rest, the world-knowledge, becomes of no concern to us: but in reality they are two sides of one seeking. All knowledge is ultimately the knowledge of God, through himself, through Nature, through her works. Mankind has first to seek this knowledge through the external life; for until its mentality is sufficiently developed, spiritual knowledge is not really possible, and in proportion as it is developed, the possibilities of spiritual knowledge become richer and fuller (Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 492–493).

Viewed from this perspective, I find that the knowledge gained through the two metatheoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter, can be seen to represent the ‘world knowledge’ which seeks to understand human development as it can be observed and experienced by the human surface consciousness. I feel that these metatheoretical frameworks embedded within the discourse of ‘rationality’ can be seen as marking significant points on the spiral of evolving knowledge about human development and a necessary step in the human ascent.

What I find striking is that, the story of human development remains incomplete, if the other side of the seeking—the *God-knowledge* is not tapped from within. Taking a leaf from Sri Aurobindo’s book, the God-knowledge I feel is necessary because:

Amid the many systems of the One.
Made by an interpreting creative joy.
Alone it points us to our journey back...
(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 98)

From Sri Aurobindo’s perspective, it is ultimately the God-knowledge that completes our journey by opening to view the spiritual riches and also is capable of the bringing together the ‘world knowledge’ and ‘God knowledge’ in an *Integral view* that can be represented by the attitude—‘*All life is yoga*’. I think this is a perspective worth studying because it seeks to divinise the life on earth through a progressive *evolution of the human consciousness* which we explore in the next chapter.

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Chapter 5

Sri Aurobindo's Perspective on Evolution of Consciousness: The Metatheory

A subtle pattern of the universe.

It is within, below without, above.

(Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 98)

Divinity's lapse from its own splendours wove

The many-patterned ground of all we are.

(Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 99)

A highest flight climbs to a deepest view.

(Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 660)

*Two are joined together, powers of Truth, powers of Maya,
they have built the Child and given him birth and nourish his
growth.*

(Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 499)

5.1 Introduction

Sri Aurobindo's perspective on 'human development as evolution of consciousness' is based on a deep philosophical-yogic view that can reconcile the highest Divine consciousness with the darkest lack of consciousness—i.e. connect the spiritual and the material. This view provides the answers not only to the 'What' and the 'How' of development but also addresses centrally the question—'Why do we develop in the way that we do?' not only from a wider *universal-evolutionary* perspective but also from the *individual-existential* perspective which is so crucial to our lives. The evolving divinity in the *individual* and the *universe* and its relation with the *transcendent* divine forms the *many-patterned* 'transitional' *ground* that *we inhabit* at present—and defines our evolutionary gains, challenges and developmental pathways to a new future.

5.2 The Origins of the Universe: The Puzzle

The origins of the universe and the place of humankind within it is the most complex metaphysical puzzle that has confronted yogis, thinkers and philosophers across ages and cultures. The human rational mind is incapable of fathoming this puzzle as the secret of the origins, may not be apparent or *observable* to the limited human reason. This is the reason why the contemporary scientists have shied away from studying the metaphysical aspects of reality and have either implicitly or explicitly looked at the universe as a result of a random chance or as a mechanical process of evolution that is inherently meaningless.

However, Sri Aurobindo (1997a), states that a study of human psychology must be able to engage with the metaphysical, if it is to gain a comprehensive understanding of human psyche and its evolution. I think that the yogic Mind has a key value as it is able to move beyond the armchair metaphysical ruminations and conjectures of the rational human mind and build its metaphysical understanding based on the dynamic revelations from the higher levels of consciousness, which can provide it with crucial insights into the nature and relation between the evolving individual and the universe.

Sri Aurobindo adopts a position that moves beyond the theories of chance and mechanical evolution (e.g. Darwin) and the theories which view the world as created by a Creator who is external to his own creation (e.g. Creationism).

This world is not an apparent order fortuitously managed by an inexplicable Chance. Neither is it a marvellous mechanism miraculously contrived by a stumblingly fortunate unconscious Force or mechanical Necessity. It is not even a structure built according to his fancy or will by an external and therefore necessarily a limited Creator. Mentally conceivable, each of these solutions can explain one side or appearance of things; but it is *a greater truth* that can alone successfully join all the aspects and illumine all the facts of the enigma (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 162, emphasis added).

5.3 The Divine Plan: The Answer

What is this greater truth? The greater truth lies in the fact of *involution* which precedes *evolution*. The secret of the evolutionary process can be fathomed according to Sri Aurobindo (1997a) only if we understand that the Highest Divine Consciousness whom we call God, *Brahman* or Spirit has plunged itself or involved itself into its own self-created opposite—i.e. the Inconscience of matter—and is now struggling to manifest itself in that reluctant substance. The Omniscient has plunged itself into the Nescience, the All-Conscious into Inconscience, the All-Wise into perpetual Ignorance, the All-Blissful has put on a huge insensibility out of which it struggles by pain, hunger, desire and sorrow. The gradual Becoming of the Divine out of its own phenomenal opposites is the meaning and purpose of terrestrial evolution.

Evolution is the process of liberation of the consciousness from the Inconscient and in the process of its release from matter, the emergence of life is the first step, the emergence of mind is the second step; however, evolution does not finish with the mind but seeks to release itself progressively into the highest consciousness. In Sri Aurobindo's words (1997a):

Evolution is the emancipation of a self-revealing Soul secret in Form and Force, the slow becoming of a Godhead, the growth of a Spirit. In this evolution, mental man is not the goal and end, the completing value, the highest last significance; he is too small and imperfect to be the crown of all this travail of Nature. Man is not final, but middle term only, *a transitional being*, an instrumental intermediate creature (p. 166, emphasis added).

The story of Human evolution seen from Sri Aurobindo's perspective would therefore be essentially incomplete if the fact of involution was partialled out of analysis. Involution is the reason that we can view the nature of evolving universe and more specifically human life to be meaningful and purposive and not a hostage to chance, despite the apparent contradictions of existence. Nor are we prisoners of a mechanical process of evolution, we have within us the possibility of thinking, aspiring, becoming self-conscious beings and find ways to evolve beyond the Mind—into a greater consciousness. There is an all-seeing purpose in terrestrial creation which moves through the contradictions and perplexities towards its supreme expression. This is the *Divine Plan* of creation.

5.3.1 *The Descending and the Ascending Scales*

The *involution* represents the *descending* scale whereby the highest Divine consciousness in triune form—*Sat-chit-Ananda* or the *Sachchidananda* consciousness descends an act of divine sacrifice and lies hidden in a seed form in the Inconscient of the Matter. As it descends, all that is manifested from the Eternal is arranged in planes that represent different aspect its own nature, i.e. the planes of the triune luminous Infinite, planes of Supermind, planes of Mind, planes of Life and the planes of subtle Matter. These worlds or planes are *typal*, i.e. *non-evolutionary in nature* where there is no death and disintegration (Sri Aurobindo 1997a). These worlds exist—each according to its own perfection but within the limits of a stationary world formula (Sri Aurobindo 2005). In the involutionary movement, the Divine eventually plunges itself into the Inconscient to create an occasion for a Divine Play—i.e. the adventure of *evolution* whereby it recovers itself gradually through a struggle, from the Inconscient. To quote from *Savitri*:

In the enigma of the darkened Vasts,
In the passion and self-loss of the Infinite
When all was plunged in the negating Void,
Non-Being's night could never have been saved
If Being had not plunged into the dark
Carrying with it its triple mystic cross.

Invoking in world-time the timeless truth,
 Bliss changed to sorrow, knowledge made ignorant,
 God's force turned into a child's helplessness
 Can bring down heaven by their sacrifice.
 A contradiction founds the base of life:
 The eternal, the divine Reality
 Has faced itself with its own contraries;
 Being became the Void and Conscious-Force
 Nescience and walk of a blind Energy
 And Ecstasy took the figure of world-pain.
 (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 140–141)

Thus the problems that we face as humanity—pain, suffering, ignorance, falsehood are all the inverse face of the quality of the Divine Consciousness that has involved itself in the Non-Being and the aspiration of Nature is to recover this very Light.

Sri Aurobindo (1997a) outlines the possibilities of the growth into higher consciousness and a Life Divine on Earth most lyrically which is difficult to rephrase:

The nature of the Divinity in the world is an enigma to the mind, but to our enlarging consciousness it will appear as a presence simple and inevitable. Freed we shall enter into the immutable stability of an *eternal existence* that puts on this revealing multitude of significant mutable forms. Illumined we shall become aware of the *indivisible light* of an infinite consciousness that breaks out here into multiform grouping and detail of knowledge. Sublimated in might, we shall share the illimitable movement of an *omnipotent force* that works out its marvels in self-imposed limits. Fixed in griefless bliss we shall possess the calm and ecstasy of an *immeasurable Delight* that creates forever the multitudinous waves and rhythms and the ever increasing outward-going and inward-drawing intensities of its own creative and communicative world-possessing and self-possessing bliss. This, since we are inwardly souls of that Spirit, will be the nature of our *fourfold experience* when the evolving Godhead will work here in its own unveiled movement (p. 161, emphasis added).

The way of progress towards the greater consciousness thus lies in the urge for constant self development of humanity which when yoked to the Divine Consciousness becomes yoga—the psychological method of the ascension of the consciousness.

The study of human evolution thus cannot be complete unless these overarching metaphysical lines within which it embedded—its source, processes and aims—i.e. the complete *metapsychology* is not made explicit. Sri Aurobindo (1997a) notes that the study of human psyche is a compound both of metaphysical inquiry and psychological science. It is with this view in mind that this chapter further explores the ontology of Sri Aurobindo's perspective on human evolution, the epistemological and methodological correlates, the nature and mechanisms of human evolution, a related analysis of the major theories of the aims of existence that influence the ways in which we view the purpose of life and a comparative analysis with the dominant metatheoretical perspective within the contemporary discipline of Human Development.

5.4 Sri Aurobindo's Ontological Position

According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), the *Brahman* is the *Omnipresent Reality* and can be considered to be the alpha and the omega of human development. All that we see in the cosmos and within ourselves is the Divine and this is the *ontological reality* of our existence. There is no fundamental schism between the Divine and the phenomenal world and between Matter and Spirit. As the Divine is present in the very origin of the Cosmos and in the deepest structure of the creation, its endpoint too is Divine.

5.4.1 The Sevenfold Chord of Being

The concept of the *sevenfold chord of being* encapsulates the *detailed ontology* of human development as seen by Sri Aurobindo (2005). The seven terms of existence, *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ananda*, Supermind, Mind, Life and Matter are in Aurobindo's (2005) view:

...one in their reality, but also inseparable in the sevenfold variety of their action. They are the seven colours of the light of the divine consciousness, the seven rays of the Infinite, and by them the Spirit has filled in on the canvas of his self-existence (p. 500).

The nature of the highest consciousness which has involved itself can be understood through the first three terms of sevenfold chord of being or *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. While *Sat-Chit-Ananda* have been discussed separately as three separate terms of existence, it needs to be emphasised that these three are essentially One, i.e. *Existence is Consciousness and Consciousness is Bliss* and all the three are inseparable from each other. The seven terms of existence and their implication for development are discussed further:

Sat: This is the pure existent/Being and the opposite of Non-Being or *Asat*. It is the indefinable, infinite, timeless, spaceless Existence which is Absolute in nature. It cannot be summed in any form, quality, quantity or any combination of qualities. If all these were to disappear, the pure existent would still remain. The pure existent is the Absolute which cannot be thought by the mind although one can experience it through the process identity which moves beyond all human knowledge (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

In terms the ontology of Human Development, it is the pure existent- the *Sat*- or the Absolute that forms the true basis for human development. The Absolute manifests itself in two terms Being and Becoming, of stability and movement, of unity and multiplicity. Yet it is beyond all these principles for it contains them rather than being contained within them.

While Being is the *fundamental reality*, Becoming according to Sri Aurobindo (2005), is the *effectual reality*. Becoming is the creative energy working out mutable forms and processes from the immutable, formless Being. Any theory that

emphasises one or the other terms is according to Sri Aurobindo, likely to move among half truths. For instance, if we look at the world only as an interminable movement of phenomena, we end up in an unsatisfactory position as the very affirmation of the idea of movement implies the existence of its opposite ,i.e. inaction or the lack of movement. Sri Aurobindo (2005) likens the idea of movement without any stable base to staircase of ascent which abruptly comes to an end and is suspended without any support in the Void or the Nihil.

Sri Aurobindo (2005) points out that in the very idea of movement or Becoming, the Being is inherent and that Becoming can only know itself wholly when it knows itself as Being. When we think of Becoming or movement, we are likely to conceive it because of the temporal nature of language as having a beginning, middle and an end. We are likely to think in terms of successive duration because in our Becoming we are embedded in Time which is the very stuff of our consciousness. A concept of an Absolute beginning and an Absolute end is however according to Sri Aurobindo (2005) an anomaly, for a beginning and an end imply that there was something before the beginning and something beyond the end. The fact is that the emergence of movement from the immutable stability is an eternal and ever-new phenomenon and that Becoming is the only Being.

It is possible for us as humans to experience the stable Divine presence within us which is eternal or Timeless in nature beyond the fleeting moments of the existence. It is even possible to draw back into this stability and live in it and even change our external attitude and nature from that poise.

The Absolute contains both these terms— Being and Becoming as they both are its psychological representations. In words of Sri Aurobindo (2005):

The Absolute is beyond stability and movement as it is beyond unity and multiplicity. But it takes its eternal poise in the one and the stable and whirls round itself infinitely, inconceivably, securely in the moving and multitudinous. *World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing* (p. 85, emphasis added).

In terms of Sri Aurobindo's ontology of human development, it can be said that it is the *Sat* or the Absolute which truly represents the *meta*-psychological for both Being and Becoming are its psychological representations and it is *beyond* both of them. Human development as a discipline of study has implicitly focussed on the aspect of *Becoming* for most of its explorations deal with phenomenal experience as it successively unfolds within Time. The presence of the Being, of Eternal and Absolute Self as a psychological reality which exists concomitantly with Becoming is not adequately recognised by the discipline of Human Development. This sense of *Being*, which is a stable self-concentration of the Divine within us as *Jivatman* or the *Spiritual Self* needs to be recovered by the discipline of Human Development if it aims to comprehensively understand the human potential for inner growth and its capacity of creating a perfect society based on spiritual Oneness with not just the entire humanity *but with all beings*.

The following vision of new consciousness from *Savitri* can be used to express the Divine play which simultaneously can hold stability and movement, Oneness and multiplicity:

None was apart, none lived for himself alone,
 Each lived for God in him and God in all,
 Each soleness inexpressibly held the whole.
 There Oneness was not tied to monotone;
 It showed a thousand aspects of itself,
 Its calm immutable stability
 Upbore on a changeless ground for ever safe,
 Compelled to a spontaneous servitude,
 The ever-changing incalculable steps,
 The seeming-reckless dance's subtle plan
 Of immense world-forces in their perfect play.
 (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 324)

Chit: This is the pure consciousness. It is the infinite self-awareness inherent in the infinite existence. Sri Aurobindo (1999b) notes that “All is Chit because all is Sat; all is various movement of the original Consciousness because all is various movement of the original Being” (p. 389). According to Sri Aurobindo (1970, 2005), Consciousness has two aspects, i.e. the capacity of self-awareness where it is *svayamprakasa* or self-illuminating and the power of self-force; the former is static the latter makes it dynamic in action. The latter aspect is also known as the Consciousness-Force or *Chit-Shakti*.

Sri Aurobindo (1970) conceives of Consciousness as a fundamental-thing-existence whose energy movement and motion creates all that is there in the universe. In the macrocosm, and in the microcosm there is nothing but Consciousness that is arranging itself. Thus both the constitution of the wider universe as well as human beings is the organisation of the Conscious Force of Existence. Regarding the nature of the evolution of consciousness, he remarks:

All evolution is in essence a heightening of the force of *consciousness* in the manifest being so that it may be raised into the greater intensity of what is still unmanifest, from matter into life, from life into mind, from the mind into the spirit (Sri Aurobindo 2005, pp. 754–755, emphasis added).

Thus in Sri Aurobindo's ontology, Matter is not divorced from the Life, Mind or the Spirit—rather all these are different grades and organisations of one Conscious Force of Existence. Unlike the theorists who generally hold the term ‘consciousness’ as synonymous with ‘mental consciousness’, Sri Aurobindo believes that in the constitution of the human, there are ranges of conscious energy that lie below (Subconscious), above (Superconscious) and behind (Subliminal) what we know as the mental consciousness. The aim of human psychology according to Sri Aurobindo, is to study the working of the different gradations of consciousness and its myriad operations. The different grades of consciousness as they are arranged in the Universe (macrocosm) are a reflection of the grades of consciousness within the human person (microcosm) and the human subjectivity

forms the rich observational and experimental ground for the study of the influences that secretly and overtly give shape to the human personality.

Sri Aurobindo (1997a) points out these forces of consciousness can be controlled through the method of yoga or the union with the Divine and to give a higher impetus to the evolutionary process ought the aim of Psychology.

Ananda: Bliss or Ananda is the essential principle of Delight. It is for the Self-Delight of the Lord that this entire Cosmos is manifested—for the *Lila* or the Divine Play—where He creates and recreates in perpetual, inexhaustible eternal youth Himself in Himself, for the sheer Bliss of that self-creation and self-representation. He indeed is '*the Play, the Player and the Playground.*' (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

The Problem of Pain and the Solution: An understanding of the nature of Delight in human evolution also gives an essential insight into the key psychological problem of pain and suffering, its source, its necessity and its solution. When the Divine *Ananda* becomes involved in the Inconscient, it becomes its opposite dark face—i.e. pain. Sri Aurobindo states that (2005) pain is the secret face of Delight as it compels Nature to leave its habitual modes of existence and move upwards. Pain is the hand of Nature that works to sculpt the evolving being into an unimagined greatness for the current level of evolution acts as a status-quo that needs to be broken and pain is the instrument that breaks it. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (2005):

The world is from the point of view of the individual a play and complex shock of multitudinous forces. In the midst of this complex play the individual stands as a limited constructed being with a limited amount of force exposed to numberless shocks which may wound, maim, breakup or key psychological disintegrate the construction which he calls himself (p. 115).

Pain is the nature of recoil from a dangerous or harmful contact—a shrinking within one's own self of a person who is not in harmony with the inner self—which can be called *Jugupsa*. The failure of the evolving human being to absorb the shocks of existence and the resultant self contraction or shrinking can be attributed to the ignorance of its highest true nature—that is the *Sachchidananda*—the All-Blissful Consciousness.

The first step towards elimination of suffering may be the practice of *titiksha* which is equality in face of all shocks of existence. There can be two ways of equality—first is the equality of a person who looks at the Transcendent Reality as the source of Bliss and maintains a poise of calm indifference to all the vicissitudes of existence; second is the equality of the Vedic seers who accept both the Transcendent and the Universal aspects of the Divine and in face of shocks of existence with the poise of taking Delight in all the works of the Lord. The latter also is the poise of the God-lover who bears the torture and shocks of existence as having been inflicted by the hand of the Divine-Lover in the passion of his own game and agrees to the rules of the game.

This Divine Play is the process and the end of evolution. We as humanity await a time, where there is no inherent necessity for pain for growth and evolution

moves from the state of Delight to a state of still higher Delight impelled by a conscious force of progress. To sum, evolution is a process where:

The *Infinite being* loses itself in the appearance of non-being and emerges in the appearance of a finite Soul; *infinite consciousness* loses itself in the appearance of a vast indeterminate Inconscience and emerges in the appearance of a superficial limited consciousness; *Infinite self-sustaining Force* loses itself in the appearance of a chaos of atoms and emerges in the appearance of the insecure balance of a world; *infinite Delight* loses itself in the appearance of an insensible Matter and emerges in the appearance of a discordant rhythm of varied pain, pleasure and neutral feeling, love, hatred and indifference; *infinite unity* loses itself in the appearance of a chaos of multiplicity and emerges in a discord of forces and beings which seek to recover unity by possessing, dissolving and devouring each other (Sri Aurobindo 2005, pp. 118–119, emphasis added).

This is the '*many patterned ground*' which defines the insecure poise of humanity in its present transitional stage of evolution. The way forward is to widen the mental consciousness to a Superconscient Unity where one can embrace all; to widen the narrowness of the heart and the vital being that it is cleansed of its cravings, lusts, discords and can embrace all in Universal Love and Delight; the body has to know itself as not a separate entity but a part of the indivisible flow of Force which sustains all. In brief—the human has to recover the Unity, the Harmony and the Oneness with all beings and things that are inhabited by the Supreme Lord. The study of human nature and the discovery of psychological attitudes and methodologies that can lead to the highest *Sachchidananda* consciousness is the aim of the future psychology.

The Three Poises of the Divine: The Absolute reveals itself in three terms of its essential nature. These are—the Self, the Conscious Being or Spirit and God or the Divine Being or to use the Indian terms—*Brahman* the Absolute, Supreme, Infinite and Eternal Reality manifests itself in three term or poises—the *Atman*, the *Purusha* and the *Ishwara*. The Power of Consciousness also manifests itself in three corresponding powers—*Maya* which is the phenomenal consciousness which is conceptively creative of all things and is also known in its higher form as the *Atma-shakti*; the *Prakriti* which the executive force of the *Purusha* and *Shakti* which is conscious power of *Ishwara* or Divine Being and is both conceptive, creative as well as dynamically executive of all the workings of the Divine being. Taken together, these three represent the Individual (*Atman-Maya*), Universal (*Purusha-Prakriti*) and the Transcendental (*Ishwara-Shakti*) poises of the Divine or the *Brahman* (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

The Divine *Maya* as the conceptive power of the *Brahman* has two aspects—the lower and the higher. In its lower form it represents the separative mental consciousness. The earlier Indian philosophers have viewed phenomenal existence pessimistically as an illusion or an inexplicable paradox which created by the mind (e.g. *Shankara*) and from which one needs to escape. According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), the *Maya* has a higher aspect which in the Vedic sense means the power of infinite consciousness to comprehend, measure out, to form—name and shape out of the vast illimitable *Truth* of infinite existence. It is in this higher aspect that *Maya* becomes the fourth term of the sevenfold chord of being and is also known

as the—*Supermind*. It is the Power of Truth and *Maya* that together build the *Cosmic Child* in an affirmation of the original *Vedic* vision and nurture its growth and development, i.e. “*Two are joined together, powers of Truth, powers of Maya, they have built the Child and given him birth and nourish his growth*” (as cited in Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 499).

Supermind: This is the power of *Truth-Consciousness* or the *Real-Idea* which creates, governs and upholds the worlds; it is the secret wisdom that upholds both our Knowledge and our Ignorance. It is the intermediate consciousness that lies between the upper domain of *Sachchidananda* consciousness and lower domain of mind-life and matter and mediates between the two. Without Supermind as the intervening link, we are forced to consider either the Transcendental *Sachchidananda* Consciousness or the phenomenal world-existence as true and one has to be abandoned in order to enjoy the other and the Life Divine on Earth becomes impossibility. A detailed understanding of the Supermind is essential as it is the crucial mediating link in the story of human evolution without which this story would be unfathomable.

The Supermind or Truth-Consciousness is present in universe as an ordering self-knowledge and without the predetermining Real-Idea as a seed of things in evolution, the world would be just a play of chance, circumstance and a chaos of an amorphous and confused uncertainty. The world can manifest its harmonies in Time and Space because of the action of the Supermind which lies within it as a seed and manifests at each moment in cosmic and individual development in accordance with the inherent Truth in the interplay of the forces. The reality of Supermind affirms that nothing is arbitrary in this world but manifests in accordance with the rhythmic idea of the universe contained in the seed form—it contains “*the subtle pattern of the universe, which is within, below, without, above*” (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 98).

