

Spiritual Awakening and Enlightenment according to Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti

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Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti are two of the most important contemporary sages of our time. They have opened a new path towards self-transformation and genuine spiritual awakening. Their message, addressed to each one of us, gives a new direction for the third millennium. They challenge our present psychological make-up centered on the ego and each in his own unique fashion, provides invaluable insights into the nature of the 'me' and how our ego has led us to a dead end. Studying their teachings ignites the divine spark which lies within the depth of our being, and if we are sincere, it becomes a flame which shall consume the ashes of falsehood and bring forth our divine destiny.

The Observer — Observed Phenomenon

Our starting point, whether philosophical, psychological or spiritual, unavoidably is ourself. We see everything as other than ourselves, thus we become the observer watching the observed. In fact, the observer creates the observed, thereby establishing a duality.

Duality occurs when there is the observer and the observed. The observer is the past. So, through the eyes of the past the observation takes place and that creates a duality. (Krishnamurti, *The Way of Intelligence*: 110)

Without a thorough understanding of the observer-observed complex in a direct non-conceptual manner, there is no basis for sane and wholistic thinking. Each observer interprets reality in his or her own peculiar way

which unavoidably entertains a world of division and strife, creating a battlefield of ideas dividing us from each other. To remedy this problem which divides humanity into so many 'isms', the observer, which is you and I, must give up all preconception in order to see in actual fact what we are made of.

It seems to me that before we set out on a journey to find reality, to find God, before we can act, before we can have a relationship with another, which is society, it is essential that we begin to understand ourselves first. I consider the earnest person to be one who is completely concerned with this, first, and not how to arrive at a particular goal, because if you and I do not understand ourselves, how can we, in action, bring about a transformation in society, in relationship, in anything that we do?" (*The First and Last Freedom*: 31)

Always in this sense of a supreme self-knowledge is this word *jnana* used in Indian philosophy and Yoga; it is the light by which we grow into our true being, not the knowledge by which we increase our information and our intellectual riches '*Know thyself*' is the first and last step on the journey to truth... (CWSA 19: 203)

Self-knowledge is the direct knowledge of oneself as one 'actually' is, not to be confused with ideas that one may entertain about oneself. Knowledge imparted by others, however great their authority, if blindly accepted, inhibits our intelligence and brings about sectarianism or narrowmindedness. Therefore, a creative exploration is necessary to acquire the livingness of understanding.

According to Krishnamurti, 'to go far one must start near' which is in fact with oneself. Without thought where is the thinker? 'Thinking' fuels our ego, the 'I – process'; the 'me' is a dynamic process sustained by thought. We are a network of identifications through sensation and desire for various objects. Self-knowledge begins with the understanding of the

nature and structure of thought and without self-knowledge how far can we travel in the realm of truth, of reality, without self-delusion?

For Krishnamurti, it is essential to remain with what he calls the '*What-is*', the actual fact, the state of our being as it is, whatever that may be. Otherwise, we live within a cloud of ideas unrelated to who or what we really are. This is the beginning of self-knowledge: a knowledge which is not derived from another, but directly from the source within. For example, we make a donation and think that we are generous, whereas in fact our underlying motive is to gratify our ego: 'I am' the one who has given! Becoming spontaneously aware of our unconscious selfish motivations disguised behind our humanitarian pretense is authentic self-knowledge.

In his teachings Krishnamurti does not wander away from the fact or actuality of '*What-is*': the understanding of '*What-is*' opens the door to truth. Do we really see '*What-is*', reality as it is, or do we unwarily project ourselves into what is seen and do not see things and people as they really are?

Our perception is coloured by our conditionings, traditional, racial, personal and collective. Krishnamurti draws our attention to the phenomenon that he calls the '*the Observer— Observed*'. The 'I' which observes is no other than the background of its conditioning, in fact they are one and the same thing. A Catholic, a Muslim, a non-believer, an Englishman, a Frenchman, and so on, will perceive not the Real but the projected content of their own consciousness! Even a school of meditation can colour our vision and inhibit any further enquiry into the infinity of life, which demands pliability of being rather than fixity of thought. Buddha realized spiritual illumination through his own life experiences and insights, whereas a Buddhist 'follows' and makes it a doctrine!