We as human beings are not aware of the forces that determine us and manifest in accordance to their inherent truth, for we live in a limited consciousness that cannot perceive the Unity of Truth because of the separative nature of our mental consciousness. We are subjected to the forces of Time and Space and live mostly in the frontal phenomenal consciousness.

Time, Space, Causality and Human Progress: Sri Aurobindo (2005) notes that Time for the mental consciousness is measured out by the successive movement of the past, present and future *events* within which it locates itself and looks either before or after. Space to the Mind is the stable extension measured out by the divisibility of the substance in which, at a point, Mind locates itself and views the way in which the substance or *matter* is organised around it. Causality is the interaction of related things in succession of Time and Space.

Taken together, succession of Time, Space and Causality give us the sense of the development and progress of the world. This progression is in fact the secret work of the Supermind which at the same time can also view the past, the present and the future in one view, containing and not being contained in them. Similarly, all the points and regions in Space can be contained within a single view. The true name for causality in the Supermind is the *Divine Law*. In words of Sri Aurobindo (2005):

The essence of that Law is an inevitable self-development of the truth of the thing that is, as Idea, in the very essence of what is developed; it is a previously fixed determination of relative movements out of the stuff of infinite possibility (p. 154).

The human Mind does not possess this Divine Law but is itself governed by it; by itself the Mind observes the pattern of self development but with a divided consciousness, and is not able to fathom its root and strives in vain to reach the source of Reality. Mind moves in arena of multiplicity and is not able to fathom the Divine Law of Causality which lies in the Unity of all things. The result is that the play of different evolutionary possibilities in their multiplicity of relations seems to the human mind to manifest through a clash, an inter-shock of forces and through a blind struggle of external forces.

It seems to me that this may be the reason that an evolving individual becomes a hostage to circumstances, unaware of the cause of suffering and a helpless witness to the forces which seem out of that person's control. However, seen from perspective of the Divine Law of Causality, in reality there is spontaneous working out things in accordance with Truth from within. The inherent Law governs the inner and outer process in a profound harmony which is contained in the Supramental vision. This is one key reason for the evolving human being to aspire for highest consciousness so that an individual can view the self and the world from the perspective of the Divine Law and be a conscious master of destiny.

The Triple Status of the Supermind: Further, if we view life from a mental separative consciousness we have but one poise of being or one aggregate of experiences whereby we affirm the truth that is acknowledged by us in the present and which is limited, as it is subject to the relative forces of Time and Space. In contrast, the Supermind is not a limited or a particularised consciousness and has *three poises* in its 'world- founding consciousness'.

The first founds the inalienable unity of things, the *second* modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One and One in Many; the *third* further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the illusion of the separate ego (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 156, emphasis added).

The *first poise* is that of the comprehending consciousness—"a cosmic vision which is all-comprehensive, all-pervading, and all-inhabiting" (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 146). In this consciousness, the 'Knower, the Knowledge and the Known' are essentially one and held in a single regard. Our mental consciousness works by separating the three for without this separation the mind becomes static and incapable of action in the phenomenal world. Thus 'I' the knower know what I observe in myself, which is separate from the object of my knowledge and am capable of observing the process of knowledge which links the knower to the known. However, in the comprehending consciousness, 'I' the knower am the very consciousness which knows and am one in the same movement of consciousness with the object of my knowledge. These three are an indivisible and one movement in the comprehending consciousness (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

This consciousness contains all Multiplicity without losing its own inherent Unity. Sri Aurobindo (2005) describes the nature of this consciousness and its poise of looking at world—evolution through the metaphor of a tree and a seed:

A tree evolves out of the seed in which it is already contained, the seed out of the tree; a fixed law, an invariable process reigns in the permanence of the form of manifestation which we call a tree. The mind regards this phenomenon, this birth, life and reproduction of a tree, as a thing in itself and on that basis studies, classes and explains it. It explains the tree by the seed, the seed by the tree; it declares a law of Nature. But it has explained nothing; it has only analysed and recorded the process of a mystery.... But the Supermind works otherwise. The tree and its process would not be what they are, could not indeed exist, if it were a separate existence... *The tree does not explain the seed, nor the seed the tree; cosmos explains both and God explains cosmos* (pp. 147–148, emphasis added).

The Supermind, in its comprehensive poise thus pervades the reality of the seed and the tree and lives in a greater knowledge which is indivisible. I think that often when approaching the mystery of the universe through the mental consciousness we reach the status-quo of 'the chicken and egg' situation and are unable to come to any conclusion about which of them came first for we must choose one to explain the other. The comprehending poise of Supermind holds both the seed (involved Divine Consciousness) and the tree (evolving universe) in a single comprehensive regard wherein both of them are aspects of the wider cosmos and the existence of cosmos itself is explained by the Existence of the Divine which has involved itself in the universe. Thus in this vision the All (Multiplicity) and the One are the same existence and this identity is the nature of the supramental cognition.

The *second poise* of the Supermind is the apprehending consciousness. The nature of the Supermind is to link the higher *Sachchidananda* consciousness to the lower creation of mind, life and matter. The nature of the comprehending consciousness is the equable self-extension of *Sachchidananda* and when the reflection of this consciousness falls on the purified still Self, it loses all the sense of individualisation for there is no concentration in this poise of consciousness. The apprehending poise of Supermind is characterised by concentration whereby it stands back from the idea of movement that it contains and follows it to inhabit it and distribute itself into forms.

It stabilises itself as Conscious-Self or as *Jivatman* (as distinguished from the Universal Self) and follows and supports the individual movements of the Play and its differentiation from other movements of Play. This is the position of the subordinate dualism. The Supermind in this secondary poise can support the existence of the Individual Soul and the realisation that it is the One that expresses itself in all forms and names through its reflection in the purified Mind.

The *third poise* of the Supermind is attained if the supporting consciousness no longer were to stand back to observe the Play of multiplicity from the poise of superiority by following it and enjoying it but were to *project itself* into the movement of the play of relations. As a result of this projection, it may take on the appearance of having fallen into Ignorance for a while through the process of individualisation but retains the possibility of the recovery of its spiritual nature.

The Play in this poise becomes the Play of the fundamental blissful dualism in Unity whereby the individual once spiritualised can potentially affirm the both the reality of the Unity and also of the differentiation as necessary for the fullness of the Joy of Unity.

Sri Aurobindo (2005) notes that the three poises of the Supermind make possible the varied forms in which the Divine Truth of existence can be enjoyed—for in all three the *Ananda* may vary but there is no fundamental lapse into Falsehood or Ignorance. Thus world thus becomes an occasion for the progressive manifestation all the possibilities of the Life Divine and not as an illusion marked by imperfection, suffering and pain from which one needs to escape into the Transcendental Divine.

The presence of the Supermind makes possible the link between the upper hemisphere—the *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (*pararādhā*) and the lower hemisphere, i.e. *the mind, life and matter* (*Aparārdha*) and the rending of this veil makes possible the divinisation of life.

The Mind, Life and Matter: The Mind, Life and Matter belong to the lower hemisphere and are subject to Ignorance because of the self-forgetfulness of the One in the play of Multiplicity in the Divine Plan. Mind, Life and Matter are aspects or subordinate powers of the higher divine quaternary—i.e. *Sat-Chit-Ananda* and the nodus their expression—the Supermind.

In this scheme, *Mind* is the subordinate power of the Supermind which views the world from a lower standpoint of division but through re-illumination from the Supramental can return to the experience of Oneness. *Life* is the subordinate power of the energy aspect of the *Sachchidananda* or the Consciousness-Force which is working out the form and the play of conscious energy from the standpoint of division created by the Mind. Life moves through its struggles with the forces of death, desire and incapacity towards a Divine Harmony through the realisation of the Divine. *Matter* is the subordinate power of the Existence aspect of the *Sachchidananda* and as a substance or the form of Being, is imbued with Consciousness and Force. Matter seen from Sri Aurobindo's perspective is an aspect of the Divine that can hold consciousness and can be spiritualised.

The Soul or the Psychic Being: In addition to Mind, Life and Matter, there is a fourth principle that manifests at the nodus of these three terms of existence—the Soul. If Matter is a reflection of the Existence and Life of Consciousness, then the Soul is the reflection of the *Ananda* and the Bliss principle in the lower hemisphere.

The soul has two aspects—the *desire soul* and the *Psychic Being*. The desire soul works in the surface nature, functions in the ego-consciousness and is responsible for our vital cravings, emotions, need for recognition, power, knowledge and happiness. The psychic being or the *Chaitya Purusha* is the deeper principle of Delight or *Ananda* which is the repository of the spiritual experiences in us. It is the source of the pure joy, pure power of light, love, beauty and a refined sense of being. The soul completes the quaternary in the lower hemisphere and Sri Aurobindo (2005) points out that we can add an eighth principle to the seven, to complete the story of the Divine refraction in the lower hemisphere. These eight principles—in pairs—are:

Existence	Matter
Consciousness-force	Life
Bliss	Psyche (or the psychic being)
Supermind	Mind

The Divine *descends* through the play of Existence, Consciousness-Force, and Bliss through the creative mediation of the Supermind into the *Cosmic Being*. We *ascend* through Matter, the striving of Life, the development of Soul and Mind through the rending of the veil between the lower and higher spheres by the illuminating action of the Supermind into the *Divine Being*.

This, in brief is the Divine Plan within which our lives unfold and the meaning of life—its source, its driving forces, its aspiration, aims and potential of human development can all be understood as embedded within this Divine scheme of things.

5.4.2 A Summary

In brief, the ontological assumptions of Sri Aurobindo's view of human evolution are:

- The *Brahman* is the alpha and omega of all creation.
- *Sat* as the Pure Existent—psychologically represented in the twin terms of Being and Becoming is simultaneously the fundamental and effective Reality of the Cosmos.
- *Chit* is the fundamental and pure self-awareness inherent in *Sat* which creates the universe and all that is within it—in macrocosm and the microcosm, through its self-power or *Chit-Shakti*.
- *Ananda* is the essential principle of Delight for which the all creation is manifested.
- Involution of Divine Consciousness precedes Evolution of Consciousness.
- Supermind is the power of Truth-Consciousness or the Real-Idea which creates, governs and upholds the world and its evolution. It is the mediating link between the higher *Sachchidananda* Reality and the Lower Creation in Matter, Life and Mind.
- There is a purpose in creation and the aim of life is self-perfection and not self-annulment which is realised through the progressive manifestation of the Life Divine on Earth.

In my view, Sri Aurobindo's works present a very explicit, detailed and comprehensive ontology within which his own observations about Psychology and its consequent meanings for human evolution can be understood with clarity. If we locate the scope of the current discipline of Human Development within the metaphysical scheme outlined in Sri Aurobindo's vision, we find that this discipline deal at most with *the three elementary terms of existence* in the lower

hemisphere, i.e. Matter, Life and Mind and that too in the ascending scale only, for the concept of involution which is the descending scale is not seen as a reality by this discipline of inquiry.

Sri Aurobindo (1997a) points out that if the study of human development is to be complete, it must take into account all seven (or eight) notes of the Divine scheme of existence, for it is impossible that everything that we see around us is a matter of chance—there is an invisible force of the Divine that has conceived the possibility of this creation and which secretly guides, supports and unfolds it in accordance with the Truth of its purpose. There is an aim towards which we evolve and our present condition is just one point in the curve of the spiral that moves towards perfection.

While the descending scale is important to understand the complete picture Sri Aurobindo (1997a) notes that we must proceed to know ourselves and the world not only through the route of *metaphysical reasoning* but also through the route of *psychology*. Through the psychological method in the ascending we can scale practically ascertain and verify the psychological truths for our own selves. For Sri Aurobindo (1997a), Yoga is practical psychology and it is through Yoga that we arrive at an instrumentation that can help us know the laws and movements of the operations of Consciousness and tap the psychological unknown. So, while the descending scale provides the broader cosmology or the metatheory, which defines the broader context of understanding, the hypotheses derived from it need to be psychologically verified to arrive at a truth that not only based on philosophical reasoning and opinions but can be personally ascertained to be the sure base of life. Sri Aurobindo (2005) comments on the need for a metaphysical philosophy and the need to translate it into the dynamic truth of life:

Our metaphysical knowledge, our view of the fundamental truth of the universe and the meaning of existence, should naturally be the determinant of our whole conception of life and attitude to it; the aim of life, as we conceive it, must be structured on that basis. Metaphysical philosophy is an attempt to fix the fundamental realities and principles of being as distinct from its processes and the phenomena which result from those processes. But it is on the fundamental realities that the processes depend: our own process of life, its aim and method, should be in accordance with the truth of being that we see; otherwise our metaphysical truth can be only a play of the intellect without any dynamic importance (p. 693)

Thus a mere intellectual approach to Truth is a mental gymnastics and has no Integral importance, if Truth is not realisable in life and is not capable of changing our inner and outer realities.

5.5 Sri Aurobindo' Epistemological Position

In dealing with the epistemological aspect of Sri Aurobindo's perspective of human evolution, one can deliberate on the following related questions—What is the nature of Knowledge and Ignorance? What are the dynamics of the relation between Ignorance and Knowledge? What are the different types of Knowledge according to Sri Aurobindo in terms of the relation between the knower and the known?

5.5.1 The Nature of Knowledge and Ignorance

Sri Aurobindo (2003) points out that there are two terms of all manifestation—*Vidya* (Knowledge) and *Avidya* (Ignorance) or the consciousness of Unity and the consciousness of Multiplicity. *Avidya* or Ignorance is based on the action of our surface cognition which is limited and restricted way of looking at oneself and others as it makes an essential separation between the self and the other as different centres of consciousness. *Vidya* is the perception of Unity as a fundamental and an eternal fact. Both are two aspects of *Maya*—the formative self-conception of the Eternal.

In Sri Aurobindo's (2003) view, the *Brahman* or the Supreme Being is the Lord of both *Vidya* and *Avidya* and one should not aim to affirm one term or the other but to hold both the Ignorance and Knowledge in a single view to get an Integral understanding of human evolution. Sri Aurobindo (2003) affirms a statement in *Isha Upanishad* as follows:

Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the Ignorance, they as if in a greater darkness who devote themselves to Knowledge alone... He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys Immortality (p. 8).

Those who are committed to the principles of division and Multiplicity, move away from knowledge of Oneness and confirm themselves in Ignorance for it contracts and limits the scope of knowledge. *Avidya* can be said to be at the base of the *materialist denial* according to Sri Aurobindo (2005) whereby modern scientists assume that physical senses are the sole means of knowledge and reason has to on them to know the Reality. There is refusal to recognise that observable material reality could have any connection with the Spirit or there exist any faculties of knowledge higher than the mind. This is a dangerous position for it confirms a human being in world of multiplicity where one can enjoy, enlarge one's being in world-knowledge but cannot have access to the Divine Transcendence.

If an exclusive pursuit of world-knowledge ignorant of its divine origin and aim is dangerous, the exclusive pursuit of *Vidya* or God-knowledge which rejects the world-knowledge or the *refusal of the ascetic* is even more dangerous (Sri Aurobindo 2005). In this refusal, one enters into a state of indiscriminate Unity which takes us away from the complete and Integral experience of the *Brahman*. While the materialist is ignorant because of compulsion of error, the ascetic is ignorant because of the choice of an exclusive knowledge. To know All, so that one can transcend All is according to Sri Aurobindo (2003), the right path to *Vidya*. Even in worst Ignorance there is some element of a hidden Truth by which it is supported and the aim should be to recognise, enlighten it and transform it.

Thus the one who knows Ignorance and Knowledge both as aspects of the *Brahman* can be the possessor of Integral knowledge. Ignorance is the cause of mortality which has a purpose through a self-limitation, a person affirms the self against the flux of Nature and individualises in order to eventually transform. This

is the first necessity of Nature and death is seen as a means of a wider life in the cycle of births. However, once the Integral Knowledge of World and God is obtained, one enjoys immortality in life itself. Sri Aurobindo (2003), states that immortality beyond the universe is not the aim of the manifestation of this universe for that the soul has always possessed—the aim is to enjoy immortality in the realm of Becoming—and from this poise to attempt the adventure of manifestation of the Divine values in the Earth Consciousness.

In its present status, humanity works predominantly through a separative mental consciousness and largely functions within the realm of Ignorance. However, the aspiration of higher and true knowledge is inherent in humanity and is likely to emerge with the evolutionary stress and intensification of consciousness. The modes of knowledge through which we operate in Ignorance are in fact a dim shadow of the Light of Knowledge which lies as potential beyond the present evolutionary limits of humanity. The following section looks at the different modes of knowledge through which we currently know ourselves and the deeper and higher significance of these modes of Knowledge.

5.5.2 *The Fourfold Order of Knowledge*

Our surface cognition is secretly influenced by the states of consciousness that are Subliminal, Superconscient and Inconscient to it. There are according to Sri Aurobindo (2005), four cognitive methods of Knowledge operating at different levels of consciousness which constitute the way in which we know ourselves and the world even in the self-limitation of the surface consciousness. These four methods represent the varying relations between the *knower and the known*. They are:

Knowledge by Identity: This is the direct knowledge of our essential existence. In the surface mental consciousness the access to this knowing in its purest form is rare. We can however, experience a semblance of knowledge by identity when we are identified with certain passions or emotions. For instance when there is an up-rush of anger, it may take place with such vehemence that we get completely swallowed up by anger. We are not experiencing a state of anger at that moment—we *are the anger*—we are so identified with it that the distinction between the thinker, the thinking and the thought disappears.

Knowledge by Intimate Direct Touch: Ordinarily, however, the identification is partial, i.e. the knower and the known are partially identified and there is a double movement whereby a part of us becomes the passion and another part follows it closely through an intimate direct contact though not complete identification. Thus through the dynamic part of the mind, it is possible to have an intimate sense of the emotions, passions and desires through direct and intimate association or touch. In this poise a person is no longer 'the anger' but is able to sense in intimate identification that 'How extremely angry I am and I want to explode!'

Knowledge through Separative Direct Contact: Although we may know a movement intimately, we are not able to dominate it and have a full perspective on it and there is always a danger of the mind being swallowed up by the passion, action or desire. This necessitates a sense of detachment—a separation of Being from the temporary Becoming, so that one is able to observe mentally a movement and control it. There is a greater separation between the knower and the known though a link is still maintained. In thought, this gives the capacity to step back from our thoughts and observe their origination and movement, partly by silent insight and partly by the action of the thought on thought (or metacognition). In such poise, a person is able to have a perspective on a thought process or an emotional state. For instance, in case of an up-rush of anger, a person may be able to use the mind to objectively see the source from which my anger arises, its nature, and have the possibility of controlling it by stepping back. This poise however is not easy for the surface mind which is separative in nature and though it is essential for it to prevent it from being engulfed by the continued flux of life.

Separative Knowledge through Indirect Contact: The three preceding forms of knowledge are located within the self and therefore retain the capacity of the direct touch. However, in the cognition of external things, the knowledge takes on an entirely separative character whereby the knower and the known are completely divorced from each other. We cannot know the others, we cannot enter their existence with the immediacy, intimacy and directness though we have the capacity of knowing ourselves. In the words of Sri Aurobindo (2005), “there is no direct touch between our consciousness and their consciousness, our substance and their substance, our self of being and their self-being” (p. 547).

Thus the only link we have with objects or people that are external to us is through the senses—i.e. sight, hearing and touch. It is through the action of the sense impressions received by the brain that an understanding of an object is created. Whatever deficiencies are there in the information received by our senses, it is filled up through the intervention of reason or intelligence. If the sense organs were not defective in providing a complete intuitive understanding of the external object, there would have been no need for the intervention of the organising action of reason. Sri Aurobindo states (2005) “Man has had perforce to develop his reason in order to make up for the deficiencies of his sense instrumentation, the fallibility of his physical mind’s perceptions and the paucity of its interpretation of its data” (p. 548).

Our World-Knowledge owing to the indirect and separative nature of our sense-instrumentation according to Sri Aurobindo (2005) is very ineffective. We attempt to know the world and complete the incomplete picture through our interpretations of data sense through speculation, reflection, imagination, reasoning, impartial weighing, inference, measurement and testing. Our scientific endeavours because of the indirectness of knowledge paint us a picture of the world that is only half-certain. Science is mass of hypotheses, ideative representations, theories and generalisations that brings with it doubts that are a source of continued debates which remain inconclusive because of the imperfection of our knowledge.

In summary, it can be said that the fourfold knowledge as it manifests in surface consciousness is operating through the principle of *Ignorance*. Our World-

Knowledge is imperfect because the separation between knower and the known—with senses as the only link to the external world. However, even our self-knowledge is compromised as our larger being is shut behind a wall created by the externalising consciousness. This wall is created by Nature to attempt the ego-centric individualisation of the mind, life and body uninvaded by the deeper and wider truth of our existence; it defends it against the deeper oneness and Infinity and against the cosmic Infinite. This is the first step of Nature. To move beyond Self-Ignorance and World-Ignorance, our mind has to realise its limitations and break the walls of ego-consciousness. In words of Sri Aurobindo, “In place of its knowledge by indirect contact, or in addition to it, it must arrive at a knowledge by direct contact and proceed to a knowledge by identity. Its limited finite of self has to become a boundless finite and an infinite” (p. 551). It is the aim of evolution to recover the highest state of Knowledge by identity by progressively deepening of consciousness and realisation of the inner being, widening into the Cosmic Consciousness and scaling the heights of Supramental Truth-consciousness.

In this highest poise of Supramental Truth-consciousness, the Knowledge, the Knower and the Known are One and there is no distinction between the subject and the object, between one conscious self of being and the other (for more on this poise of Supermind see [Sect. 5.4.1](#)). To quote from *Savitri* (Sri Aurobindo 1997b):

Here came the thought that passes beyond Thought,
Here the still Voice which our listening cannot hear,
The Knowledge by which the knower is the known,
The Love in which beloved and lover are one. (pp. 297–298)

Knowledge in this consciousness is luminously self-evident and intrinsic and is “not an *act*, but a *state* pure, perpetual and inherent” (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 565, emphasis added). One knows the Self and the All (multiplicity) through the consciousness of essential Unity and Identity—the *true Knowledge or Vidya*.

5.5.3 A Summary

In brief, the epistemological assumptions are:

- For an Integral understanding of human evolution it is not enough to focus on Knowledge but to hold both the Ignorance and Knowledge in a single view.
- Ignorance or *Avidya* is Knowledge in process of evolution
- *Vidya* is the perception of Unity as a fundamental and eternal fact. In highest supramental cognition—the All (Multiplicity) and the One are the same existence. It is a state of luminous self-evident Knowledge of the Self and the World.
- Our surface knowledge is limited in nature and works within the realm of Ignorance.
- For True Knowledge of the Self and the World, one needs to break the walls of surface ego and grow into one's true inner Self, the wider Cosmic Self and the highest Spiritual Self.

5.6 Sri Aurobindo's Methodological Position

The need to evolve beyond the mental reason to the intuitive way of knowing and move from separative indirect ways of knowing to Integral Knowledge through 'Knowledge by Identity' can be said to be the cornerstone of Sri Aurobindo's method of investigating and facilitating human potential. This decisive transformation of the ways of 'Knowing' and 'Being' requires a special technology of inner and outer change—the *method of Integral Yoga*.

5.6.1 The Method of Integral Yoga

To have a right perspective on the nature of our surface personality and to access and study the deeper aspects of our personality, we need a special methodology—the method of the yoga which according to Sri Aurobindo is the practical psychology through which we can not only understand the parts and layers our nature but can also attempt to transform it. Yoga is traditionally known as the yoking of the human consciousness to the Divine consciousness. However, for Sri Aurobindo this is only the first step of the Integral Yoga. In his words:

The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others—for its aim is not only to rise out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter (Sri Aurobindo 1970, p. 505).

The Divine-knowledge and the World-knowledge are both part of the Integral view of Life through the method of Integral Yoga one can find a way not to reject the consciousness of Ignorance but to purify it and progressively, deepen, widen and heighten it.

Nature is a vast laboratory that is progressively working out different evolutionary possibilities. In humans, the Nature has become self conscious and there is a possibility of consciously collaborating with the Divine and compressing what would have taken subconscious Nature ages to achieve to be realised in a lifetime through the process of yoga. The *human subjectivity* thus becomes a special *laboratory*—where through yogic-processes one can do experiments, understand the processes of transformation of the nature and find ways to fasten the pace of evolution by varied and complex operations of consciousness.

The way of Integral Yoga is not through any standard use of meditational exercises or mantras but through the triple process of aspiration of the being for the Divine, rejection of all the influences that are not in line with one's central aspiration and surrender of the complete being to the Divine so that it can be transformed.

The aim of Integral Yoga is to tear down the walls of the separative mind-based ego-consciousness and to rise to the highest heights of the Supramental Knowledge that can give us a capacity for a *true knowledge by identity* where separation

ends and there a direct touch between consciousness and consciousness and being and being. It is a self-luminous consciousness full of Love, Power, Joy and Knowledge. Sri Aurobindo (1997b) expresses this spiritual consciousness of identity beautifully in the following lines in *Savitri*:

There was no cleavage between soul and soul,
 There was no barrier between world and God.
 Overpowered were form and memory's limiting line;
 The covering mind was seized and torn apart;
 It was dissolved and now no more could be,
 The one Consciousness that made the world was seen;
 All now was luminosity and force
 The circle of the little self was gone;
 The separate being could no more be felt;
 It disappeared and knew itself no more,
 Lost in the spirit's wide identity.
 (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, p. 319)

In the final analysis, the method that an aspirant uses to attempt the transformation of consciousness is in keeping with the call from the Divine and his own unique Truth contained in the Psychic Being. Sri Aurobindo comments on the method to be adopted by a seeker of the Integral Truth (1999b):

What is his method and his system? He has no method and every method. *His system is a natural organisation of the highest processes and movements of which the nature is capable.* Applying themselves even to the pettiest details and to the actions the most insignificant in their appearance with as much care and thoroughness as to the greatest, they in the end lift all into the Light and transform all. For in his Yoga there is nothing too small to be used and nothing too great to be attempted (p. 61, emphasis added).

The path and the method of Integral Yoga cannot be defined fully *for it is ever the task of new creation*. Sri Aurobindo likens it to a journey through a virgin forest through which a pathfinder has to hew a way. It is an adventure in a true sense in which a path to the future has to be discovered and lived through a creation of new Divine life-values.

5.6.2 Methodological Implications of the Fourfold Order of Knowledge

A key methodological implication Sri Aurobindo's perspective on fourfold order of knowledge is that one need not primarily study the human development in terms of 'other' as external to one's own self. The 'scientific' endeavour to interpret sense-data or construct a knowledge of the 'other' through hypotheses and theories is according to Sri Aurobindo very ineffective in its results for it can only give us a semblance of knowledge which is always unsure of its own conclusions. The direct

implication I think is that the complexities human subjectivity are best understood not studying the 'external subject' through experimentation, questionnaires or even the qualitative methodologies using which a researcher attempts to interpret the responses, construct and deconstruct the 'other' but to study human subjectivity on its own terms. Several qualitative methodologies recommend the technique of 'ordering the subjectivity' to ensure sufficient inner objectivity in the process of observation of a phenomenon under study. However, without the sufficient *purification of the mental instrument*, this is a difficult goal to achieve and one needs the yogic practice of continuous stepping back, concentration and stabilising oneself in the quiet spiritual centre within to be able to progressively have a true objectivity necessary for study of the human subjectivity and its transformation.

The knowledge through identity, knowledge by intimate touch or even knowledge by separative direct contact are modes of knowledge that have not been sufficiently been utilised by Human Development as an academic discipline for it largely attempts to study the psychological development, an objective Science—that needs to have an observable, measurable and externally verifiable base. Sri Aurobindo (1998, 2005) is not opposed to the need for a scientific temper in investigations. However, his writings indicate that making psychological investigations by separative indirect touch is not at all the appropriate method. The other three forms of knowledge can give us a much greater access to the richness of human subjectivity through exercise of the capacities of knowledge by identity, by partial identification and objective or reflective self-knowledge.

These three forms of knowledge can be exercised conjunction with each other. For instance, most of those living in surface consciousness attempt to balance the knowledge by intimate direct touch with the knowledge by separative direct touch. Here ordinary passions or desires that we may want to fulfil are known through partial identification are attempted to be controlled by the sanction of the objective and reflective functions of the mind. According to Sri Aurobindo (2005) this psychological poise is an *uneasy one*—for there is an ever present danger of the mind being engulfed by passions and also because our surface objective knowledge has its source in the mind whereby we can analyse many aspects of a situation but cannot say with certainty that the decision that we arrive at after objective consideration of all the facts is indeed the true one.

To know one's true purpose of being there is need to deepen the consciousness whereby the mind can develop the capacity of entering into the movement of the Becoming and identifying with it and can at the same time retain the status of the Being—i.e. the witness, the observer and the controller which is rooted the deeper psychic and spiritual presence within (Sri Aurobindo 2005). Thus one can become the master of the influences coming from without and within—and can with a self assured knowledge accept those which harmonise with one's true being and calmly reject those which do not.

5.6.3 A Summary

In brief, the methodological assumptions are:

- The scientific method based on separative mental consciousness is an ineffective in yielding true knowledge of oneself and others.
- A thorough study of human subjectivity with all its complexity and its evolutionary possibilities is necessary for complete psychological investigations.
- The yogic method hastens the pace of evolution and has the capacity to compress within a short period of time what may have taken subconscious process of nature ages to do.
- Integral Yoga is a method through which one not only yokes oneself to the Divine Consciousness but also attempts to manifest it on the Earth.
- Human nature can be radically changed and transformed through the process of Integral Yoga through progressively deepening, widening and heightening the consciousness.
- Integral Yoga requires a conscious collaboration between the human individual and the Divine.
- The triple method of aspiration, rejection and surrender forms the basis of Integral Yoga.
- Each individual soul is unique and makes its journey in keeping with its own psychic truth.
- Conscious evolution is an adventure of consciousness and the path is not laid out but has to be discovered or new created by the aspirant.

5.7 The Nature of Human Evolution: The Processes and the Principles of Change

Sri Aurobindo's perspective on human development—its varied lines, its range and complexity of structure are significantly broader in vision as compared to most theories in the academic discipline of Human development. For instance, in addition to the ontogenetic (individual development) and microgenetic processes of development (changes taking place over short period of time, e.g. inner-yogic processes), Sri Aurobindo's view of development also takes into account the broad cosmogenetic (involution and evolution of consciousness) and phylogenetic (evolution of the species) dimensions of development, the key principles of change related to which are discussed in the following sub-sections.

5.7.1 *The Three Principles Evolution: Ascent, Widening and Integration*

The story of evolution begins with the fact of involution of the Superconscious in the Inconscious. Matter is the first foundation—the base within which evolution takes place. Through the secret action of the Supermind, the matter evolves different forms which become progressively more and more subtly and intricately organised that allows for the upward evolutionary progress of consciousness, from one grade to another, in an ascending series which finally culminates in the highest Supramental Consciousness and its manifestation on Earth. *Evolution thus is essentially heightening and intensification of the force of consciousness so that what is unmanifest emerges in form of a New Consciousness* (Sri Aurobindo 2005).

The ascent of consciousness is the first principle of evolution. In Sri Aurobindo's view (2005), Science has looked at evolution from the physical side—i.e. from the perspective of the *evolution of forms* (e.g. Darwin's theory) but has not paid adequate attention to the inner psychological basis—the *evolution of consciousness*.

The physical science has found it very different to account for the missing links and gaps that abound in the process of evolution for the principles of variation and natural selection are unable to explain this discontinuity in *how* a new principle or a species emerges in the process of evolution.

If we attempt to understand the process of evolution from the inner side, this problem can be solved as the discontinuity in development can be seen as an emergence of a new principle of consciousness which is secretly guided by the action of Supermind which lies involved in matter. The transition between one grade and another or one species and another thus takes on the shape of a reversal—a metamorphosis or a transformation. There may be a slow imperceptible continuity of change to which may be added emphasis of occult action of the secret forces that brings about the decisive emergence of a new principle or a species. It is the presence of this secret principle of Supermind that explains the reason there is in the evolution of Nature, a constant mathematical architecture, a design, a constant invention and experimentation and an adaptation of the means to the ends which gives it the semblance of a purpose.

The process of ascent begins with the progressive emergence of Life in Matter. In Matter, there is an outer form of consciousness seems as though it is asleep—it appears to be an 'eternal somnambulist'. However, even in the form of the atom and molecule there is a presence awake in the sleep of matter though it does not wake up and is involved within it. In plants, the outer form consciousness is still asleep but it becomes as though full of nervous dreams—always on the point of waking up but never quite awake—this is the subconscious principle of Life that has emerged within Matter. This happens through the intensification and of the Conscious Force that was earlier hidden in Matter which is raised to a height that it becomes capable of manifesting a new principle of action in the ascent of Consciousness—the principle of vitality—of Life.

The next transition that comes about by the further intensification and heightening of the consciousness is the emergence of the animal being, where the consciousness becomes awake in form of sense-mind and the vital-mind. The animal being senses the body, senses life and also senses the mind, has no longer only blind subconscious nervous reactions but has the capacity of conscious sensations, volitions, impulses, observation and cunning and strategy which prepares for the emergence of the next grade of consciousness—the human intelligence. Even in the higher animal, the waking mind has a limited range restricted to fulfilling the needs of its vital existence.

In the next grade of consciousness—the human being, there is an emergence of a new principle; the consciousness is heightened from the vital-mind into the reflecting and thinking mind. Consciousness becomes much more subtle and there is an enlarged capacity of imagination, of making complex connections, aesthetic creation and interpreting reason. The consciousness no longer remains merely reactive or reflexive in nature but develops the capacity of a self-detaching intelligence that gives humans the possibility of mastering the vital reactions.

The widening of the consciousness takes place with each ascent as the evolving being is able to function from a new poise of a much wider field of action. This wider and higher stance of a new consciousness is the second principle whereby the evolving being turns its gaze downwards and attempts not to reject but to integrate the lower being by developing, refining and subtilising it and bringing it to a point where a new grade of consciousness can manifest within it.

The integration of the lower with the higher consciousness is the third principle of human evolution. This accounts for a *continuity* in the process of human evolution as the gains of the previous grade of evolution are not abandoned in favour of a higher principle but are given a new meaning and value within the higher consciousness and integrated. For instance, when the human intelligence manifests as the higher evolutionary principle, the enlarged consciousness enables a human person to gaze down with the twin powers of the Consciousness-Force, i.e. the power of will and the power of knowledge gained so far and attempts to give the lower animal existence new values. According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), the integration lower notes of being is attempted because the nature of hidden Divine Consciousness is to extract from the process of evolution the maximum *Ananda* of composing a rich symphony of the realisation of multiple possibilities inherent within it. Thus for the Divine Lord:

...the delight of existence being his eternal business and a harmony of various strains, not a sweet but monotonous melody the method of his music, he wishes to include the lower notes also and, by surcharging them with a deeper and finer significance, get more delight out of them than was possible in the cruder formulation (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 743).

The lower nature however, must *consent* to be transformed into a new term of existence if it is to be integrated within the higher consciousness. This is the reason behind the system of ethics and other forms of discipline that we create for ourselves as humans so that we can tame and purify the lower instruments, i.e. the latent animal instincts of the physical being and the uncontrolled and unrefined

passions of the vital being which further cloud the instrument of the mind. The aim thus is to perfect and not destroy the surface instruments and make them fit so that they can become capable of manifesting first the higher mental being and progressively the Supramental Harmony through the heightening of the consciousness.

The human being is not satisfied in relying only on Nature to guide it by instinct. The Nature has become conscious within it and it is possible to effectuate not only downward integration but to consciously open the gaze upwards into higher levels of consciousness and inwards into his inner being. This is the beginning of a new journey—an evolutionary step to the creation of new species—the Supramental Being. The greater the height of the ascent, the greater the depth of the downward gaze and the lower elements that can victoriously transformed in the higher Light. The decisive transformation of the lowest Inconscient needs one to ascend to the highest consciousness—the Supramental Consciousness for according to Sri Aurobindo (1997b)—“*a highest flight climbs to a deepest view*” (p. 660). Then there remains no fundamental disconnect between spirit and matter for even the matter can be transformed to manifest the Highest Divine Consciousness.

5.8 The Aims of Life: Four Theories of Existence

The current scope of the discipline of Human Development and the psychological vision that guides it are dependent on the aim of existence that guides it implicitly. Sri Aurobindo has outlined *four aims of existence* which define the positions that are widely taken by thinkers, mystics and philosophers across ages and culture and define their broad cosmologies. A look at these may be a useful exercise for it may give us an indication of the world-view that currently drives the discipline of human development and its difference from Sri Aurobindo's Integral view of human existence. These are:

The *Supracosmic* aim of existence, as represented in the Buddhist and the later *Vedantic* philosophies (e.g. *Shankara*), is to escape from this world which is considered to be an Illusion or a madhouse and depart into the Supracosmic realms or the eternal Self through *Nirvana* or *Moksha*.

The *Cosmic-Terrestrial* view looks at the aim of human life as located within the material cosmos and accepts it as the only reality. It focuses the individual and collective progress of humanity. This view negates the possibility of the presence of a Supracosmic realm and is represented by the worldview of the atheist, the agnostic or the believer in a Nature Soul that guides the evolutionary process.

The *Supraterrestrial* view, as represented by the Christian philosophical tradition, admits the reality of the material cosmos and accepts the temporary life of a human being on earth to be the first step of evolution. The life on earth is followed by a further journey of an immortal soul that survives physical death to the higher planes of existence or heavens which have eternal or at least a more permanent

duration. The solitary earthly life is viewed by Sri Aurobindo (2005) as a place of ordeal, a field of development or a scene of spiritual fall and exile with heaven as the true home for which an individual should aspire.

The *Integral* aim of life proposed by Sri Aurobindo brings together different aspects of truth in the three aims discussed above and synthesises them into an Integral perspective. The Integral perspective recognises the existence of Supracosmic and Supraterrrestrial planes of existence and also the reality and necessity of the Cosmic-Terrrestrial evolution. Earthly existence according to this view is not a spiritual fall or a lapse into an un-divine realm but a scene of evolutionary unfolding which moves towards the terrestrial revelation of the Supreme Spiritual Light, Power, Bliss and Oneness. While it is true that the soul can ascend into higher planes of existence after death, it is equally true that the higher divine consciousness can be manifested in the terrestrial existence itself. (Sri Aurobindo 2005)

The discipline of Human Development it seems to me has largely ignored the possibility of the presence of Supracosmic and Supraterrrestrial realities. Its refusal to engage with the metaphysical is only an occasion for implicit subscription to the cosmic-terrestrial view of existence whereby the material reality of the terrestrial existence is the reality within which largely the potential of human development is located. The reference to the notion of the Divine is in my view, often treated as a *mental notion* on which people base their belief-systems and not as a *Reality* that has been experienced spiritually by innumerable individuals across the different ages and cultures and whose force guides them dynamically through life.

A life in the material reality divested of higher divine guidance and in the final analysis meaningless at it ends in eventual death is the metatheoretical derivative of the cosmic-terrestrial cosmology for there is no Supracosmic reality. Thus it is left to the struggling human to make the best of life, attempt to actualize his observable potential and cope with life in the best possible manner till it passes from him.

5.9 Understanding the Neo-Darwinian and Relational Metatheories in Light of Sri Aurobindo's Perspective on Evolution of Consciousness

Viewed from the perspective of Sri Aurobindo's writings on the Human Cycle, it can be asserted that the emergence of different metatheoretical perspectives at different points in socio-historical time is itself a reflection of the evolutionary need of humanity and the ever-unfolding story of progress and perfection. It was noted in Chap. 4 that the emergence of the neo-Darwinian metatheory can be viewed as a reflection of the rationalist agenda of an age where as the relational metatheory can be seen as a making the initial forays into the complexity of human subjectivity marking the beginnings of a subjective age.

Sri Aurobindo's perspective on human evolution gives us a framework through which we can look at human evolution both retrospectively and prospectively. Its gaze reaches back to the time of the Vedas and also makes a leap prospectively into the future evolutionary stages of humanity. It scans the realms of the Time-Space Reality and locates it within the spiritual vision of the Timeless, Spaceless Pure Existent which is the basis of both the eternal and the phenomenal existence—the Being and the Becoming.

According to this perspective, the current impasse for humanity is to delve into the deeper layers of the human subjectivity and discover the psychic presence within which can usher humanity into the new modes of knowing and being of the subjective age and provide a solid base for the future emergence of a spiritual society. I think that this vision which stretches into the past and leans into the future has a tremendous potential to inform the understanding of human development and also facilitating conscious evolution through the inner-yogic technologies. In the following paragraphs I re-examine the ontological, epistemological, methodological assumptions of the two dominant metatheories, the aim of human existence and the nature of development in Light of Sri Aurobindo's perspective on the evolution of consciousness. The aim here is to bring them in dialogue with each other and examine the potential of Sri Aurobindo's perspective in giving a future direction to the study of Human Development.

The neo-Darwinian metatheory with its materialist ontology looks at the *“ultimate nature of the universe, and hence the nature of the psychological subject, as reactive, uniform, and fixed”* (Overton 2006, p. 30). The matter is the Absolute bedrock—the foundation and evolution is seen to be inherently meaningless and non-purposive. Further, there is a Cartesian splitting of the mind and body, heredity and environment which are seen as either-or categories. Sri Aurobindo's view of human nature and its evolutionary nature and potential is drastically different from the assumptions of human nature made by the neo-Darwinian metatheory. His view on human evolution directly challenge following assumptions:

First, man is a creation and slave of matter. He can only master matter by obeying it. *Secondly*, the mind itself is a form of gross matter and not independent of and master of the senses. *Thirdly*, there is no real free will, because all our action is determined by two great forces, heredity and environment. We are the slaves of our nature, and where we seem to be free from its mastery, it is because we are yet worse slaves of our environment, worked by the forces that surround and manipulate us. (Sri Aurobindo 1998, p. 15, emphasis added).

Sri Aurobindo (1998) points out that the human being is not hostage to material forces and all human processes including the human mind are not reducible to the material-physiological processes as in the neo-Darwinian metatheory. There is an Absolute Reality that marks Sri Aurobindo's view of evolution but it is the *Absolutism of the Spirit* and not that of blind matter. This is a fundamental ontological difference between the two perspectives—the neo-Darwinian metatheory viewing evolution as a result of blind mechanical chance and Sri Aurobindo's perspective where the Divine consciousness is involved in deepest darkest matter

and secretly guides the process of evolution. Mind in this scheme is the lower delegate of the Supermind and not a form of the gross matter and is in its nature significantly different from the senses which it has the capacity to control because of its higher grade in the ascent of consciousness. The twin factors of heredity and environment in split either-or form or in conjunction have been traditionally assumed by developmental theories to be decisive in influencing the process of change. According to Sri Aurobindo (1998), the evolutionary destiny of humankind is not hostage to either of these factors. It is possible to change the very nature with which we are born and surmount determinism of heredity and also the master of the influences of the environment in which we are born, through the process of conscious evolution. This is direct contrast to the neo-Darwinian view of human nature as essentially *reactive* and *fixed*.

The relational metatheory represents the ontological view that the “*ultimate nature of both universe and persons as active, organized, and changing*” (Overton 2006, p. 30). It has a process ontology with a focus on Becoming which rejects the notion of an Absolute foundation, Cartesian splitting of factors and looks at ideas not as pure forms but as fuzzy forms that flow to each other. One understands reality through the *vantage points* or *groundings* from which one views it. While the ontological position that the universe and the human nature is organised, active and changing is partially in synchrony with Sri Aurobindo’s view of human evolution there are fundamental differences in two sets of ontological assumptions.

In Sri Aurobindo’s (2005) perspective, our understanding of the universe and human nature is incomplete if viewed only as process of Becoming. Unlike relational metatheory, in Sri Aurobindo’s perspective there is an Absolute Reality—the Pure Existent—the *Sat* that is the basis of the twin poises of Being and Becoming which together account for the process of human development. The relational theories reject the neo-Darwinian metatheoretical Absolute and rigid material foundational base because it constrains its view of reality as changing and active. However, the Absolute of the Spirit as conceived by Sri Aurobindo cannot be seen as a source of rigidity but is in fact *a source of infinite and self-determined Divine freedom and variation*.

The relational analysis of phenomenal Becoming can be seen as asserting the primacy of the ‘Mind’ in form vantage points through which we view ourselves and the world. The human mind finds it difficult to imagine an Absolutism of the Spirit which can hold both Being and Becoming—the Eternal and the Phenomenal, the Stability and the Change, the Unity and Multiplicity—in a single poise. For this one needs to step back into one’s inner being to be able to recover the possibility of Unity of Being while enjoying the infinite Becomings. The aim of evolution is to progress and to perfect human nature and divinize it. Viewed from this perspective, the ontology of relational metatheory looks like a series or stairs of mentally constructed ideas that are suspended without any base or an end. Further, the relational metatheory only taps the three elementary notes—Body, Life and mind of a symphony for which Sri Aurobindo has seven (or eight) ontological notes, i.e. Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Supermind, Psychic Being, Mind, Life and Body. The entire creation is united in a single vision in this Divine

view of Reality according to Sri Aurobindo (2005)—where there is no fundamental difference between the creator and the creation- and what we in our present transitional poise are witness to the initial discordant evolutionary notes which are a precursor to a greater harmony—provided we consent to be divinized.

In the neo-Darwinian metatheory, knowledge is created through a process of adaptation whereby the split factors of heredity and environment interact to produce the knowledge of the world. Knowledge here is created through essentially a one-way causation and those knowledge forms survive that help an individual adapt to the environmental challenges. In contrast, the relational epistemological position is an attempt to heal the either-or splitting of reality into rigid categories to have a more inclusive form of knowledge. It attempts to move beyond the mechanical explanation of the neo-Darwinian metatheory and emphasises the faculties of reason, observation and understanding in knowledge creation. The dialectical nature of the mind with its processes of thesis, antithesis and synthesis are seen as the basis of development of knowledge.

The relational metatheory is a significant improvement over the neo-Darwinian metatheory for it locates the source of knowledge squarely in the realm of the conscious human mind rather than look for explanation of human knowledge in blind mechanisms of Nature. The development of the human mind as a surface instrument is an important step in evolutionary march of humankind. It also makes a significant departure from a reliance on separative knowledge through indirect contact (neo-Darwinian metatheory) to a separative knowledge through direct contact for the relational metatheory relies on the self-detaching capacity of mental intelligence and reasoning to be able to know the reality through the dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The Mother (2002) too refers to the method of thesis, antithesis and synthesis as an important method to develop the mind as it simultaneously widens the mind by the consideration of the antithesis to a thesis and heightens it by moving above both the positions into a higher synthesis that includes and transcends both the initial positions. Thus, there is an agreement in the need to develop and train the human mind in the two perspectives. However, the similarity end here as the human mind is not the terminal end of human capacities according to Sri Aurobindo (2005) and the dialectical mind is viewed as limited in its action. While the dialectical intellect may be used to arrange ideas or justify our expression of the vision and the knowledge, but it is not *the source* of vision or the knowledge. The true knowledge of self requires a true perception which:

...cannot be satisfactorily pursued and reached on the basis of an examination of words and ideas or a dialectical discussion; it must be the result of a total observation and penetration of the relevant facts of consciousness—both those of the surface and those below or above our surface level or behind our frontal surface—and a successful fathoming of their significance. For the dialectical intellect is not a sufficient judge of essential or spiritual truths; moreover, very often, by its propensity to deal with words and abstract ideas as if they were binding realities, it wears them as chains and does not look freely beyond them to the essential and total facts of our existence (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 510).

The dialectical reason thus cannot be allowed to exclude the truth that does not fall within its rigid frame of logic. It is precisely the mistake committed by

relational theorists who scan in my view but the superficial layers of the self and reject the psychic and spiritual kernel within. The faculty of reason which it has a total reliance is in effect a temporary mechanism created by Nature which is not as yet in a state of knowing itself directly and surely. According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), the human being is capable of developing the higher capacities of the mind and through an ascent of consciousness move to the next stage of evolution.

The view of relational theories whereby individuals learn to know as active beings and knowledge manifests in an organized form in qualitatively different stages of development is partly in harmony with Sri Aurobindo's vision of development. However, there is a difference in the metaphysical assumptions about the nature of development. Most relational theories do not subscribe to the view that evolution is divinely guided. There are a few theories, for instance, Piaget's theory of cognitive development which refers to an immanent Divine as an explanation of the structured nature of intelligence (Chapman 1988). The dominant focus however, is on the ideas related with cognitive change—structure and functions, adaptation and organisation and the process of equilibration—but the source of the emergence of these orderly processes is not brought into the *forefront* and metaphysical assumptions do not provide the wider context within which to locate these observations of cognitive change. The question *why* do we know in the manner that we do thus remains in the background. However, it is in interesting to note how an independent observation-based enquiry (e.g. Piaget) corroborates the fact that there is an underlying intelligent developmental architecture which defines the nature of emerging mental knowledge—a fact which is perceived through a yogic vision by Sri Aurobindo as characteristic of both universal and individual evolution.

Sri Aurobindo's discourse on human development moves beyond the relational theories, in the reclaiming of the spiritual Being—the Eternal spiritual presence within as the source of True Knowledge. Here, True Knowledge is Integral in nature—i.e. it leads to the perception of Ignorance (theories based on the intellect) and Knowledge (theories based on direct spiritual realisation) as two sides of a single story in the Infinite Self-Play of the Divine.

The neo-Darwinian metamethod is based entirely on the *separative knowledge through indirect contact* for it makes a crucial split between the inner and the outer reality and studies the outer reality as external to its own self. This fundamental schism severely constrains the study of human complexity for it refuses to study the human subjectivity on its own terms. The neo-Darwinian metamethod reduces the phenomena under study to its fundamental constituents and then looks for the material and efficient causes that explain the interaction between the constituents. This metamethod is essentially mechanical in nature as it attempts to fix cause-effect relations into laws and generalisations that are interpretation—free and independent of the mind that observes it. This metamethod is highly unsuitable for the study of human psychological reality which is not essentially mechanical but dynamic in nature and cannot be bound by laws that have the material causation as a base.

The relational metamethod in contrast attempts to study the human reality in much more holistic fashion and attempts the study of human subjectivity through

healing of the split between the inner and the outer reality. It however, finds itself not willing to engage with *causes* and attempts instead to study the phenomena under study by inferring the best possible explanation which is not foundational and rigid in nature. For instance, heredity and environment may be seen as factors that influence development but not as 'causes' of development.

I think that the relational metamethod does well to reject the material foundationalism of the neo-Darwinian metamethod and in using the separative knowledge with direct contact as its main method. Its reach however, does not extend to fathoming the width, depth and height of the larger human potential that has been envisioned by Sri Aurobindo. According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), there is causation—but it is the causation of the Divine Law which has *essential freedom of self-expression* as its very basis. This may seem like a paradox to the human mind but the world of imperfection as we know it is in Sri Aurobindo's view the result of the exercise this fundamental freedom of the Perfect Divine. The Divine has become the opposite of his own highest qualities—*Sat* becomes *Asat*, Consciousness becomes the lack of consciousness and Bliss becomes pain and Immortality becomes death. The self-recovery of these qualities becomes the nature the free self-play of the Lord who has secretly involved himself in this Creation and enjoys the play of multiple possibilities of evolution. *The method to enjoy this play* is through the process of Integral yoga whereby one has the potential of progressively becoming aware of the essential divine nature, manifesting it though a change of surface nature and also knowing the entire creation through a blissful Identity.

From the neo-Darwinian perspective, human development is essentially a process of adjustment and adaptation to the external environment. The nature of change is variational and it is the additive nature of experiences that accounts for the continuous nature of change. In contrast, the relational metatheory looks at the nature of development as both transformational and variational in nature with five essential features as also mentioned in Chap. 4. These are: "(1) *organization of processes* (also termed *structure* and *system*) (2) *order* and *sequence* (3) *direction* (4) *epigenesis* and *emergence*, and (5) *relative permanence* and *irreversibility*" (Overton 2010, p. 4).

In addition, the nature of change is assumed to be spiral in nature with differentiation and integration attempted at each new stage of development. Interestingly, all these features also characterise the evolution of consciousness as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo though on a much wider cosmogenetic scale which are further expressed in the phylogenetic, ontogenetic and microgenetic-yogic dimensions of development. In the cosmogenetic scheme, the Supermind connecting the lower and higher hemispheres of the Cosmos contains the Divine Plan of evolution which *unfolds and emerges* in a relatively *orderly fashion* in the process, is *organized* within different grades of evolution, *directed* towards the self emergence of the Divine involved in matter, and marked by a *transformational change* from one grade of evolution to the other. In evolution of species there is a *reversal of consciousness* as one grade of consciousness ascends to a newer grade and novel set characteristics emerge at each stage. The mechanisms of change—

ascent, widening, differentiation and integration are analogous to the mechanisms described by relational developmental thinkers. For instance, Werner (1957) views development as moving from a state of “*lack of differentiation to a state of increasing differentiation, articulation and hierarchic integration*” (p. 126). While these principles are applied in by contemporary developmental thinkers to understand current level human evolution, these principles are consciously applied by an aspirant of Integral *yoga* in the field of internal psychological experimentation to ensure emergence of a new grade of consciousness.

The process of evolution in Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary vision is spiral in nature and with the each evolutionary movement being reaffirmed and enhanced at a higher grade of development in the cycle of the ages. Even from the perspective of ontogenetic development, there is an orderly emergence of the predominant qualities of physical, vital and mind in surface nature supported by the Psychic Being as though from behind a veil. The evolutionary stress caused by current imperfections of human consciousness prepares humanity for a further reversal of consciousness which can be attained through a conscious union with the Divine presence within. Sri Aurobindo’s vision of nature of evolution then differs in two fundamental ways from the central idea of the relational metatheory—it gives us a clear perspective of the *essential source* from which evolution ensues and an understanding of the *ultimate aim of human evolution* not only in this lifetime but across the cycles of birth.

With reference to the aims of existence, neo-Darwinian metatheory subscribes entirely to the Cosmic-terrestrial aim of human existence whereby the process of human evolution is seen as a result of the mechanical processes of Nature and inherently as apurposive, meaningless and amoral in nature. As far as the relational metatheory is concerned, it too, in effect, constrains its scope to the Cosmic-terrestrial aim of existence. Some of the theories that represent the relational viewpoint (e.g. Baldwin and Piaget) have attempted to look at the nature of divine impulsion in the guidance of human development. However, the academic Psychology as it has been practiced in the past two centuries has almost ‘sanitised’ the popular versions of these theories of any reference to the Divine. However, the nature of human development is viewed by these theories as *moral* in nature with each stage of development as higher synthesis increasing the *quality* of relation with oneself and the world through an increase in cognitive and affective capacities (e.g. Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson). The attainment of ‘wisdom’ and a capacity to handle the complex moral dilemmas of life can be seen as some of the aims of existence which are largely viewed within the frame of a single lifetime and the story of life necessarily ends with death.

Sri Aurobindo view of human evolution in contrast conceives of spiritual *impulsion as a source and as an end of the developmental process*. It is a vision of eternal hope for nothing worthwhile in the process of evolution is lost or squandered. In the evolution of species, the gains of a previous evolution are integrated in the next grade through spiral evolution and the soul in Nature manifested as the psychic being in humans, carries forward the gains of evolution through the cycle of ages and births. The ultimate aim of existence is not to leave the imperfect earth

and merge with the Divine through a process of self-annulment but to perfect and divinize the self—spirit, soul, mind, vital and *even the body*. In words of Sri Aurobindo (1997b):

A divine harmony shall be earth's law,
Beauty and joy remould her way to live:
Even the body shall remember God... (p. 707).

The western conceptions of human individual within the academic disciple of Human Development are largely working out the rationalistic agenda of an age and hesitate to delve into the tracts deeper and higher consciousness that lie beyond the surface personality. The individual based on the neo-Darwinian metatheory is conceived as a product of the mechanical process of evolution and conditioned by the factors of heredity and/or environment—both of which are out of the direct control of the developing individual. The relational developmental theories give a greater agency to the individual forming his or her own individuality and consciously coordinate the factors of biology and culture in the process of development. However, viewed from Sri Aurobindo's perspective, it is the development of the 'human individuality' that is the focus of many of the ambitious contemporary synthetic theories attempting to understand the evolving self (Csikszentmihalyi 1993; Kegan 1982). The next two victories, i.e. offering the human individuality to the Divine and becoming a True Individual, need a firm grasp of the psychic-spiritual yogic reality, which the perspectives restricted to a surface subjectivity cannot fathom. *Integrity* and *wisdom* for instance, are seen as the ultimate developmental gains of the conception human life cycle which describes only the *surface ego-development story*.

The humanistic and transpersonal psychologies however have made an attempt to move beyond the surface human personality and fathom the mysteries of the higher human potential. Some of the influential transpersonal theories have drawn heavily from the works of Sri Aurobindo to understand the scope and aim of the evolutionary potential of consciousness, e.g. (Wilber 2000). There is, in my view, a need for such western theories (e.g. Wilber) which attempt to integrate Indian—yogic perspectives, to move beyond the mere borrowing of the of the outer dimensions of human evolution for the purpose of map-making, and delve more deeply into the dynamics of inner-yogic-processes, the direct experience of which alone can reveal the full scope, genius and power of such perspectives.

There also exist theoretical works of significance that make an incisive comparative analysis of the western and eastern approaches to the Self and Identity and have attempted to bridge the gulf between Being and Becoming that exists in the East and the West (Paranjpe, 1998). There is a immense richness of human developmental perspective contained in the works of Indian yogis like Sri Aurobindo based on their direct yogic perception and experience—which has the capacity of not only showing us the way to the Divine but through yogic power new creating the pathways to a *New Future* by decisively changing the Earth Consciousness. This richness needs to be represented to the world—*on its own terms*, which is the aim of this work.

5.10 Revisiting the Developmental Agenda of the Contemporary Psychological Theories

I now examine the agenda of the two popular mainstream theories of evolution of self and propose a further deepening of this agenda when viewed from an Integral-developmental perspective. The contemporary theories that I have chosen for analysis are those of Robert Kegan and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi both of whom have written a book each, interestingly by the same title- *'The Evolving Self'*. The other significant work of these authors is a book called *'In Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life'* by Robert Kegan and a book by Csikszentmihalyi titled *'Flow'*. Robert Kegan's works has been chosen as they include many of the major contemporary theories of development (Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger, Maslow, McClelland, Murray and Erikson) in a bid to synthesise an evolutionary theory of self. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's work is chosen for it is a significant and influential psychological theory that looks the process of optimal development and way it extends the human capacities of development.

5.10.1 Robert Kegan Theory of *'The Evolving Self'*

The developmental perspective of Kegan (1982) looks at the process human development as a meaning-making process comprising of five major qualitatively different stages of development. These stages are: Incorporative, Impulsive, Interpersonal, Intuition and Interindividual stages. In each of these stages, the growing individual is seen as embedded within a subjective reality which defines the limits of its meaning-making capacity and there exist certain psychological processes that become externalised into an objective view. Each stage represents a new subjective reality as you 'hatch out' in Mahlerian sense from stage to the next. The stages of development based on common ground spanned by major psychological theories are:

The Incorporative Balance: This is a stage of infancy that is equivalent to the Piagetian sensorimotor stage where a child is seen as embedded within the subjective reality of reflexes and largely operates through them. The sense of self is largely undifferentiated and there is little that is 'objective' to the child's view as object permanence has not been achieved. The stage is called incorporative balance because the fundamental mode of operation is all-assimilative in nature in the Piagetian sense. From the perspective of Loevinger one could call this stage a pre-social phase.

The Impulsive Balance: The next early childhood stage is the impulsive balance where the subjective reality of the child is embedded in the impulses and perceptions whereby the world looks exactly as it is directly perceived by the child. The child can now take an objective view of the reflexes as the child is disembedded from this reality. Cognition is not as yet flexible or reversible and if

the perception of an object for a child changes—then the object *itself* changes. This is true also in the domain of impulses—the child does not have good impulse control at this stage and the reason is that the impulses are not mediated. In fact, the impulses *are* the self and their non-expression is the loss of self. The child is unable to hold two feelings simultaneously and has no capacity for internal conflict management and thus has to express the impulses to claim the sense of self. In the Piagetian terms, this stage corresponds to the preoperational stage, the punishment and obedience orientation of Kohlberg's theory of moral development and the initiative versus guilt stage of Erikson.

The Imperial Balance: A new subject-object balance is reached when the child is able create a more endurable sense of self and can articulate needs and desires while being subjectively embedded within these. The child disembeds from the impulsive balance and can now command the impulses and *has* an impulse rather than *being* the impulse. This is the beginning of the formation of the sense of a new agency and the child has a private world which did not exist earlier. This stage shares common ground with Piaget's concrete operational stage, the instrumental orientation of Kohlberg's theory and industry vs. inferiority stage of Erikson's theory.

The Interpersonal Balance: The new evolutionary truce is the interpersonal balance whereby the child can take a perspective on personal needs and can look beyond them to coordinate different points of view. The sense of self is created in relation with 'other' and it becomes a shared and a conversational reality connected with the people present around the child. The child is embedded in this interpersonal mutuality and can take an objective view of the needs, wishes and desires. This stage can represent an early formal operational stage to stretch the Piagetian terminology and the interpersonal concordance stage of Kohlberg's theory.

The Institutional Balance: In moving beyond the interpersonal stage, the person is now able take a perspective on relationships rather than being embedded within them. In this stage the growing individual takes authorship of his or her own identity. The shared reality no longer determines the personal identity and the growing individual develops a capacity to own the varied shared contexts and coordinate multiple interpersonal demands from the perspective of the organised sense of self and identity. The self is constructed like an 'institution' and its processes are sought to be regulated by the individual. The subjective reality of an individual in this stage is marked by an ideological orientation whereby truth is sought by belonging to a particular class or a group of people. This stage shares common ground with the full formal operational stage of Piaget's theory, the societal orientation of Kohlberg's moral development theory and the identity vs. role confusion stage of Erikson's theory.

The Interindividual Balance: The new balance of evolution is achieved when the maintenance of the institutional self is no longer an end in itself and the individual becomes free to *look at* the institutional self and coordinate the psychological systems that exist within oneself and in relation with others. The person in an interindividual balance can hear negative reports about one's activities

without being irritated (as distinct from the institutional balance) for the person is not these *activities* but has a reality beyond them. This creates a deeper capacity for intimacy and the ability to work and love as the person can ‘listen’ to the voice of the ‘other’. This stage brings the interpenetrability of the self-systems which can be represented by post-formal dialectical stage proposed by Kegan, the principled morality of Kohlberg and in the intimacy versus isolation stage of Erikson’s theory.

Kegan (1982) believes that development proceeds in a spiral or helix form. He believes that there are two primary yearnings of humanity—the yearning for autonomy and independence on one hand and the need for incursion and connection on the other hand. Both these needs form a lifelong tension whereby the satisfaction of one need is accompanied a yearning for its opposite. This developmental tension is also reflected in the order of the stages whereby the imperial and the institutional balances reflect the need for autonomy and differentiation whereas the impulsive, interpersonal and the interindividual balances reflect the need for inclusion and integration.

5.10.2 Csikszentmihalyi’s Theory of Flow, Complexity and Optimal Development

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1998), we are intrinsically motivated to experience the state of ‘flow’ which is a highly enjoyable and involved state of being and is often described by persons from different cultures in interestingly similar ways as being ‘in the zone’. In a state of flow, the entire awareness of the individual is concentrated in the present moment and there is a tremendous clarity in terms of what is to be done next in a clear ordered way. Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1998) give the example of a tennis player who when in a state of flow knows whether the ball was well-hit or a musician knows if the musical note was played ‘just right’ without any conscious cognition or self-consciousness. Flow is experienced when there is a balance between ‘skills of the self’ and ‘challenges afforded by the environment’. For instance, we enjoy a game only if our opponent matches us in skill—else the game is likely to be boring. In the Piagetian terms there needs to be equilibrium between assimilation and accommodation for a state of flow to ensue. An over-assimilative state is likely to be boring and an over-accommodative state—full of unwarranted challenges.

The state of flow is likely to be experienced when a person is functioning at her fullest capacities in any given developmental stage of functioning. The attainment of state of flow is the goal of optimal development and this is achieved by escaping from boredom by raising challenges and escaping from anxiety by raising the skills. Both boredom and anxiety are sources of disequilibrium and constitute the perpetual process of dialectical process of development. A complex person is one who has “the self-regulative capacity to move towards optimal experiences by

negotiating a better fit or synchrony of self with the environment” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde 1998, p. 651).

According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1998), there are seven dimensions of complexity that can help us attain optimal development in later life. These are organised along two poles- those qualities that help us raise challenges and help escape boredom and those qualities that help us raise skills and help overcome anxiety. The qualities on the left are those which help us raise challenges and escape boredom and the qualities on the right help overcome anxiety. There bipolar qualities are:

Agency	Communion
Passion	Detachment
Divergent thinking	Convergent Thinking
Playfulness	Discipline
Extraversion	Introversion
Energy	Quetitude
Iconoclasm	Tradition (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde 1998, p. 659)

These polarities operate in a dialectical context and their interaction is seen to optimise the development of an individual. A person who can enact both the dimensions simultaneously can (a) balance the movement of both integration and differentiation, (b) Avoid loss of psychic energy through boredom and anxiety and (c) channelize their energies towards growth enhancing activities.

The culmination of the optimal development is in the attainment of the state of wisdom. A wise person plays the role of a sage, teacher, counsellor, mentor, etc., and has the following central attribute: “an ability to select or help others select, a course of action, that is optimal for survival and growth, based upon insight in regard to the relevant life processes” (Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde 1998, p. 661).

5.10.3 An Analysis of the Two Theories

The two theories mentioned above give a taste of the manner in which the evolutionary potential of self and personality are perceived in the mainstream psychological literature. The key elements of interest that strike me in the constitution of these developmental perspectives are:

- A dialectical approach to understanding the nature of human development
- Differentiation and personal integration as two important processes of development
- The individual ontogeny as the primary context of human development
- A focus on the constructivist-relational perspective in explaining the nature of development

- The ability to know and coordinate different selves within us (e.g. Inter individual balance) and to know and extend the self to help others (wisdom) as the optimal and ultimate evolutionary potential of development.

A majority of developmental literature views the developmental process as dialectical in nature. The tension between the two polar opposites constitutes the developmental context. While the tension between the autonomy and inclusivity marks development in Robert Kegan's (1982) theory of evolution of self, the process optimal development is conceptualised as the tension between seven different dimensions by Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1998). Further, Kegan looks at the process of human development as a continuous series of progressive differentiation and integration processes. These define the subjective reality to which one cannot take a perspective and those aspects of psychological functioning that become available to the objective view and can be consciously integrated. Each stage of development provides new opportunities of differentiation which are then integrated with previous development. The context of development in these theories is largely the human ontogeny and the broader existential issues of the nature of death, life after death and the existence and nature of the Divine are left untouched. The 'reality' is assumed to be a 'construction' of the human mind and the nature of this construction is based on the interaction between the evolving self and society. Mental reason is vested with the power to be both the instrument and the end of human developmental process. The definition of wisdom given above relies on the matured and seasoned power of the mind to provide answers to the difficult problems in life. The endpoint of development in Robert Kegan's theory is the interindividual balance which gives an individual the power to scan the different psychological realities that exist within and without and self-correct the problems through the capacity for listening to criticism.

There are wonderful nuggets of insights that are scattered in the psychological literature of this tradition and many of its themes can deepened when seen from the Integral view. The following section outlines some of the Integral-developmental principles that in my view can help facilitate the higher stage of development

5.10.3.1 A Journey towards the Higher Stages of Human Development: The Integral-Developmental Path

The Divine Dialectic: The dialectical movement that form the base of the two psychological theories mentioned above is relevant in my view to the journey of the adventurer of the Light. To quote from Savitri:

There on the verge of Nature's summit steps
The secret Law of each thing is fulfilled,
All contraries heal their long dissidence.
There meet and clasp the eternal opposites,
There pain becomes a violent fiery joy;
Evil turns back to its original good,
And sorrow lies upon the breasts of Bliss: (Sri Aurobindo 1997b, pp. 450–451.

When seen from Sri Aurobindo's perspective, in the process of involution, the opposites of the Divine qualities have been created whereby Joy has become suffering and Good has become evil. The two divine opposite are in essence the same. It is the tension between these opposite that creates the occasion for evolution. The dialectical movement marks the phases of growth till such point that all contraries become capable of healing themselves in the Highest Divine Light. The divine\dialectic emphasises both the original and ultimate Unity of the opposite and contraries that mark our lives and *all* evolution in essence happens in the close embrace of the Divine. The attitude that sustains and facilitates the journey of a seeker of Divine can be encapsulated by the following aphorism of Sri Aurobindo (1997a)- "To feel & love the God of beauty and good in the ugly and the evil, and still yearn in utter love to heal it of its ugliness and its evil, this is real virtue and morality" (p. 428)

I find the dialectical dimensions of agency-communion; playfulness-discipline, energy-quietude, passion/engagement-detachment mentioned by Csikzentmihalyi and Rathunde (1998) especially interesting for they resonate deeply with the developmental processes that are set in motion as you enter the spiritual realm of development. Sri Aurobindo (2005), for instance, seems to look at the Divine Supramental consciousness as ordered in nature and yet the entire creation is also the delightful Play of the Divine. The inner-yogic progress is based on the realisation of both the *static* and the *dynamic* energy within (Sri Aurobindo 1970). The process of Integral realisation requires both an intense engagement and a simultaneous detachment with the life and its processes. The power of agency too needs to be retained if one has to succeed in Integral Yoga—for the surrender to the Divine too is an active surrender and not the surrender of an automaton (Sri Aurobindo 1999a). The other pole—the true inner communion is the very aim and object of yoga and new creation of consciousness.

Breaking of the Boundaries: Introducing a New Element in Development:

While the process of development is viewed largely from the ontogenetic by most developmental theories, The Mother (2004) gives us an insight into the process of development as it happens at the Universal level—with its reverberations felt in each individual life. In the Mother's view, the process of evolution can take a completely unprecedented and unexpected turn when a new element enters the process of development. This new element may change the number of dimensions that constitute very fabric of the Universe and manifold possibilities emerge by tearing of the limits of the existing boundaries. In the Universe comprising of 12 dimensions, a 13th dimension enters and entire Universe becomes topsy-turvy. This is the unforeseen hazard of developmental process as the process of introduction of the new element and its resultant possibilities cannot be predicted beforehand and needs to be worked out to know the outcomes. The introduction of the new element causes the fundamental reversal of consciousness which once effected cannot be reversed back (The Mother 2004).

The Complexity of the Developmental Process: When seen from the wider evolutionary perspective neither the individual neither evolution nor the process of social evolution is constituted in clean and organised stages—although there seems

to be an relative order when we widen the frame of our view. In the evolutionary process, there may be a great surge to move ahead but often steps have to be backtracked to recover those aspects of self that are still fallen or remain untransformed. This zig-zag movement makes the process of development look chaotic. Yet, in the Integral view, there are opportunities to recover those aspects which are not in step with the progress made by the rest of the Being. Finally—*Nothing* is accomplished till *all* is accomplished—for the integral consciousness does express itself in its full plenitude unless the base is prepared for its complete expression. Once the base is prepared, there is the joining of the material and spiritual realms of the existence and evolution in this full circle moves from a state of perfection to a still higher perfection in a Supreme equilibrium.

The Lower and the Higher Perfection: According to the Mother (1990), there are two kinds of perfections that exist. The lower perfection is to achieve the utmost level of development in the present form. The literary and artistic genius, the sports person par excellence, the social worker with the sense of goodness and charity achieve the lower perfection when they exercise their capacities of human development to the fullest. The lower perfection gained may be quite independent of the spiritual life and most developmental research in the mainstream discipline of human development falls within this realm. A higher perfection is the spiritual perfection where all life values have been heightened and reconstituted in the light of the spiritual being. Many mainstream theories touch the edge of the spiritual state (e.g. the state of ‘flow’ mentioned earlier) but in my view do not quite pass to the other side. An Integral perfection according to the Mother (1990) does not reject the world. Rather, it is the attitude of carrying possibilities of both the perfections simultaneously within our being that constitutes the True Integral attitude. It is only when the lower perfection of the being consents to be spiritualised and opens to the touch of the Supramental that the complete Integral flowering of the Being can take place.

5.11 Conclusion

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s perspective on evolution of consciousness thus creates an ever-new field of experimentation within. Its aim I sense is to touch naked body of Truth-Consciousness and manifest it in Divine Life. The idea that I find to be seminal is that the evolutionary journey to the heights of Truth-consciousness gives an Integral Power to illumine the nethermost depths. The Cosmic ‘Divine Child’ in this vision is cradled by the Powers of both Truth and Maya and they ever-weave the multi- patterned possibilities of our growth.

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Chapter 6

Designing a Future Discipline of Human Development: The Agenda

By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life.

(Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 57)

Consciousness is indeed the creatrix of the universe, but love is its saviour.

(The Mother 2002, p. 65)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I revisit the aim of the thesis and gather together all the threads from across this work to weave a new agenda of human development based on insights from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works. This chapter begins by examining the ways in which Sri Aurobindo's discourse on development extends the boundaries of the current discipline of Human Development. This is followed by an articulation of *a new agenda of human development*. The chapter next engages with the unfolding of this agenda in human life. It ends with summary observations on the future directions for Human Development as a discipline of inquiry.

6.2 Creating a New Vision for the Discipline of Human Development

The aim of this book is to *re-engage with the disciplinary boundaries* of the field of Human Development and explore the viability of a new agenda of human development as based on the works of Sri Aurobindo. In this work, I have attempted to delineate the metatheory of human development contained in Sri Aurobindo's work and examined its power of giving a future direction to the current discipline of research and study. This engagement has yielded some key insights on the nature of the current agenda of human development, the nature of its dominant metatheories and the manner in which Sri Aurobindo's writings can *extend the limits of the present developmental discourse*.

In Chap. 1, I had mentioned several limitations of the current discipline of human development. Viewed from Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary perspective, these questions can only be engaged adequately by effectuating a central shift from *a rational discourse of development* to a *spiritual discourse of development*. This requires spirituality to be viewed not as a dimension of human development but to as an overarching perspective *that moves beyond the rational discourse and includes it*.

Consciousness as the Fundamental Reality that Underlies all Developmental Processes: A problem with the study of human development based on the rational discourse is that it has a tendency to break up the synthetic nature of human reality and its relation with all beings and forms—into different dimensions, variables and factors that *influence* change. The neo-Darwinian and the relational metatheories view—physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral dimensions of development—separately or in dynamic interaction with each other as influencing human development. This fragments the nature of Reality—for there is no fundamental Reality that holds these dimensions of development together in Unity. In Sri Aurobindo's perspective, all that exists in the macrocosm and in the microcosm are the gradations of Consciousness as a fundamental Reality. Thus all the different dimensions of development are gradations of consciousness and any psychological investigation looks at the way in which these gradations interact with each other. This perspective reveals a radically new way of looking at development where the parts of the being—physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual are organized *as a hierarchy of consciousness*, with each higher gradation capable of dominating the lower. The vital consciousness can use the physical consciousness, the mental consciousness has a potential of controlling the physical and the vital consciousness, and the psychic-spiritual consciousness capable of transforming the mental, vital and physical consciousness. As a person by using the method of yoga, i.e., connection with Divine Consciousness—*heightens* the consciousness, that person gains a greater power to control and change the lower aspects of human nature. For instance, the ascent to the highest plane of Supramental consciousness gives an individual the capacity to control the darkest Inconscient plane of human nature. Further, all Creation—matter, plants, animals—are imbued with Consciousness which lies either asleep (matter), is partially awake (plants, animals) or awake (humans) in Nature. The process of evolution is the progressive awakening of consciousness to its greatest heights. The present rational capacity of humanity is only a transitional step in evolutionary journey of humankind. The task of human development is to progressively rise to still more awakened planes of consciousness—in the Light of the psychic, spiritual the supramental gradations of consciousness. A Developmental Science based on Sri Aurobindo's perspective is *not just* a science of understanding the processes of development as they unfold in a lifetime (Valsiner and Lawrence 1997) but is a *science of conscious development*—which through the process of ascent of consciousness can give a developing individual a greater control over the lower parts of human nature. The ascent of consciousness is succeeded by the descent of the

Divine Consciousness in the lower parts of the being which are then, reconstituted, subtilised and integrated into the higher consciousness. Even the Matter and Spirit can be connected in this developmental scheme. This is a new developmental science of human subjectivity and the cornerstone of the new agenda of human development.

Human Development as the Study of Becoming and Being: It was noted in Chap. 1, that a major limitation of the contemporary perspectives on development is that it restricts itself to the study of change—i.e. the aspect of Becoming. In fact, I find that the neo-Darwinian metatheory does not even adequately deal with the dimension of developmental change or Becoming as with its *materialist ontology*, it views the “*ultimate nature of the universe, and hence the nature of the psychological subject, as reactive, uniform and fixed*” (Overton 2006, p. 30). The focus is limited—i.e., on the *description* of change as it mechanically takes place in human beings. In contrast, the relational metatheory subscribes to process ontology with a focus on Becoming and views the “*ultimate nature of both universe and persons as active, organized, and changing*” (Overton 2006, p. 30). While the ontological position that the nature, universe and the human being are organized, active and changing is in synchrony with Sri Aurobindo’s view of human evolution, there are fundamental differences in the two sets of ontological assumptions.

Sri Aurobindo (2005) points out that our understanding of the universe and human nature is essentially incomplete if we view it only as a process of Becoming. There is a need to recover the Eternal and the stable divine presence within—the *Being*—which supports all our Becomings and the recovery of this relationship is the foundation for the new agenda of human development. The recovery of the Being can be used to create a stable base for attempting the conscious change of nature and move beyond the mental principle which is the limit of the relational discourse, to a new principle of development—the Supramental principle. Not only is the nature of universe and individual perceived to be active, organized and changing but the individual has the potential of progressively gaining the *Divine Power* through which to *determine the nature of change*—both in the individual and in the universe—in accordance with the Divine Law of the Universe.

Individual as a Free Determinant of Destiny: A question posed in Chap. 1 was—‘Are we capable of freeing ourselves from the influences of heredity and environment and giving a conscious shape to our destiny?’ In Sri Aurobindo’s view (1998), a human being is not a hostage to material forces and all human processes including the human mind are not reducible to the material-physiological processes as in the neo-Darwinian metatheory. In fact, it is possible to change the very nature with which we are born and surmount the determinism of heredity and also master the influences of the environment through the process of conscious evolution. This is in direct contrast to the neo-Darwinian view of human nature as essentially *reactive* and *fixed*. While the relational metatheory gives an individual a much greater *agency* in initiating developmental change, it seems to me that the

individual experiences this agency within limits, as the influences of both heredity and environment cannot be fully mastered by the individual. A developmental science based on Sri Aurobindo's perspective on evolution of consciousness aims at the ultimate liberation of human nature from the atavisms of heredity and the caprices of environmental influences and opens a way to the free determination of destiny in keeping with an individual's inner Divine nature.

Individual as a Co-creator of the Evolutionary Change: The neo-Darwinian metatheory looks at the individual as a product of the mechanical processes of evolution—with the environmental influences as the primary causal factors of change. The relational metatheory is reluctant to delve into the 'cause' of developmental change and is more content to engage with the nature of developmental change. I find that the relational metatheory, is based on the study of an *already existing agenda of development* which is seen to unfold in the course of a lifespan. Sri Aurobindo's discourse on human development makes a departure from the relational metatheory in making possible a more central engagement with the original cause of development, viewing the process of evolution as divinely guided and giving a key role to the *individual as the initiator of new possibilities of developmental-transformational change* which can be accomplished by becoming an active collaborator with the Divine presence within. The word 'transformation' is used by Sri Aurobindo in a special sense, i.e. to refer to the emergence of a new principle of evolution—the Supramental Consciousness, which is as momentous in its implications as was the emergence of the principle of the Mind that took humanity beyond animal consciousness.

Moving Toward a New Agenda of Research and Study: The current boundaries of the discipline of Human Development, delimit its research agenda. In the following section, there is an attempt to understand the current research agenda of Human Development as a field of inquiry and explore a *new research agenda* based on Sri Aurobindo's discourse on human development.

The Current Agenda of Research: The leading contemporary developmental scientists (Lerner 2006; Overton 2010) are seeking to move beyond the limits of the neo-Darwinian metatheory and working out a research agenda based on the relational metatheory. Here, it is the individual-context relationship is sought to be studied in a fused, dynamic and integrated manner. A key idea that is emphasized for study is 'diversity' or the intra-individual and the inter-individual differences as they unfold within multiple contexts of development—i.e. family, school, community and culture. Diversity is no longer viewed as a source of error variance which needs to be 'controlled' in experimental designs that are based on a uniform and fixed view of human nature (the neo-Darwinian metatheory). There is a focus on the study of multiple and varied developmental trajectories of both—*individuals and groups*—and the way in which they can interact to lead to the emergence of positive development (Lerner 2006). There are *five* interrelated, empirical 'what' questions for the developmental scientists who are interested in describing, explaining and promoting positive development—forming the current *research agenda* of human development:

- “What attributes (?) of
- What individuals (?) in relation to
- What contextual/ecological conditions (?)
- What points in ontogenetic, family or generational and cohort or historical, time
(?), may be integrated to promote
- What instances of positive development (?)” (Lerner 2006, p. 12)

The research methods for investigating developmental change include both quantitative and qualitative approaches that study the integrated biogenic, psychogenic and sociogenic aspects of development, conceptualized as developmental and dynamic *systems*. There is an attempt to synthesize variables operating at different levels of organization within a system, and longitudinal method is preferred for studying the developmental trajectories of change. *Diversity sensitive measures* are sought to be used that take cognizance of *person variables*—such as race, religion, ethnicity, differential ability, developmental status, as well as *contextual variables*—i.e. family, community, culture, physical ecology and historical time (Lerner 2006).

The New Agenda of Research: I find that the perspective on human development based on Sri Aurobindo’s writings makes a central departure from the current conceptualisation of the discipline and its research agenda on several points. The wider context within which the study of developmental change takes place is limited to the physical ecology or the socio-cultural-historical dimension of development in the current agenda of research as evident from the scope of the ‘what’ questions mentioned above. Religion or spirituality is studied as a person variable or as a dimension of development. Sri Aurobindo’s perspective on human development demands the entire discourse of development to be heightened to the *level of spirituality* and envisages the divinely guided cosmic evolution as the widest frame which defines the scope of research and study.

The current research agenda attempts to look at the reality in an integrated fashion and study it in form of dynamic developmental systems through the use of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Viewed from Sri Aurobindo’s developmental perspective, this attempt is not likely to succeed as there is no fundamental reality that can unify the different dimensions of development and truly integrate them. *Consciousness* in Sri Aurobindo’s view is a fundamental reality that pervades the entire Cosmos and the study of human development as *evolution of consciousness* has the capacity of creating a new developmental frame of study.

With reference to ‘variety’ Sri Aurobindo (1997b) states that any human being is a representation not only of general humanity but also his race-type, his class-type, his mental, physical or vital type where he partially resembles and partially differs from others to some extent. However, beyond all the external and typical factors—there needs to be studied the deeper individual law of development wherein the source of *his true uniqueness lies*. It is the psychic being or the divine presence within that gives the individual the essential freedom to not be passively subject to any of these influences but to transmute them in keeping with his divine and true subjectivity.

Further, the method of studying human evolution is not to study the development of the ‘Other’ as in the current agenda of development but to study the development

of the 'Self'. It is a change in the human consciousness that is envisaged to be the precursor of change in the social and the Cosmic Consciousness. The subjective human consciousness thus becomes an inner field for study and the dynamics of change are studied as proceeding from *within outwards* and from *up-downwards* (as based on principles of ascent, widening and integration).

The quantitative or qualitative methodologies as used in the current discipline of study are restricted in their approach to the study of the frontal and representational selves. The study of deeper aspects of human subjectivity requires *yogic* methodologies based on the progressive quietening, refinement and purification of the external nature which leads to a connection of the individual consciousness to the Divine Consciousness. The evolutionary journey that a person makes within his own consciousness reported with scientific exactitude of observation, precision of recording, done with authenticity and sincerity can form the new method of research, as based on this agenda. The task of person who has studied or researched human development no longer be that of 'developing the other' but creating the psychological conditions in which each person can develop one's own self in keeping with that person's own deeper truth.

In the neo-Darwinian metatheory, the individual is perceived to be a product of the environmental influences and the primary method of knowledge creation is through an *adaptation* to the environment. Here, only those forms of knowledge survive, which help an individual to cope with the environmental challenges. There is a fundamental split between inner and outer reality and focus of this metatheory is on the delineation of the material and efficient causes that mechanically explain the nature of development. This method fixes the cause and effect relations into generalisable laws that are free of interpretation and independent of the observing mind. In this view, individual agency in knowledge creation is significantly compromised and I find this a serious limitation of this metatheory. The relational metatheory attempts a re-approachment between the inner and the outer reality sundered apart by the neo-Darwinian metatheory and locates the source of human knowledge within the human mind rather than perceive it as a product of the mechanical process of nature. It relies on the dialectical nature of the mind to heal the split between the outer and the inner reality. Sri Aurobindo's metatheory significantly extends the discourse on knowledge creation as it views the human mind and the dialectical intellect not as a *source* of knowledge but as an *instrument* that is used to express knowledge. The source of true knowledge lies in the Spirit and the mind can be trained as an instrument to express this knowledge.

Viewed from Sri Aurobindo's perspective on the fourfold order of knowledge, I find that the neo-Darwinian metatheory subscribes to 'separative knowledge through indirect contact' where there is a fundamental separation between the knower and the known, and reality can only be known through an indirect contact, i.e. from the outside. The relational theory makes a partial transition to a higher form of knowledge, i.e. 'separative knowledge through direct contact' by attempting to heal the separation between the knower and the known—the inner and the outer reality. The limit of human development for the relational theory is

the human Mind and its methodologies rely on the use of *reason, understanding and interpretation* for research. There is use of the self-detaching function of the mind whereby the reflective capacities of the researcher can be developed to introduce the metacognitive element in research. While this is a useful capacity in Sri Aurobindo's view, there exist still higher methods of knowledge that can help a person to move toward a deeper integration of the human personality and give a higher impetus to development. There is a possibility of gaining knowledge through an intimate contact with the object of one's knowledge and knowledge through Identity—i.e. knowing the essential Truth of any phenomena. There are deeper yogic methodologies based on the purification of the mind and cultivation of the inner silence which can locate the individual in the stable witness self within and use this inner poise to understand, consciously observe, organize and transform the movements of nature. The yogic methodologies thus make possible a new poise within—the discovery of the Spiritual Self—which takes us beyond the methodology based on the mental *interpretation* of reality (used by relational metatheory) which is potentially open to question and doubt, the direct Knowledge of the Truth of a phenomenon. Yoga in Sri Aurobindo's view is a scientific methodology through which a person can open to a higher reality by systematic practice—and Integral Yoga leads to the manifestation of the highest Supramental consciousness where knowledge by Identity also is accompanied by the *power* of the immediate effectuation of what we know to be true.

The assumptions which can drive the *new research* agenda as based on this perspective are:

- Consciousness as a fundamental reality pervades the Cosmos and defines the Unity of study of all human developmental phenomena.
- The Individual-Cosmos are bound in a synthetic relation with each other.
- Human development can be studied as a science of operations of consciousness as they unfold in human life.
- The individual is a co-creator creator of developmental change in collaboration with the Divine and operations of consciousness can be studied most successfully as located within the human subjectivity leading to a subjective-developmental science of study.
- The aim of development is the Integral transformation of consciousness.
- The inner-yogic methodologies create an inner field of rigorous psychological experimentation which can be used for transformation of consciousness.

These assumptions have specific implications for the kind of methodologies used for doing research from the integral developmental perspective. Two such major implications are:

- *Using research as method of self-ascension:* The aim of research is to study a phenomenon of interest to the researcher. The integral-developmental framework has a double aim. In addition to exploring the self-chosen area of research, the researcher also engages with the psychological processes of growth and change that are unleashed within the researcher in process of doing the research. As the power

of ordered-subjective observation is key tool for research, there is a conscious attempt to develop the powers of human subjectivity through progressively quietening the being so that the mental noise does not interfere with the fundamental act of observation. The continuous and conscious development of the researcher thus becomes a central part of the research process. A researcher in this framework can be the researched subject—especially for investigation of processes that can only be directly observed within one's own laboratory of consciousness.

- *A need to investigate processes of gaining psychological strength in varied contexts:* In the field of yogic studies, it is not important to look for the 'normative' data which can be generalized to the entire population. It is important to investigate case histories of people who have developed new strength within themselves while engaging with everyday life or pursuing a spiritual discipline. Each victory for gaining a psychological strength by fundamentally transforming an aspect of self has implication for entire humanity at the Universal level for it opens in new possibility of development for entire humanity. Thus our struggles with the vicissitudes of life—and dealing with forces of disintegration, depression, illness, anxiety, poverty, incapacity, death through mobilization of the inner resources and conversely our pursuit of higher spiritual strengths becomes the special case studies that have deep and fundamental validity for the entire humanity. The task of the researcher is to be able to truly listen to these stories and represent them veridically to the world in terms of the richness of ideas and processes of development. Thus such case studies chosen with care—could have a deep impact in terms of deepening our knowledge about varied and complex human developmental possibilities.

A new agenda of human development based on Sri Aurobindo's discourse on human development is articulated in the following section with a focus on the key developmental themes *which extend the current discourse of development*.

6.3 Articulating a New Agenda for Human Development

A new agenda can be envisaged for the discipline of Human Development as based on Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works—an agenda that is sublime in its vision, grand in its scale of fathoming the human potential and truly scientific in its spirit of studying the mysteries of the inner subjectivity.

6.3.1 *The Metapsychological Foundations of Human Development*

The *meta*-psychological basis of this vision is the conception of the *Absolute* or the Timeless, Spaceless *ontological* reality that cannot be known though mind but only experienced through Identity. *Sat* as the Pure Existent—is psychologically

represented in the twin terms of Stability and movement, Being and Becoming, Unity and Multiplicity and is simultaneously the fundamental and effective Reality of the Cosmos. This implies that there is a higher capacity within the human beings to live life (Becoming, Movement, and Multiplicity) with an *eye on eternity* (Stability, Being, Unity) and raise life values from the status of the *ephemeral* to that of the *Absolute*—Absolute Joy, Absolute Power and Absolute Love (Sri Aurobindo 2005). In the current academic discipline of human development, there is a focus on recounting the ontogenetic story of life (Becoming) as it *appears* from the outside—i.e. its developmental pattern of emergence of the human potential, its problems and its pains. In this alternate vision, the potential of human development is viewed in terms of what it *can be* when approached through the *practical psychology* of the higher-yogic processes. This enables a central engagement with the key existential issues of life and the exploration of the sublime possibility of the transmutation of the human consciousness marred by the problems of incapacity, pain, suffering and death to the values of the Absolute Divine Consciousness. The individual thus confirmed in the fundamental stability of Being can from its security, give a *conscious* form to the multitudinous expressions of life. Death in this scheme is force to be battled with and defeated through the power of Supreme Love and is a passage to a greater life (Sri Aurobindo 1997a).

The *psychological study* of human development in this alternate vision becomes essentially the study of the operations of the consciousness. Pure Consciousness as a part of the highest *Sachchidananda* Reality pervades the entire created universe—i.e. “*man and god and beast and stone*” (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 681). It lies involved at the base of the Inconscient and is the reason that *the world forgets to die* (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 681). It defines the fundamental Unity of all things-in-existence and manifests as a vast *Cosmic Being* or the *Virat* which contains *all the material and non material reality*.

A mass of superconscience closed in light,
 Creator of things in his all-knowing sleep.
All from his stillness came as grows a tree;
 He is our seed and core, our head and base.
 All light is but a flash from his closed eyes:
 An all-wise Truth is mystic in his heart,
 The omniscient Ray is shut behind his lids:
 He is the Wisdom that comes not by thought,
 His wordless silence brings the immortal word.
 He sleeps in the atom and the burning star,
 He sleeps *in man and god and beast and stone*:
 Because he is there the Inconscient does its work,
 Because he is there *the world forgets to die*.
 (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 681, emphasis added)

The *same* Consciousness that takes the form of the Cosmic Being also creates the Individual Being—in the process of evolution. The Individual Being is thus, in essential consciousness, tied to the entire creation in a fundamental relation of Unity. Through the process of yoga, an individual can study the operations of

consciousness within the subjective being and consciously use the knowledge of self to grow into the Higher Self where one can widen into the Knowledge of the vast Cosmic Being.

The Supermind is the intermediary through which the higher *Sachchidananda* Reality can manifest in the lower reality of mind, life and body. The Supermind contains the divine plan of evolution and as a highest grade of consciousness holds the secret of the *seed and core* of the evolving tree of the Cosmos. “*The tree does not explain the seed, nor the seed the tree; cosmos explains both and God explains cosmos*” (Sri Aurobindo 2005, p. 148). To ascend to the Supramental or God-consciousness is thus the ultimate aim of human development—for in this poise, the Knowledge, the Knower and the Known become unified in a single identity and lead to the highest Self-Knowledge and World-Knowledge. *This defines the new agenda for human development.* In this agenda, evolution in Ignorance and evolution in Knowledge can both be combined in a single view. When viewed from this perspective, the human being is the Divine-in-the-making. The present trials and tribulations of humanity define its transitional stage which can be consciously hastened by collaborating with the Divine within. When seen against the backdrop of the epistemology of Sri Aurobindo’s plan of evolution, the current discipline of Human development as yet primarily examines the domain of ‘evolution in Ignorance’ or *lower knowledge* and needs to make a shift in terms of its fundamental vision and *methodology* to be able to find the inner psychological tools that can help it grow into the Divine or the *Higher Knowledge* and its resultant *Power* or the *Consciousness-Force*. The third term of the *Sachchidananda* Reality is *Ananda* which in this new vision of human development is the goal of all cosmic manifestation. The aim of development is not to *maximise happiness* and to *cope* with the best of one’s ability to the alternations of joy-grief, sin-virtue, success-failure, pain-pleasure or good fortune and ill fortune which life presents us with. The aim of development is to develop the capacity to step back from the superficial reactions to the dilemmas of life and create a deeper poise of consciousness within, from where one not only watches the play of Nature or *Prakriti* with an equal *Ananda* or Bliss but also creates new modes of being through the deep creative play of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*.

Further, the current discipline of Human Development locates the non-living material reality outside the human being and there is no fundamental connection between the inert matter and the mind or the spirit. The new vision of human development admits even the possibility of the control of material reality through supraphysical means, i.e. through the development of the inner powers of the spirit. Further, the material-body itself can be transformed into a divine form and the consciousness of even the cells of the body can be divinised. The Mother (2002) formulated a prayer of aspiration for the cells of the body:

The prayer of the cells in the body—Now that, by the effect of the Grace, we are slowly emerging out of inconscience and waking to a conscious life, an ardent prayer rises in us for more light, more consciousness, O Supreme Lord of the universe, we implore Thee, give us the strength and the beauty, the harmonious perfection needed to be Thy divine instruments upon earth (p. 282).

The key themes of human development as culled from Sri Aurobindo and The Mother's works and explored across the chapters is are summarized below. The major lines of the new agenda of human development are articulated with reference to the *aims of existence* and the *major developmental dimensions*, i.e. cosmic, social, individual and inner-yogic dimensions.

6.3.2 A Blueprint of Human Development: The Key Developmental Dimensions

An Understanding of the Aims of Human Existence and the Goal of Development

- Exploring the four aims of human existence on earth.
- The future evolutionary possibility of the perfection of the individual and the collective: A manifestation of the Divine Life.

An Understanding of the Nature of Cosmic Development

- A wide frame of understanding human development, i.e. the cosmological story of human development. This frame contains within itself all the other trajectories of human development (social, individual, inner-yogic) from both the *retrospective* (the history of human evolution) and *prospective* (the future of human evolution) views.
- An understanding of the process of human development as based on the involution and evolution of consciousness.

An Understanding of the Nature of Social Development

- A conception of the cycles of social development based on the evolution of consciousness perspective.
- A clear prospective framework of societal progress based on the *Ideal Law of Social Development*.

An Understanding of the Nature of Individual Development

- A bringing together of the material and the spiritual realms of consciousness which have been historically been sundered apart in philosophy and psychology.
- The perfection of the complete being of a person based on a detailed understanding of the different planes and parts of the being.
- The multiple directions of development: deepening, heightening and widening the consciousness.
- A clear relation between progress and perfection.
- The spiral nature of progress and implications for individual and society.
- Exploring the limits of the human ego consciousness in the process of human development: the need to move beyond the ego-based consciousness.
- The psychological key to human development: the role of the psychic being in moving from the human individuality to the True or Gnostic Individuality.

- A major challenge of inner development: the need to distinguish between the false and the true subjectivity.
- The need for conscious self-development, i.e. the integration of the self and moving to a new inner poise of consciousness by organizing the sub-personalities around the psychic being.
- The role of individual agency: engaging with the question of freedom and determinism.
- The Individual as a collaborator of the Divine in creating new pathways of development.
- The need for a decisive developmental shift in human consciousness: A possibility of a reversal of consciousness and transformation.
- The higher stages of evolution of consciousness: psychicisation, spiritualisation and the supramentalisation of consciousness.

A Yogic Method for the Transformation of Consciousness

- The method of Integral Yoga and the four aids of development.
- The workings of the key developmental principles of ‘ascent, widening and integration’.
- An understanding of the Integral Yoga practice: the key psychological movements that aid and further human development—i.e. aspiration, rejection and surrender.

While, the above-mentioned agenda may give us a sense of the new domain of possibilities of human development, the pathway to manifesting them *is not set in its trajectory* but needs to be *created* by an aspirant—it is a task therefore of an *adventure of consciousness* in a real sense.

6.3.3 The Unfolding of the New Agenda: Bringing Together the Key Themes of Development

In Sri Aurobindo’s developmental scheme, the life of an individual unfolds within the broadest *cosmological-Infinite dimension*. In his words (1999)—*By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life* (p. 57). The cosmic dimension forms the widest frame within which the social, individual and the inner-yogic dimensions of development unfold.

The Relation of the Cosmos and the Individual: There is a synthetic relation between the cosmos and the individual where the individual conceived as a microcosm can be seen to contain the entire cosmic developmental potential with the secret recesses of its own Self. The individual potential can be realized by evolution of *consciousness*—i.e. by progressively deepening the consciousness one can access psychic being or Divine Self which lives deep within our hearts, by widening the consciousness one can live in the Universal or the Cosmic Divine

Self and by progressively heightening the consciousness one can reach the heights of Supramental consciousness and live in the Supreme or the Transcendent Self.

The Aims of Human Existence as Determinants of an Individual's View of the Cosmos: The exact relation of the individual with this cosmic dimension is likely to depend on the aim of human existence that an individual subscribes to—i.e. Cosmic-terrestrial, Supraterrestrial, Supracosmic or Integral aims of existence. (Sri Aurobindo 2005). If an individual subscribes to the Cosmic-terrestrial aim of existence, the material-physical reality universe would be the ultimate macrocosm for that person. A faith in the Supraterrestrial view would gear an individual to look at earthly existence as secondary to the ultimate aim of human existence, i.e. to live in divine immortal realms that exist beyond the earth. For a person with a Supracosmic aim of existence, the Supreme Reality alone is entirely real. The earthly existence may be viewed as an illusion or a dream which one has to shake-off in order to belong to the Supreme reality. A person with an Integral aim of life would not view earthly existence as an occasion for escape but as an opportunity for perfecting life through the manifestation of the Supreme divine values.

The Unfolding of the Social Development: The agenda and expression of life of an individual is also likely to be influenced by *the stage of social evolution* in which a person takes birth—a dimension that can be seen as embedded in and unfolding within the larger cosmic dimension. For instance, the organisation of collective-social life in a typical stage of human cycle is likely to differ sharply from the social structure of a rational or a subjective stage. Thus the stage of social evolution is likely to set the tone for the way in which the aim of life and its values are experienced by a majority of humanity in that age. The recent rational age, for instance, has emphasised the value of freeing the mind from blind superstitions to enable the examination of reality in the clear light of the reason. This has given an impetus to the emergence of the humanistic values of equality, liberty, fraternity that struggle to reduce the class-distinctions in society and have also helped in the emergence of the disciplines of Natural and Human Sciences, as we know them today. Our societal systems of Education, Law, Economy and Politics—are all currently dominated by the agenda of the rational age, which is the formative social medium that gives shape to the lives of majority of the university educated population in India. The advent of the subjective and spiritual ages in the future are in Sri Aurobindo's (1997b) view, likely to yield an entirely new set of values—which are based on tapping the divine psychic and spiritual reality that lies latent within all of us. These values will transform the nature of both the individual and the society—in the light of the Spirit. The way forward is through the progressive realisation of *the ideal law of social development*, i.e. that all things are one or *unified in their origin*, and have a similar general law of existence and interdependence but each being realises its purpose through *its own lines of variation* resulting in a rich multiplicity of expressions (Sri Aurobindo 1997b).

The Relation between Individual Transformation and Social Transformation: It is the *individual transformation* that is the basis of *social transformation* and one can hope to address the ills of society only if more of more individuals become well integrated beings, harmonized and unified around the

deeper psychic centre within. The perfection of even a single individual is likely to have a momentous influence on the collective consciousness as it opens a new pathway to the future by breaking through the fundamental human limitations. To quote Sri Aurobindo (1997a)—*One man's perfection still can save the world* (p. 531). The individual is simultaneously the 'fraction' and the secret 'integer' of the Divine Reality.

It made all persons fractions of the Unique,
Yet all were being's secret integers.
(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 324)

An individual is a microcosm or a 'fraction' of the Cosmos—a fraction that contains the entire developmental potential of the cosmos within its own deeper Self. Further, a transformative change in individual consciousness is likely to have impact on the entire cosmos, as it establishes a new principle of evolution in Earth Consciousness.

The Nature of Individual Development: Sri Aurobindo (1997a) points out that the journey of *individual human transformation* becomes an exploration of a new path; it is a journey within, a path which has as its aim the discovery of *the Truth within*. In other words, it is the discovery or rather *creation* of the new values and life goals—in a play with the inner Divine. Sri Aurobindo in his epic poem '*Savitri*' calls this inner field the '*the House of Spirit and New Creation*'. The result of the Play is a new creation of the self and a new basis of relating to the 'other' through of the 'loss' of the external 'ego' and reclaiming of the 'True Divine Person' within. According to Sri Aurobindo (1997b), the realisation of the *true subjectivity* is dependent on realization of *two great psychological truths*. *First*, that we are a higher self than our ego and *second* that we are in our life and being not only ourselves but all others. The *false subjectivity* is, on the other hand, based on the ego consciousness. When the essential freedom of an individual to think is constrained, that person's individualism is mutilated and repressed, and it results in a *false subjectivity*. In such a scenario, there is a real danger that the individual may start becoming dependent on an external authority—i.e. a state or an ideology and may comply with it unquestioningly to assure its survival. A free development of the mind, unencumbered by fear is therefore a necessary condition for inner growth.

The task of individualization is a challenge for we are not one person but a conglomeration of several sub-personalities which pull it in different directions resulting in the unpredictability of reactions and a lack of self control. The multiple sub-personalities need to be unified and harmonized with the help of the deeper psychic Light to create an individual capable of responding *only* to the leadings of the Truth within. The emergence of the psychic being as the leader of growth can free the individual from the tyranny of *external environmental influences* and through the progressive psychicisation, spiritualisation and supramentalisation it is possible to free the being even from the *hereditary atavisms* with which one has taken birth.

The mutual play between the human and the Divine is thus the process of the recovery of the Truth within through the elimination of the ego. How is this marriage of the human and divine, *Prakriti* and the *Purusha*, the Earth and the Heaven to be effected? An externally imposed moral perfection or a flight away from life cannot be the way to transformation of the human into Divine Nature according to Sri Aurobindo (2005):

It would be, then, not when he has excised the evil in Nature out of himself by an act of moral surgery or parted with life by an abhorrent recoil, but when he has turned Death into a more perfect life, lifted the small things of the human limitation into the great things of the divine vastness, transformed suffering into beatitude, converted evil into its proper good, translated error and falsehood into their secret truth that the sacrifice will be accomplished, the journey done and Heaven and Earth equalised join hands in the bliss of the Supreme (p. 54).

This is the goal of individual development—to explore the alchemy of the transformation of the human into the Divine Consciousness where the earth and the heaven, the matter and the spirit join hands to create a Divine Individual and a Divine Collective.

The Spiral Nature of Development: The individual and the collective progress toward the realization of the goal of perfection and transformation of consciousness proceeds not in a linear but in a spiral pattern of development. The aspects of development that are taken up at a particular point of the curve of a spiral are at the same point at the next level of the spiral revisited enhanced, and re-integrated at a higher level of development. There are as many spirals as there are aspects of development, all of them criss-crossing each other and create a complex picture of evolution. The story of individual and social evolution may seem to be chaotic to the outward eye because of alternations of period of light and darkness in human evolution, but the totality of view reveals that eventually a decisive progress is made in form of a ‘spiralling ascent’ of all human possibilities to the next level of evolution—through a reversal of consciousness (Sri Aurobindo 1997c; The Mother 2003b).

The Nature of Perfection and Human Progress: The Mother (2003a) points out that perfection is not an ultimate state of a static equilibrium but refers to progress that is made through a series of dynamic equilibriums. The nature of perfection is *constant progress*. Whenever, static equilibrium is reached in individual or collective development, there is a status quo which needs to be broken for making the further journey. The narrow successful life of an individual, for instance may be undone, if an individual has made a central surrender to the Divine and said with sincerity—“I want only the Divine” and this offering has been accepted by the Divine. The circumstances of the life of such an individual may be arranged in such a manner by the Divine that a person can no longer follow the limited worldly goals and becomes a captive of the Divine. As humans, we evolve from a state of imperfection to a state of perfection. Through the ascent of consciousness to the supramental principle, there can be descent of the possibility of evolving from a state of *perfection to perfection* and achieving the *supreme equilibrium* where we have the power of instantaneously manifesting what we

know to be true. The captive of the Divine becomes free—for there is no longer any difference between the Individual and the Divine Will. This state is the result of a Divine Play with the Lord—described most lyrically in *Savitri*:

The wager wonderful, the game divine.
 What liberty has the soul which feels not free
 Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds
 The Lover winds around his playmate's limbs,
 Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace?
 To seize him better with her boundless heart
 She accepts the limiting circle of his arms,
 Bows full of bliss beneath his mastering hands
 And laughs in his rich constraints, *most bound, most free*.
 (Sri Aurobindo 1997a, p. 653, emphasis added)

The Key Principles of Developmental Change: The three principles of developmental change, i.e., *ascent*, *widening* and *integration*, apply both to the evolution of species or phylogenetic change and to the individual change. The progress from one gradation of consciousness to another is made through an aspiration of the Nature to move beyond the present state of limitation. The *ascent* into a new gradation of consciousness breaks the mould of the past and establishes a new evolutionary principle in the being which significantly *widens* the scope its operations and outlook. The gains of the previous stage of evolution are not discarded but purified, subtilised and *integrated* into the new consciousness.

At the individual level, there is a long period of horizontal progress that prepares the vertical progress or an ascent of consciousness. After an ascent has been made and the new principle discovered, it is again followed by a period of horizontal progress where the gains of the evolutionary saltus are consolidated in terms of change in inner psychological functioning and action.

The Science of Integral Yoga and the Art of Development: The art of human development lies in being able to perceive the call of the secret presence that acts from behind the veil of external appearance and to surrender one's being to its flutings. The art of living lies in ensuring that one always remains at the summit of one's consciousness—the highest truth of one's being so that the highest possible destiny of the individual manifests. This art is at the same time *a science* for to be able to sustain the connection with the divine presence within, one needs to completely purify one's being and make it fit to house the divine presence. The task purification of being, harmonising and unifying it around the divine presence or psychic being requires an immense and persistent effort—through a science of self-observation and self-organization. The individual walks the path of progress in keeping with his own line of development and there is no set method or formulation in Integral Yoga for that could obscure the voice of the inner guru within. The true purpose of one's being once revealed through the power and intensity of aspiration, there is a need to reject all the influences that can obstruct realization of the purpose and surrender the external being to the Divine so that the external instruments transformed become fit to manifest Divine Consciousness.

6.4 The Integral View of Human Development: Contemporary Relevance

This new agenda in my view can successfully address the limitations of the current discourse of human development which were outlined in [Chap. 1](#). It seems to me that Sri Aurobindo's Integral view of development can be used to create a broader *spiritual discourse* which does not reject the advances made by the current discipline of human development through the use of the rational discourse but helps *include* these advances as a step toward creation of a higher knowledge system. It can also find its points of synthesis in the Spiritual Light with other disciplines of study—when similarly raised to the level of the spiritual discourse—to form the broadest definition of the field of Human Development. In this sense, the study of arts, politics, history, economics, culture, ethics are all relevant themes for the unified study of human development.

The discipline of human development in India is currently experiencing an exciting new phase of its growth. There is a concerted attempt to move beyond the reliance on western theories and to explore culturally rooted perspectives that can be its guiding light in understanding the human developmental processes. A number recent researches in the area of the development of 'self' and 'emotions' have used concepts from traditional Indian Psychology to understand the nature of human development (Sharma and Choudhary 2009). In this scenario, Sri Aurobindo's perspective of human development with its clear metapsychological foundations, a deep understanding of the multiple lines of psychological development and its offerings of a yogic methodology for facilitating inner psycho-spiritual change can infinitely widen the range of study of developmental phenomenon and establish it as a *new Developmental Science* of human subjectivity. It demands *four fundamental shifts*—i.e. a shift from the study of the 'Other' to the *study of the 'Self'*; a shift from a fragmented nature of developmental inquiry to an Integral-developmental perspective based on *Unity of Consciousness*; a shift from the view of the discipline of Human Development as study of the process of Becoming to a discipline of study that is based on the recovery of the eternal spiritual self within, i.e. *a Developmental Science of Being and Becoming*; and a shift from studying only the present developmental capacities of humanity to *creating new developmental pathways in collaboration with the Divine*.

The first shift, i.e. a shift from the study of the 'Other' to the study of the 'Self' demands that the individual self-observation and self-organisation be made the direct subject of psychological investigation. The subjectivity of the investigator needs to be ordered through conscious effort and instruments and faculties of the mind need to be developed and purified to give access to the deeper mysteries of the being. This is a radical shift—as the methods of knowing and collecting data are directly experimented upon and refined within the laboratory of human consciousness.

The second shift, is a shift away from a fragmented nature of developmental inquiry to an Integral-developmental perspective based on the 'Unity of

Consciousness'. This shift has two major implications. The first implication regards the content of psychological investigation. In the integral-developmental view, the spiritual and the material realm are not sundered apart but are joined in a creative integral unity. It is the challenge of evolution to realise and effect this union in the human, Universal consciousness. The inner journey to the transcendental realms can tap into the highest supramental ranges of consciousness which can heal the deepest darkness and incapacity in the human consciousness.

The third shift refers to a tendency in Developmental Psychology to look at development as pattern of stability and change at the level of external nature. When viewed from an integral perspective there is another deeper line of development where true stability comes from the realisation of the Eternal Spiritual Self within—True Being. The dance of consciousness held by this eternal gaze is the aspect of Becoming—which forms the multifarious expressions of life. To be able to realise the Eternal Spiritual and to give a conscious divine expression to life—i.e. a simultaneous realisation of *Becoming and Being*—is the aim of Integral-developmental Psychology.

The fourth shift is a fundamental shift in perspective whereby the human being is not perceived to be an ephemeral creature that can leave no permanent stamp on the living—unfolding story of the universe. Each moment that rings True becomes the integral part of the progress of mankind. The individual can find the hidden Veda within and write the story of one's own life as imperatively guided by the inner voice. This is the New Psychology—that ever-extends the boundaries of progress.

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Chapter 7

Applying the New Agenda of Human Development

*As if a sea exploring its own depths,
A living Oneness widened at its core
And joined him to unnumbered multitudes.
A Bliss, a Light, a Power, a flame-white Love
Caught all into a sole immense embrace;
Existence found its truth on Oneness' breast
And each became the self and space of all.*

(Sri Aurobindo 1997a, pp. 322–323)

7.1 Introduction

The application potential of the new agenda of human development is immense as it covers all activities and domains of life. I focus on a few key areas of application where this alternate vision of human development can powerfully re-create practices and attitudes. A major field of application of this agenda is the radical transformation of educational/parenting practices. Other applications include—envisioning a new work culture, new ways of relating and communicating and new ways of healing. The key goals of the new agenda of human development is described in a beautiful passage titled *A Dream* by The Mother (2002) where she envisions a new world manifest on Earth:

There should be somewhere on earth a place which no nation could claim as its own, where all human beings of goodwill who have a sincere aspiration could live freely as citizens of the world and obey one single authority, that of the supreme truth; a place of peace, concord and harmony where all the fighting instincts of man would be used exclusively to conquer the causes of his sufferings and miseries, to surmount his weaknesses and ignorance, to triumph over his limitations and incapacities; a place where the needs of the spirit and the concern for progress would take precedence over the satisfaction of desires and passions, the search for pleasure and material enjoyment. In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their souls; education would be given not for passing examinations or obtaining certificates and posts but to enrich existing faculties and bring forth new ones. In this place, titles and positions would be replaced by opportunities to serve and organise; the bodily needs of each one would be equally provided for, and intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority would be expressed in the general organisation not by an increase in the pleasures and powers of life but by increased duties and responsibilities. Beauty in all its artistic forms, painting, sculpture, music, literature, would be equally accessible to all; the ability to share in the joy it brings would be limited only by the capacities of each one and not by social or financial position. For in this ideal place money would no longer be the sovereign lord; individual worth would have a far

greater importance than that of material wealth and social standing. There, work would not be a way to earn one's living but a way to express oneself and to develop one's capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole, which, for its own part, would provide for each individual's subsistence and sphere of action. In short, it would be a place where human relationships, which are normally based almost exclusively on competition and strife, would be replaced by relationships of emulation in doing well, of collaboration and real brotherhood (pp. 93–94).

7.2 Integral Education

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother were directly involved in creating a new system of education that can prepare an individual's consciousness to be able to manifest the *Dream* discussed in the previous section. Unlike the present education system which in effect, emphasises the development of the human *mental* capacities, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother envisage an education that has as its focus the emergence of the *soul* of the individual—for it is the key to realising the integrality of consciousness in one's being and to change human nature. The 'Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education' established by The Mother in Pondicherry in 1951 embodies the principles of Integral education through 'a free progress system', i.e. "a progress guided by the soul and not subject to habits, conventions or preconceived ideas" (The Mother 2002, p. 109).

Moving Towards a Curriculum of the Soul: This view of education regards the learner essentially as a 'living soul' and the curriculum of education is essentially concerned with the creation of conditions whereby the soul or the psychic being can be the true leader of the learner's progress. Sri Aurobindo, in the beginning of the twentieth century gave three pithy principles of true education from which the entire curriculum of Integral Education can be evolved. These three principles are:

Nothing can be Taught.

The mind has to be consulted in its own growth.

To work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be.

(Sri Aurobindo and Mother 1956, pp. 20–21)

The first principle is a startling statement from the perspective of the present education system in India which aims to equip the growing individual with the knowledge and the skills that can help a person operate in the world. The recently constituted National Knowledge Commission (2009) looks at 'knowledge' as a 'cultural capital' the optimum use of which can bring about social and economic transformation and help India emerge as a significant economic power in the world. The conception of knowledge here is translated into a development of a 'capacity' which can be taught through an efficient system and is translatable in terms of 'economic' or 'social' value.

The first principle of true teaching—'nothing can be taught' is focused on a completely different form of knowledge—a deeper self-knowledge which cannot

be ‘taught’ for it is not ‘externally existent body of knowledge’ but wells up from a source deep within the individual —i.e. the soul. The task of teaching according to this principle is to develop the instruments of knowledge so that a person becomes capable of using these instruments to acquire true knowledge for himself or herself. Thus in this view, there cannot be an existent body of knowledge which can be seen as a ‘capital’ and can be exploited in terms of its economic and social value. In Sri Aurobindo’s perspective of human development, it is only the awakening of an individual to the *truth within* that can be the basis of an effective social transformation.

The second principle of education is ‘The mind has to be consulted in its own growth’. Each child is a unique self-representation of the divine with his or her own inner *Dharma* which should be the true guide for development. To force a child to artificially follow an external agenda of development, different from its own inner nature is:

...to do it permanent harm, mutilate its growth and deface its perfection. It is a selfish tyranny over the human soul and a *wound to the nation*, which loses the benefit of the best that a man could have given it and forced to accept instead something imperfect and artificial, second-rate and perfunctory and common (Sri Aurobindo and Mother 1956, p. 2).

The development of the instruments of knowledge thus is a precursor to the crucial second step—which is to find one’s own divine sphere of ‘perfection’ and strength’ and to develop it. A system of education that falls short of this goal would be constraining and deforming the development both of the individual and the Nation.

Further, the education of an individual should be based on the third principle *To work from the near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be*. This implies that education needs to begin as rooted in the cultural milieu in which a child is born and with ideas that are closest to his nature of being and then widened to include other possibilities. If something is brought from outside of the child’s experience, it must be offered and not imposed on the child.

An individual who is a firm possessor of the *truth of his being* is an asset for the Divine who does his marvelous works through him in the world. “He is *svarāt*, self-knower, self-ruler, but he begins to be also through this spiritual oneness and transcendence *samrāt*., a knower and master of his environing world of being.” (Sri Aurobindo 1999, p. 641). This is the lofty scope of an education based on the soul. Sri Aurobindo (1956) point out that India has always viewed the individual essentially “as a soul wrapped in mind and body” (p.15). All other human capacities—intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic and social are seen as powers of the soul through which it manifests in the world, and grows through their growth, with the possibility of ascent to the highest spiritual light. The primary aim of education in India thus must be the *development of the soul and all its possibilities*, for it is a vision that is rooted in its ancient wisdom which can be ignored only at the risk stunting its cultural genius.

The recent ‘Right to Education’ act (passed in Indian Parliament in 2009 ensuring education as a fundamental right of children from ages 6–14), aims at an

‘all round development’ of the child but emphasises on the development of the ‘physical and mental’ capacities to the fullest. From the perspective of the Integral Education, this reflects a partial understanding of the capacities of a developing child as there needs to be the fullest development of *all* the parts of the being—the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual—for a *complete* education.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, in its position paper on ‘Aims of Education’ (2006b) has done well to include ‘self-knowledge’ and ‘learning through creative arts’, ‘appreciation of individual and cultural diversity’ as important aims of education. However, the scope of self-knowledge in this vision is largely restricted to the perfection of the *moral-ethical* nature through the cultivation of values. There is an inclusion of an important area of education in the NCF 2005, i.e. ‘education for peace’ (2006a), where the values of peace and harmony are sought to be manifested through a method of conflict resolution. The mental skills of critical thinking, information handling, creative thinking, reflection and dialectical thinking are relied upon to ensure a culture of peace and harmony. In Sri Aurobindo’s perspective of development, true harmony and peace can only be manifested by moving beyond reliance on the human mind whose action is essentially *separative* in nature and cannot become the basis for a true harmony within the individual or the society. According to Sri Aurobindo (2005), while the dialectical intellect may be used to arrange ideas but it is not the source of true knowledge.

In Sri Aurobindo’s conception of human development, beyond the infrarational and the rational capacities of humanity, lie the powers that are *suprarational* in nature. These unfold as an individual becomes aware of the possibility deeper consciousness within—the inner psychic-spiritual realms of experience. The scope understanding the ‘self-knowledge’, ‘individual and cultural multiplicity’, ‘arts and aesthetics’ and ‘harmony’ can be recreated and immensely widened in this higher psychic-spiritual Light. While the development of the capacities of the rational mind is a key evolutionary victory, an education that does not create sufficient conditions for the blossoming of the capacities of the soul and spirit is likely to remain an inadequate interim measure—incapable of resolving the fundamental problems of life. In this context, there is *an urgent need* for an education system that gives a learner access to the deeper subjective resources within, teaches the learner how to gain true knowledge and take a *conscious lead* in unfolding the highest possible destiny (Also see Sect. 2.4.1 for developing the potential of the body, vital, mind moral-ethical being).

Integral Education and Conscious Self-Development: According to The Mother (2002), education begins at birth but continues *throughout life*. An adult should continue his education through conscious self-development and walk the path of continuous progress and perfection. Sri Aurobindo (1997b) points out:

There is in every individualised existence a double action, a *self-development from within* which is its greatest intimate power of being and by which it is itself, and a *reception of impacts from outside* which it has to accommodate to its own individuality and make into material of self-growth and self-power. (p. 48, emphasis added).

A person who attempts to live life from within develops progressively the power of greater self-determination and also grows through interactions with the influences from outside which that person can powerfully transmute to aid growth.

If however, there is no sufficient inner development, the external influences may inundate the personality of an individual who no longer feels in control of life. The Mother (2002) states “All radical and durable transformation proceeds *from within outwards*, so that the external transformation is the normal, almost inevitable result of this process” (p. 54, emphasis added). An *Integral education* which is capable of leading to *the Supramental realization* would require strengthening of the inner being through the practice of a fourfold austerity or *tapasya* that leads to fourfold liberation from the determinisms of external nature (The Mother 2002).

Four Austerities and Four Liberations: The fourfold austerities are—the *tapasya* of Love, the *tapasya* of Knowledge, the *tapasya* of Power and the *tapasya* of Beauty. The word austerity here is used to indicate a ‘discipline’ which does not refer to any self-mortifying ascetic practice but aims at the perfection of the being. The key ideas related to each austerity as given by The Mother (2002) are discussed below:

The Tapasya of Beauty: This discipline of beauty is the austerity of physical life, i.e. preparation of the body towards the habits of harmony, balance and Light which leads to a liberation in action. The aim is to create a body that is beautiful in form, agile and flexible in freedom of its movements, graceful in posture, confirmed in habits of health and a powerful instrument of action in the world. The aspirant has to make a choice of lending the body towards the perpetuation of the present race or to prepare the body as a step towards the creation of a new race embodying Supramental consciousness. If the choice is to create a new body, then the aspirant must abstain from all pleasure seeking including sexual pleasure and shun all habits that lead to disintegration of the body—smoking, drinking, drugs, etc. All food must be taken as an offering to the Divine within—as with food one ingests external influences and, even rest and relaxation must be done in a poise of higher consciousness. All superficial morality must be discarded in order to afford liberation for the body and transform it in the highest Supramental Light. This is however not an excuse for licentious behaviour and demands the utmost sincerity from the individual. In work too, there is an austerity which is discussed in a subsequent section (see Sect. 6.5.2).

The Tapasya of Power: The source of power in person is the vital being and the *tapasya* of power aims at perfection of this part of the being. It is the vital being that converts thought into will and then into dynamic action and is necessary for operating in the world. As the vital being is also the source of turbulent passions and desires, violence, revolt and depression, it is generally sought to be controlled by starving it of sensations from which it draws sustenance. The result is that it becomes empty, dull and listless. It is not by weakening the vital but strengthening and purifying it that one can aim to make it an instrument of Supramental plenitude. It must not be deprived of sensations, for sensations are excellent instruments of knowledge. Rather the vital must be trained to discern the nature of sensations and respond only to those sensations that are beautiful and pure. A vital

so uplifted becomes an unselfish, noble and heroic instrument that moves beyond egoistic seeking for happiness and seeks only the Delight of belonging to the Divine.

The Tapasya of Knowledge: The *control of speech* and a cultivation of *inner silence* are two invaluable disciplines through which one can gain true knowledge.

The ‘Word’ has immense power according to The Mother (2002) and speech should be used to communicate the Truth. To acquire the power of ‘Word’, one must be very careful of the manner in which one uses speech. Indiscriminate expression of feelings, ideas, opinions, judgments causes much confusion in our lives and there is no way to retract these words. Talking of spiritual experiences dissipates their power and is to be avoided unless absolutely essential. In this *Tapasya*, one must aim to speak only the words that are indispensable. The Mother (2002) writes that “certain ideas are capable of transforming the world. They are the ones that ought to be expressed; they are the ruling stars in the firmament of the spirit that will guide the earth towards its supreme realisation” (p. 61). It is the inner silence that one must cultivate, for it is in silence that the true knowledge manifests. Then one simply says what needs to be said, without any pre-calculation of the effect of the words and the words so uttered have a *true creative power*.

The Tapasya of Love: The most difficult and the most powerful of all austerities is the *tapasya* of love. Human love is often marked by the painful sense of separation. One is helplessly in control of one’s emotions and feelings and worst follies have been committed in the name of love. It is only the *Divine Love* which is able to control the caprices of human love. The Mother (2002) says that love is “in its essence, the joy of identity; it finds its ultimate expression in the bliss of union” (p. 65). It comprises of two complementary movements—the power of attraction and the need of self-giving. There is an original holocaust of Love that as a movement of Divine self-giving is involved at the base of all Creation and it is the attraction of this love that lies at the base of the evolution of all forms. The Mother (2002) writes that the need of trees, plants and flowers for sunlight, space and efflorescence is love, the need in the animals to consume, expand and procreate is love, the need in humans to come together and form grouping—biune pairs, families, communities and nations is also love. The plan of nature is to progressively recover the primordial oneness by breaking the limitations of all ego-formations and to build “a real and material foundation for human unity” (p. 67). For many humans, the drama of life and love with its thrills of alternating shadow and light is the aim of existence, and they need not be disturbed as the ‘favourites of nature’ if they are not as yet ready to gain a higher poise of consciousness. However, there are others who have an aspiration to give up the slow crab-like movements of nature and move swiftly towards the creation of a new race that will express the Supramental truth upon earth. For these individuals, love between two human beings will have to be abdicated in favour of Divine Love—for human love creates a short-circuit and cuts one off from the vast current of Divine Love. It is Divine Love alone that “can put end to the suffering of the world; only the ineffable joy of love in its essence can sweep away from the universe *the burning pain of separation*. For only in the ecstasy of the supreme

union will creation discover its purpose and its fulfilment” (The Mother 2002, pp. 69–70). Thus there is no austerity of emotions, however difficult, that cannot be attempted to reach this goal. It requires a giving up of attachment to all human relations and an offering of one’s emotions to the Divine. There is an entire reliance on the Divine alone to fulfil one’s needs and an *attachment to the Divine Reality* as way to manifest the Supramental Love on Earth.

The practice of the four austerities leads to the four liberations for the aspirant for Divine Consciousness:

The liberation of the feelings will be at the same time the *liberation from suffering*, in a total realisation of the supramental oneness. The mental liberation or *liberation from ignorance* will establish in the being the mind of light or gnostic consciousness, expression will have the creative power of the Word. The vital liberation or *liberation from desire* gives the individual will the power to identify itself perfectly and consciously with the divine will and brings constant peace and serenity as well as the power which results from them. Finally, crowning all the others, comes the physical liberation or *liberation from the law of material cause and effect* (The Mother 2002, p. 71, emphasis added).

Integral Education outlines the developmental path of *complete self-mastery* that has a capacity to free an individual from all the blind determinisms of Nature and allows only the highest will of the Divine and the truest knowledge to manifest in the individual consciousness. This is also the full scope of a future education that can integrate the systems of lower knowledge (i.e. knowledge based on the Intellect) with Higher Knowledge (spiritual knowledge that emerges from within).

It is an education that seeks to manifest the deep, wide and impersonal love in the teacher (also see *The Guru* in Sect. 2.5.1), that can help the learner engage in fearless self-reflection and contemplation of the problems and potential of one’s own nature and consciously shape the trajectory of growth. The true discipline here is self-discipline. The learner is encouraged to be his own evaluator of his growth for only he can know the truth of his own being. It encourages the culture of harmony and mutuality with other aspirants on the path of growth and uses inner silence and control of speech as way to truly know the ‘other’. The aspiration for consciousness for beauty and aesthetics is encouraged in all aspects of life—i.e. “the beauty of the soul, the beauty of sentiments, the beauty of thoughts, the beauty of the action and the beauty in the work” (The Mother 2002, p.232). The challenge of this education is to centre one’s being in the Eternal Consciousness and widen it to identify with the Unity of entire Creation with all its multiplicity of expressions. Integral education is the road to Infinite progress and perfection where the possibilities of growth never end and the agenda of growth can be continuously recreated at each new stage of evolution.

The viability of an education that attempts to give a *deeper significance to life* in the current cultural context has been demonstrated by the ethnographic studies on alternative educational experiments like Mirambika (Sibia 2006) and the Rishi Valley school (Thapan 1991). Many progressive ‘mainstream’ schools today are also attempting to move towards a ‘holistic model of education’. There is a need to seriously engage with the developmental agenda of integral education and its potential for informing and deepening the educational practices based on ‘lower

knowledge’ in schooling today. I feel that India with its traditions of deep spiritual knowledge deserves an education system that is a reflection of its ‘nation soul’ and principles of Integral Education need to be built into the National policy of education.

7.3 Conscious Parenting

One task for which our culture requires no prior training is that of parenting. Yet, in The Mother’s view (2004a) it is a task of new creation of consciousness and needs to be taken seriously by parents. In this context, there is a need to create new societal systems that can help educate the potential parents in the art of conscious parenting and help them to examine, challenge and re-create their ideas of the nature of the child, its needs and growth potential and their own duties and responsibilities in prenatal and post-natal period of the child’s growth. As the parental consciousness influences the consciousness of the child in significant ways, it becomes crucially important for parents to be on the continued path of conscious self-development and demonstrate the art of self-mastery to their children.

7.4 Work as a Means of Self-Development

‘Work’ when viewed from Sri Aurobindo’s and The Mother’s perspective is not a ‘profession’ that one adopts at a particular stage of life to operate successfully in the world but is a means of spiritual ascension. In the passage *A Dream* The Mother (2002) mentions —“There, work would not be a way to earn one’s living but a way to express oneself and to develop one’s capacities and possibilities while being of service to the community as a whole” (p. 93). Through work one develops the inner and outer capacities and utilises them for the larger good. According to The Mother (2002) while it is important to find work that suits one’s nature, it is also equally important as a spiritual discipline to do all the work that one is given with the attitude of progress and perfection. Even the smallest of tasks done with the attitude of perfection takes one a long way in developing capacities. All work must be done in an attitude of self-consecration or offering to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo (1999) points out that the *karma yoga* of the *Bhagvad Gita* which inspires the worker to act selflessly and not be attached to the fruits of the action is the right initial attitude towards work. Once the person has the attitude of inner consecration towards work, the task remains to prepare the external instruments which need to be perfected to carry out the Divine Will in the world. In the beginning, a lot of personal effort is required to ‘remember and offer’ one’s actions to the Divine. However, as one’s consciousness deepens and a living relationship is formed with the Divine, the ‘work’ is done not by the person but by the Divine

who uses the individual as an instrument. There is no ‘personal agenda’ left in doing the works, as all work is done for the Divine, in the Divine and by the Divine.

7.5 Towards New Forms of Relating

The unfolding of the new agenda of human development also opens doors to new ways of relating and communicating. Human relations are marred by ego-based ways of knowing and relating with the ‘other’. The ego-based consciousness full of desire and expectations from the ‘other’ creates conditions of strife, dissatisfaction and disharmony within the being. Even the best of human love is marked by a sense of separation and the pain and suffering is the keynote of a life that begins with the certainty of eventual death. The *tapasya* of love, discussed earlier in this chapter is way to heal this fundamental separation and through the power of ‘identity’—which is the power of Divine Love. The emergence of this new way of relating can also be hastened by experimentation with new societal forms that can help in sustaining the aspiration of an individual for the Divine. The Mother in 1968 established Auroville as an experimental community where people from across the world—different countries, races and languages can attempt to live together in harmony and mutuality and manifest the New Consciousness of human Unity on Earth. Auroville is based on the concept of ‘spiritual anarchy’ where it is the responsibility of each person to discover the divine individuality within and function on the basis of that. Such a person is not be bound by any outward convention or standard of behaviour but operates in light of the highest sincerity of her own being. If one needs to be with another person, The Mother (2004b) preferred that one does not make bondage of marriage, for it can hinder the development of both partners if their agendas of growth at some point diverged from each other. The ultimate aim of yoga is the relation with the Divine and our true relations with each other can only be revealed in the Supreme Light of the Highest Divine Love. In the words of The Mother (2004b):

To unite your physical lives, your material interests, to become partners in order to face together the difficulties and successes, the defeats and victories of life—that is the very foundation of marriage, but you already know that it is not enough.

To be united in your sensations, to have the same aesthetic tastes and enjoyments, to be moved in common by the same things, one through the other and one for the other—that is good, that is necessary, but it is not enough.

To be one in your deeper feelings, to keep a mutual affection and tenderness that never vary in spite of all the blows of life and can withstand every weariness and irritation and disappointment, to be always and on every occasion happy, extremely happy, to be together, to find in every circumstance tranquility, peace and joy in each other—that is good, that is very good, that is indispensable, but it is not enough.

To unite your minds, to harmonise your thoughts and make them complementary, to share your intellectual preoccupations and discoveries; in short, to make your sphere of mental activity identical through a widening and enrichment acquired by both at once—that is good, that is absolutely necessary, but it is not enough (pp. 236–237).

7.6 New Ways of Psychological Healing

The consciousness of an ordinary human being is an intermixture of light and shadow, of knowledge and of ignorance and falsehood. The aim of this new agenda of human growth is to focus on the light within the being and use this light to find the dark and deformed parts of the being and attempt to transform them (Sri Aurobindo 1999). To directly confront darkness without at least establishing a part of being in light is not likely to be a success. In the surface consciousness, it is the light of the ‘rational’ mind that has the highest light. The scope of healing through the power of the rational mind is limited as the nature of mind is essentially separative and cannot form the basis for a true integration of personality. There is a higher light of the psychic and spiritual being in each person that needs to be brought forth as a guide for the true healing and reintegration of the personality. The consciousness of the healer or the therapist also needs to be on the path of higher growth for the healer to have the capacity to be able to facilitate the development of the ‘other’. However, the primary task of the therapist would be to enable a person to develop the strength of self-observation so that the person can identify the root of the malady and heal it through one’s own unique relationship of faith and trust with the Divine.

In general, the Integral view of existence is that of the journey of the Divine in a person. All struggles and suffering in life represent a movement from an infra-rational (animal) existence, to a more rational (human) existence, and further, towards a yet greater suprarational (Divine) existence and end-state of Truth and Bliss and Peace and Beatitude. This is the human journey; from a life of obscure beginnings in a half-lit animal–human consciousness, to an increasingly diviner humanity. And the counsellor/therapist who can assist us in this journey is but of course a fellow traveller who has walked ahead of us from a life of relative darkness to a life of increasing Light.

A counsellor in the integral tradition looks the crisis of the being as an opportunity for growth. The counsellor works on the creating environment of inner and outer harmony and beauty through which the person can heal disturbed parts of the being. At the level thought, this means reducing the mental noise and the repetitive thoughts. At the vital level, it entails an increase in positive vital dynamism by controlling the tendencies for excessive criticism or excessive self-blame. Positive energy is also increased by keeping one’s eye always on the Light, and getting rid of the feelings of excessive sensitivity, depression, boredom and stagnation. A harmonious body culture also needs to be created that can help to

heal the nerves through infusing the body with quietude and feeling of goodwill. The arts and music too can be used to create a programme for harmonious physical development.

7.7 Examining the Hidden Curriculum of Modern Life: Proposing an Alternate Integral-Developmental Agenda

Kegan (1994) (see Sect. 5.10.1), in his book *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* has very succinctly tried to uncover the hidden cultural curriculum in the west that structures practices in the area of parenting, in engaging with intimate partners, in work culture, in psychotherapy and in education. This curriculum represented an institutional balance of evolution of self and he proposed an inter-individual balance as the next evolutionary truce.

As a last thought, it would be a useful exercise here to examine this hidden curriculum and propose ways in which this curriculum could be deepened when viewed from an Integral-developmental perspective (Table 7.1).

The hidden curriculum of modern life can be seen as representing the aspect of the evolutionary movement that works towards refining the capacities of the mind and uses them to take control of life decisions and create a psychological space which will be able to maintain boundaries and the growth of self. This need to individualise and be able to express oneself is the dominant note in the western cultural agenda. In other cultures, instead of a focus on individual growth it may be a need for progress in the collective that can take precedence. At other times, a simultaneous progress of both the individual and the collective may be the nature of the evolutionary movement (The Mother 2002). However, it can also be noted that the evolutionary stress in the contemporary phase of the human cycle is on the achievement on the development of the rational-individual capacities *overall*.

The development of the capacities of the mind also makes us more keenly aware of the paradoxes and ambiguities of our life condition—and the unanswered questions. A turn toward the deeper subjective tracts of the human psyche can be the beginning of a new evolutionary journey—which has far reaching implications for new ways of living—educating, parenting, working and healing. The growing individual on the Integral-developmental path cannot see the development of ‘other’ as different from one’s own but experience a sense fundamental Unity and Identity of Consciousness. Extending the growth of the other is *in essence* extending one’s own growth. The *quietening of the mind* can create a base for purification of consciousness that has a greater power to *illumine a life issue* or *solve a problem*. This can lead to a *greater dynamism* and a more and *veridical perception* of reality. This is I feel the way *upwards*—into splendours of the supramental realms—where wait our dreams—pure and pristine for their Integral realisation.

Table 7.1 A comparison of the mental demands of modern life outlined by Kegan (1994 pp. 302–303) and the Integral-developmental curriculum of development

The hidden curriculum of modern life in the west (Robert Kegan)	The integral-developmental curriculum (based on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings)
<i>Parenting</i> Take charge of family; establish rules and roles. Institute a vision and induct family members within it. Support the development of the young within and away from the family. Manage boundaries between the generations. Set limits for ourselves, children and those outside the family.	<i>Parenting</i> Create an atmosphere of beauty and harmony in the pre-natal period as the mother's psychological state is likely to influence the child—to have the attitude that one is creating a and bringing a new consciousness in this world through the power of aspiration. Ensure an environment where there can be maximum of freedom and minimum of rules to help flower all capacities of the being. Work on one's own conscious self-development for children imbibe many psychological attitudes subconsciously through the direct influence from parents. Create an environment of beauty of thoughts, emotions, feelings, sensations and forms- in inner psychological state and in outer communication patterns. Control of speech so that one may say only what is required. Create an environment where you can help the children to 'listen' truly to their own self. Use this psychic capacity to help them resolve small conflicts and take decisions for themselves. Create an environment of faith and trust where a child finds courage to take decisive steps towards exploring greater possibilities of growth and is supported in failure. Be a constant learner and observer of your own and the child's nature. Miss no opportunity to make progress.

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

The hidden curriculum of modern life in the west (Robert Kegan)	The integral-developmental curriculum (based on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings)
<i>Partnering/Relating</i>	<i>Partnering/Relating</i>
Be psychologically independent of our partners. Have a well differentiated and a clearly defined sense of self. Transcend the idealised, romanticised approach to love and closeness. Support our partner's development. Listen empathetically and non-defensively. Communicate feelings directly and responsibly. Have awareness of how our psychological history inclines or directs us.	Creating a deeper inner relation with others. Quieting the being and the mental noise so that one can truly listen to the other. Overcoming the sense 'otherness' in relations through practice of Spiritual oneness and inclusiveness. Forgiving and letting go of the burden of past interactions to improve relationships. Realising the uniqueness and <i>svabhava</i> of the self and others and creating space where the potential of each person can expressed to its fullest. Realising the value of the power of word and using it wisely to facilitate the development of the other. True Love as the basis of Spiritual Unity. The practice of unwavering goodwill and a true silence as a way of understanding the source of interpersonal conflicts and resolving them.
<i>Work relations</i>	<i>Work relations</i>
Be the owner and inventor of our work (rather than see it as owned and created by our employer). Be self-initiating, self-correcting and self-evaluating rather than depending on others for framing problems, initiating adjustments and determining whether things are going well). Be guided by our own vision at work. Taking responsibility for what happens to us internally and externally. Be accomplished masters of our particular work roles, jobs or careers. Conceive of the organisation from 'outside-in' as a whole; see our relation to the whole; see the relation of the part to the whole (rather than see the organisation and its parts only from perspective of its own part, from the 'inside-out').	Using work as a way of creating avenues of constant growth and progress for the self. Perfection in gaining and exercising skills as a way of self-offering to the Divine. Keeping an attitude of constant goodwill and positivity towards the co-workers. In resolving conflicts and contradictions, it would be better to give space to self-expression of all rather than reaching a 'compromise' that suppresses the true needs of some the team-members. While organising, to pay attention to the central idea- for the quality of this idea likely to affect the results. Use the highest possible ideal as the central organising idea.

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

The hidden curriculum of modern life in the west (Robert Kegan)	The integral-developmental curriculum (based on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings)
<i>Healing/Psychotherapy</i> Perceive our standards as based on our own experience (rather than upon the attitudes and desires of others). Perceive ourselves as the evaluators of experience (rather than regard ourselves as existing in a world where the values are inherent in and attached to the object of our perception.). Place the basis of standards within ourselves, recognising that the goodness and badness of any experience or perceptual object is not inherent in the object but a value placed on it by ourselves. Transform our energies from manipulating the environment for support into developing greater and greater self-support. Learn to stand on our own feet emotionally, intellectually and economically. Learn to stop indoctrinating ourselves with the unwholesome philosophies of life or values we imbibed in our youth. Learn to challenge and question our own basic values, own thinking so that we really think for ourselves. Learn to challenge and question our own basic values, our own thinking, so that we really think for ourselves. Take responsibility for our lives. Learn the psychological myths or scripts that govern our behaviour and reauthor them (rather than just use insight for better understanding of why the script is as it is.)	<i>Healing/Psychotherapy</i> Perceiving crisis as an opportunity for growth. Understanding and communicating that the night is darkest before the dawn. Emphasising the power of hope and faith. The progress of the counsellor is the key to the healing process. Developing a capacity for true listening and inner discrimination; avoid making quick judgements. Using power of concentration and aspiration as a tool to pierce and fathom the most difficult knots of problems. Creating an inner and outer environment of beauty and harmony that can help in the healing process. Using art and music as a way of facilitating physical development and the healing of nerves. Creating an environment of quietness, goodwill and rest for healing the disturbances of consciousness.

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

The hidden curriculum of modern life in the west (Robert Kegan)	The integral-developmental curriculum (based on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's writings)
<i>Education</i> Exercise critical thinking. Examine ourselves, our culture and our milieu in order to separate what we feel from what we should feel, what we value from what we should value and what we want from what we should want. Be a self-directed learner (Take initiative; set our own goals and standards, use experts, institutions and other resources to pursue these goals, take responsibility for direction and productivity in learning). See ourselves as co-creators of culture (rather than only being shaped by culture). Read actively (rather than only receptively) with our own purpose in mind. Write to ourselves and bring teachers into our self-reflection (rather than write mainly to our teachers and for our teachers). Take charge of the concepts and the theories of a course or discipline, marshalling on behalf of our independently chosen topic in internal procedures for formulating and validating knowledge.	<i>Education</i> Education: An opportunity for unending progress and remaining ever-young through constant striving for perfection. The practice of the three principles of true teaching given by Sri Aurobindo: Nothing can be taught; Mind must be consulted in its own growth; teaching from the near to the far; From that which is to that which shall be. Aim to develop the complete personality - all the parts and planes of the being. Giving the child the fundamental freedom to set the pace of progress and development and equip the child to take responsibility for growth. Learning through developing the power of concentration, widening of mind, capacity of organising thoughts around the highest ideal, rejecting unwanted influences and cultivation of true inner silence; developing the different faculties of the mind. Quieting the mind to receive the central essence of the ideas that one is contemplating. Encouraging original thinking. Paying attention to the quality and consciousness of the learning materials and physical environment. True education based on listening to curriculum of the soul or the psychic being which is the true inner leader of our growth.

7.8 Some Challenges of Using the New Agenda of Human Development

Human development when approached through this alternate agenda requires the teacher, researcher, counsellor or the learner to be on the path of the higher growth and self-mastery. To teach this agenda as a mere *intellectual theory* I feel would rob it of its inner significance and import. The challenge of applying this perspective is to *create an academic ethos* that can encourage the culture of fearless and scientific examination of the inner subjectivity and use inner silence and the deeper ‘witness self’ within to organise the subjectivity around the psychic being and gain progressively the power to purify and change outer nature. While the aim of this discourse is to unfold our suprarational capacities, in Sri Aurobindo’s view each individual learner must be given the essential freedom to approach this task in a self-determined manner and allow the *spontaneous flowering* of the spiritual capacities. Also, it is important that the processes of Integral Yoga cannot bound into a *rigid system* of development as I feel that there is an element of *divine surprise* at every step taken forward in this *yoga* for it ever opens a new possibility of experiencing and relating with the world. This perspective demands from us that we keep our minds ever-open to progress and our consciousness at the summit of its present capacity. The aims and demands of this agenda are *difficult* but in my view—most satisfying as they aim at the Integral Perfection of the complete being of an individual.

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Appendix A

Sri Aurobindo A Brief Sketch of Life



Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on 15 August 1872. In 1879, at the age of seven, he was taken with his two elder brothers to England for education and lived there for 14 years. Brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in 1884 and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for 2 years. In 1890 he passed also the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but at the end of 2 years of probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. At this time the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Aurobindo saw him, obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England for India in January 1893.

Sri Aurobindo passed 13 years, from 1893 to 1906, in the Baroda Service, first in the Revenue Department and in secretariat work for the Maharaja, afterwards as Professor of English and, finally, Vice-Principal in the Baroda College. These were years of self-culture, of literary activity—for much of the poetry afterwards published from Pondicherry was written at this time—and of preparation for his future work. In England he had received, according to his father's express instructions, an entirely occidental education without any contact with the culture of India and the East.' [1. *It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo's education in England gave him a wide introduction to the culture of ancient, of mediaeval and of modern Europe. He was a brilliant scholar in Greek and Latin. He had learned French from his childhood in Manchester and studied for himself German and Italian sufficiently to study Goethe and Dante in the original tongues. (He passed the Tripos in Cambridge in the first class and obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service.)*] At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages, assimilated the spirit of Indian civilisation and its forms past and present. A great part of the last

years of this period was spent on leave in silent political activity, for he was debarred from public action by his position at Baroda. The outbreak of the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 gave him the opportunity to give up the Baroda Service and join openly in the political movement. He left Baroda in 1906 and went to Calcutta as Principal of the newly-founded Bengal National College.

The political action of Sri Aurobindo covered 8 years, from 1902 to 1910. During the first half of this period he worked behind the scenes, preparing with other co-workers the beginnings of the Swadeshi (Indian Sinn Fein) movement, till the agitation in Bengal furnished an opening for the public initiation of a more forward and direct political action than the moderate reformism which had till then been the creed of the Indian National Congress. In 1906 Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal with this purpose and joined the New Party, an advanced section small in numbers and not yet strong in influence, which had been recently formed in the Congress. The political theory of this party was a rather vague gospel of Non-cooperation; in action it had not yet gone farther than some ineffective clashes with the Moderate leaders at the annual Congress assembly behind the veil of secrecy of the "Subjects Committee". Sri Aurobindo persuaded its chiefs in Bengal to come forward publicly as an All-India party with a definite and challenging programme, putting forward Tilak the popular Maratha leader at its head, and to attack the then dominant Moderate (Reformist or Liberal) oligarchy of veteran politicians and capture from them the Congress and the country. This was the origin of the historic struggle between the Moderates and the Nationalists (called by their opponents Extremists) which in 2 years changed altogether the face of Indian politics.

The new-born Nationalist party put forward Swaraj (independence) as its goal as against the far-off Moderate hope of colonial self-government to be realised at a distant date of a century or two by a slow progress of reform; it proposed as its means of execution a programme which resembled in spirit, though not in its details, the policy of Sinn Fein developed some years later and carried to a successful issue in Ireland. The principle of this new policy was self-help; it aimed on one side at an effective organisation of the forces of the nation and on the other professed a complete non-cooperation with the Government. Boycott of British and foreign goods and the fostering of Swadeshi industries to replace them, boycott of British law courts and the foundation of a system of Arbitration courts in their stead, boycott of Government universities and colleges and the creation of a network of National colleges and schools, the formation of societies of young men which would do the work of police and defence and, wherever necessary, a policy of passive resistance were among the immediate items of the programme. Sri Aurobindo hoped to capture the Congress and make it the directing centre of an organised national action, an informal State within the State, which would carry on the struggle for freedom till it was won. He persuaded the party to take up and finance as its recognised organ the newly-founded daily paper, *Bande Mataram*, of which he was at the time acting editor. The *Bande Mataram*, whose policy from

the beginning of 1907 till its abrupt winding up in 1908 when Sri Aurobindo was in prison was wholly directed by him, circulated almost immediately all over India. During its brief but momentous existence it changed the political thought of India which has ever since preserved fundamentally, even amidst its later developments, the stamp then imparted to it. But the struggle initiated on these lines, though vehement and eventful and full of importance for the future, did not last long at the time; for the country was still unripe for so bold a programme.

Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 and acquitted. Up till now an organiser and writer, he was obliged by this event and by the imprisonment or disappearance of other leaders to come forward as the acknowledged head of the party in Bengal and to appear on the platform for the first time as a speaker. He presided over the Nationalist Conference at Surat in 1907 where in the forceful clash of two equal parties the Congress was broken to pieces. In May, 1908 he was arrested in the Alipur Conspiracy Case as implicated in the doings of the revolutionary group led by his brother Barindra; but no evidence of any value could be established against him and in this case too he was acquitted. After a detention of one year as under trial prisoner in the Alipur jail, he came out in May 1909, to find the party organisation broken, its leaders scattered by imprisonment, deportation or self-imposed exile and the party itself still existent but dumb and dispirited and incapable of any strenuous action. For almost a year he strove single-handed as the sole remaining leader of the Nationalists in India to revive the movement. He published at this time to aid his effort a weekly English paper, the *Karmayogin*, and a Bengali weekly, the *Dharma*. But at last he was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme. For a time he thought that the necessary training must first be given through a less advanced Home Rule movement or an agitation of passive resistance of the kind created by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. But he saw that the hour of these movements had not come and that he himself was not their destined leader. Moreover, since his twelve months' detention in the Alipur Jail, which had been spent entirely in practice of Yoga, his inner spiritual life was pressing upon him for an exclusive concentration. He resolved therefore to withdraw from the political field, at least for a time.

In February 1910, he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandannagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French India. A third prosecution was launched against him at this moment for a signed article in the *Karmayogin*, in his absence it was pressed against the printer of the paper who was convicted, but the conviction was quashed on appeal in the High Court of Calcutta. For the third time a prosecution against him had failed. Sri Aurobindo had left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon the magnitude of the spiritual work he had taken up appeared to him and he saw that it would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies. Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the Presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete

retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 onward he remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his sadhana.

In 1914 after 4 years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. Most of his more important works, *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Isha Upanishad*, appeared serially in the *Arya*. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture (*The Foundations of Indian Culture*), the true meaning of the Vedas (*The Secret of the Veda*), the progress of human society (*The Human Cycle*), the nature and evolution of poetry (*The Future Poetry*), the possibility of the unification of the human race (*The Ideal of Human Unity*). At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after 6 years and a half of uninterrupted appearance.

Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or-five disciples. Afterwards more and yet more began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of sadhaks had to be formed for the maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left everything behind for the sake of a higher life. This was the foundation of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which has less been created than grown around him as its centre.

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of Yoga in 1904. 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 paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and, in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains bringing the light and power and bliss of the Spirit into life to transform it. Man's present existence in the material world is in this view or vision of things a life in the Ignorance with the Inconscient at its base, but even in its darkness and nescience there are involved the presence and possibilities of the Divine. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or Nirvana, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. 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 Supermind or eternal Truth-Consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of a Divine Knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after Truth, but this is a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this Supermind that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater Divine Consciousness to rise to this

power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine and bring down the supramental Force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo left his body on 5 December 1950.

Source

http://www.sriurobindoashram.com/Content.aspx?ContentURL=_StaticContent/SriAurobindoAshram/-01%20Sri%20Aurobindo/Brief%20Introduction.htm

Appendix B

A Sketch of the Mother's Life



The Mother was born in Paris on 21 February 1878. Mirra, as the child was named, was the daughter of the banker Maurice Alfassa (born in Adrianople, Turkey, in 1843), and Mathilde Ismaloun (born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1857). Maurice, his wife, and their son Matteo (born in Alexandria in 1876) emigrated from Egypt to France a year before Mirra's birth. Her early education was given at home. In 1893 she joined an art

studio in Paris where she studied for several years. Besides being an accomplished painter (some of her works were exhibited at the Paris Salon), the Mother was a talented musician and writer.

Concerning her early spiritual life, the Mother has said: "Between 11 and 13 a series of psychic and spiritual experiences revealed to me not only the existence of God but man's possibility of uniting with Him, of realising Him integrally in consciousness and action, of manifesting Him upon earth in a life divine." Around 1905 the Mother journeyed to Tlemçen, Algeria, where she studied occultism for 2 years with a Polish or Russian adept, Max Theon, and his wife. Returning to Paris in 1906, she started her first group of spiritual seekers. Between 1911 and 1913 she gave many talks to various groups in Paris.

At the age of thirty-six the Mother came to Pondicherry. Here, on 29 March 1914, she met Sri Aurobindo. At once she recognised him as the master who for many years had inwardly been guiding her spiritual development. After staying in India for eleven months, she was obliged to return to France because of the First World War. She left France after about a year, and lived for almost 4 years in Japan. On 24 April 1920 the Mother returned to Pondicherry and resumed her collaboration with Sri Aurobindo. She remained in India for the rest of her life.

At the time the Mother rejoined Sri Aurobindo, a small group of disciples had gathered around him. After her coming the number of disciples increased. Eventually this informal grouping took shape as an ashram or spiritual community.

From its very beginning in November 1926, Sri Aurobindo entrusted the full material and spiritual charge of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram to the Mother. Under her guidance, which extended over nearly 50 years, the Ashram has grown into a many-faceted community which at present consists of about 1,500 persons. The Mother also founded the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1951 and the international township Auroville in 1968. On 17 November 1973, at the age of 95 the Mother left her body.

Source

http://www.sriurobindoashram.com/Content.aspx?ContentURL=_StaticContent/SriAurobindoAshram/-02%20The%20Mother/Brief%20introduction.htm

Glossary

The Glossary includes key Sanskrit terms and some other special terms found in Sri Aurobindo's writings. Most of these terms have been compiled by A. S. Dalal in his books 'A Greater Psychology' and 'Our Many Selves' (reproduced with permission from Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry). A few terms have also been compiled by me.

The Absolute The supreme reality of that transcendent Being which we call God.

Ananda Bliss, delight; the essential principle of delight.

Asat Non-being; non-existence; something beyond the last term to which we can reduce our purest conception and our most abstract or subtle experience of actual being as we know or can conceive of it while in this universe. This Nothing is merely a something beyond positive conception.

Atman The Self; the Spirit; the original and essential nature of our existence; the spiritual being above the mind. In its nature the Atman is transcendent or universal (Paramatma, Atma); when it individualises and becomes a central being, it is then the Jivatman.

Avatara Divine Incarnation; the Ishwara himself assuming a human name and form for action in the Lila.

Avidya Ignorance; the Ignorance of oneness; the consciousness of Multiplicity.

Bhakti Love for the Divine; devotion to the Divine.

Brahman The Absolute; the Supreme Being; the One besides whom there is nothing else existent.

Chaitya Purusha Psychic person; the psychic being.

Chit Pure consciousness; the essential consciousness of the Spirit; the free and all-creative self-awareness of the Absolute.

Chit-Shakti See Consciousness-Force.

Circumconscient The subliminal has a formation of consciousness which projects itself beyond the mental, vital, subtle physical and gross physical sheaths

and forms a circumconscient, an environing part of itself, through which it receives the contacts of the world outside us.

Consciousness-Force The Conscious Force that builds the worlds; a universal Energy that is the power of the Cosmic Spirit working out the cosmic and individual truth of things.

Desire-soul The surface soul in us, which works in our vital cravings, our emotions, aesthetic faculty and mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness.

Dharma The deepest Law of one's nature; that which holds things together.

Ego The "I" constituted by a mental, vital and physical formation which serves to centralise and individualise the outer consciousness and action; when the true self is discovered, the utility of the ego ceases, this formation disappears and the true individuality is felt in its place.

Evolution The process of progressive liberation of the consciousness from the Inconscient.

Gita Short form of Bhagavad Gita, "the Song of the Blessed Lord", being the spiritual teachings of Sri Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra; it occurs as an episode in the Mahabharata.

Gnosis A supreme totally self-aware and all-aware Intelligence; the Divine Gnosis is the Supermind.

Higher Mind A luminous thought-mind whose instrumentation is through an elevated thought-power and comprehensive mental sight. In the Higher Mind, one becomes constantly and closely aware of the Self, the one everywhere and knows and sees habitually with that awareness.

Illumined Mind A mind no longer of higher thought, but of spiritual light; here the clarity of the intelligence, its tranquil daylight, gives place or subordinates itself to an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the Spirit.

Intuition A power of consciousness nearer and more intimate than the above-mentioned gradations to the original knowledge by identity.

Overmind A delegate of the Supramental Consciousness. The Supramental is the total Truth-Consciousness; the overmind draws down the truths separately and gives them a separate identity.

Guna Quality, character, property; the three Gunas of Natureher qualities or modes, are Sattwa, Rajas, and Tamas.

Hemispheres, Higher and Lower The higher hemisphere is the perfect and eternal reign of the Spirit; for there it manifests without cessation or diminution of its infinities, deploys the unconcealed glories of its illimitable existence, its illimitable consciousness and knowledge, its illimitable force and power, its

illimitable beatitude. The lower hemisphere belongs equally to the Spirit; but here it is veiled, closely, thickly, by its inferior self-expression of limiting mind, confining life and dividing body.

The Inconscient The most involved state of the Superconscience; all powers of the Superconscience progressively evolve and emerge out of the Inconscient, the first emergence being Matter.

Involution The involution represents the descending scale whereby the highest Divine consciousness in triune form Sat-chit-Ananda or the Sachchidananda descends an act of divine sacrifice and lies hidden in a seed form in the Inconscience of the Matter.

Ishwara Lord, Master, the Divine, God.

Jivatman See Atman.

Karma Action, work; the work or function of a man; action entailing its consequences the chain of act and consequence.

Maya The conceptive power of the *Brahman*.

Nature See Prakriti.

Nescience Inconscience.

Nirvana Extinction (not necessarily of all the being, but of being as we know it, extinction of ego, desire and egoistic action and mentality).

Prakriti Nature; Nature-Force, the Lord's executive force; the outer or executive side of the Conscious Force which forms and moves the worlds.

Psychic being The divine portion in the individual which evolves from life to life, growing by its experiences until it becomes a fully conscious being.

Psychicisation The psychic change in which the psychic being comes forward to dominate the mind, vital and physical and change the lower nature.

Purusha Conscious Being; Conscious-Soul; essential being supporting the play of Prakriti (Nature); a Consciousness behind that is the lord, witness, enjoyer, upholder and source of sanction for Nature's works; the Purusha represents the true being on whatever plane it manifests—physical, vital, mental, psychic.

Purushottama The supreme divine Person; the Supreme Being who is superior both to the mutable Being and the Immutable.

Rajas The quality that energises and drives to action; the quality of action and passion and struggle impelled by desire and instinct; the force of kinesis. Rajas is one of the three Gunas or modes of Nature.

Rig Veda The most ancient of the sacred books of India.

Rishi A seer.

Sachchidananda (Sat-Chit-Ananda) The One Divine Being with a triple aspect of Existence (Sat), Consciousness (Chit) and Delight (Ananda).

Sadhana The practice of yoga.

Saskāra Association, impression, fixed notion, habitual reaction formed by one's past.

Sat Being, Existence; Pure Existence.

Sattva The quality that illumines and clarifies; the quality of light, harmony, purity and peace; the force of equilibrium. Sattva is one of the three Gunas or modes of Nature.

Shakti Force, Power; the Divine Power; the Power of the other; the consciousness and power of the Divine; the Mother and Energy of the worlds.

Soul The psychic essence or entity, the divine essence in the individual; a spark of the Divine that comes down into the manifestation to support the evolution of the individual. In the course of the evolution, the soul grows and evolves in the form of a soul- personality, the psychic being. The term "soul" is also often used as a synonym for 'psychic being'.

Soma Divine elixir or wine; bliss or Ananda.

Spirit The Consciousness above mind, the Atman or universal Self which is always in oneness with the Divine.

Spiritualisation The spiritual change in which there is the established descent of the divine peace, light, knowledge, power, bliss from above, the awareness of the Self and the Divine and of a higher cosmic consciousness and the change of the whole nature in its light.

Subconscious The part of the being which is below the level of the mental, vital and physical consciousness; in the average person, it includes the larger part of the physical mind, the vital being and the body-consciousness.

Subliminal Comprises the inner being, i.e., inner mind, inner life, inner physical with the soul or psychic entity supporting them; (sometimes) all that lies outside the surface consciousness, including the subconscious, the subliminal proper and the superconscious.

Superconscious Consciousness above and beyond our present level of awareness in which are included the higher planes of mental being as well as the supramental and spiritual.

Supermind The Supramental, the Truth-Consciousness, the Divine Gnosis, the highest divine consciousness and force operative in the universe. A principle of consciousness superior to mentality, it exists, acts and proceeds in the fundamental truth and unity of things and not like the mind in their appearances and

phenomenal divisions. Its fundamental character is knowledge by identity, by which the Self is known.

Supramentalisation The highest and largest possibilities of transformation of consciousness leading to the creation of a Gnostic Being.

Svabhava ‘Own being’, ‘own becoming’; the essential nature and ‘self-principle of being of each becoming’

Svayamprakasa Supreme existence supremely aware of itself; direct or essential knowledge.

Tamas The quality that hides or darkens; the quality of ignorance, inertia and obscurity, of incapacity and inaction; the force of inconscience. Tamas is one of the three Gunas or modes of Nature.

Tapas The essential principle of energy.

Transcendent The seat of the Transcendent Consciousness is above in an absoluteness of divine Existence of which our mentality can form no conception and of which even our greatest spiritual experience is only a divine reflection.

Truth-Consciousness See Supermind.

Upanishads A class of Hindu sacred writings, regarded as the source of the Vedanta philosophy.

Veda Generic name for the most ancient Indian sacred literature.

Vedanta The “end or culmination of the Veda”; a system of philosophy based on the Upanishads (which occur at the end of the Veda), teaching the culminating knowledge of the Absolute.

Vedic Pertaining to the Veda.

Vidya Knowledge; Knowledge in its highest spiritual sense; the consciousness of Unity.

Vital The Life-nature made up of desires, sensations, feelings, passions, energies of action and of all the play of possessive and other related instincts, such as anger, fear, greed, lust, etc.

Yoga Joining, union; union with the Divine and the conscious seeking for this union. Yoga is in essence the union of the soul with the immortal being and consciousness and bliss of the Divine, effected through the human nature with a result of development into the divine nature of the being. Yoga is a generic name for any discipline by which one attempts to pass out of the limits of one’s ordinary mental consciousness into a greater spiritual consciousness.