In Sri Aurobindo's integral approach, the Observer, the ego, is the manifestation of something Vaster without which it would have no meaning in itself. Sri Aurobindo tells us that even in the state of Ignorance there lies hidden the secret knowledge of the One in which the Transcendent timeless reality is immanent through its divine Presence. Accordingly, to know the '*What-is*', in which the observer, the ego takes birth, one has to become aware of the interrelatedness of all the principles which have contributed to its occurrence in the first place.

The Observer is a wave in the ocean of Being. Sri Aurobindo's perception of the matter is unique: the ego is not completely false, it has a necessary value in the teleological scheme of evolution, even though at some stage it has to be outgrown by an expansion of consciousness. '*The ego was the helper; the ego is the bar.*' Behind the '*What-is*', our surface self, lies a deeper reality hidden in its bosom: a divine luminous Potential not yet realized!

Even when the little ego has been abolished, the true spiritual Person can still remain [as well as] and God's will and work and delight in him and the spiritual use of his perfection and fulfilment. (CWSA 23: 85)

The true and ultimate, as distinguished from the immediate or intermediate, importance of our observing, reasoning, enquiring, judging intelligence is that it prepares the human being for the right reception of a Light from above which must progressively replace in him the obscure light from below that guides the animal. (Ibid: 73)

Essentially, Sri Aurobindo and Krishnamurti try to awaken our own discerning intelligence to help us see directly the nature of our conditioned self, the mind that sees and creates our own limited reality by thought-projection.

Comparing, judging, evaluating is inherent to our thought process. We do not see things in themselves but draw our knowledge by contrasting one thing with another. It is what is called discursive or horizontal thinking, which in fact is the normal functioning of our mind. Our language, in the same manner, is dualistic, for it is born from the distinction between the inner and outer world, the observer — observed phenomenon. Our fragmented world is the outcome of the observer. While we crave for harmony, unity and love, we in fact live in division, separation, strife and conflict. As long as we are positioned in the observer separate from the observed the world's predicament has no solution. Is there an observer without an opinion, a belief system?

In his dialogues, Krishnamurti repeatedly warns us not to compare what he says with what another sage or thinker has said, for not only it prevents us to go to the root of the issue and to see things directly, but it also creates a mental distraction detrimental to genuine communion with life. In fact, the ego does not listen at all, for it is too busy comparing the words or concepts which it already knows with what has been said. We resist anything new that does not tally with our own views. Thought, product of the past, can only 'recognize' but not cognize things directly. It seeks security in the knowledge with which it has identified itself. Our mind conditioned by language has a tendency to take the word for the reality. Krishnamurti repeatedly warns us that '*the word is not the thing*'. Words only represent reality and can only capture its outer appearance!

When we meet someone for the first time, our mind immediately puts words on whom we see according to past information. We see others through their skin color, their nationality, religion, status, the car they drive and where they live, but none of these descriptions tell us anything about the 'being' who abides within the form. To see someone or something directly without words, without concepts, seems impossible to our mind caught in the network of thought and in the web of words. That is why, in

a like manner, both Krishnamurti and Sri Aurobindo advocate a silent mind for the right perception to occur. When thought is in abeyance reality has a chance to display its inner treasures and to reflect truth in our mental consciousness.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the observer, our surface self, in the present stage of our evolution, is composed of three distinct but interrelated parts: the physical, the vital and the mental minds or consciousness, which together form the inner core of the ego. That is, the perceiver perceives the world through the physical, vital, desire-self or thinking mind depending on the individual's unique configuration of these three aspects. There are as many versions of the world as there are perceivers! To learn to see things as they are, requires a transcendence of these functions in a new mode of perception triggered by a spiritual consciousness freed from duality.

The most important event in our peregrination is the awakening of our inner most self that Sri Aurobindo calls the psychic being who is in direct contact with the Supreme reality. The psychic being is in fact the manifestation of the divine reality in an individualized form. With the awakening of the psychic being the observer is transformed, and accordingly, distorted, partial seeing of the ego becomes pure seeing of the undivided wholeness of being. It is the inner mind, the inner vital, instruments of the psychic being which now see the world in a unified field of cosmic dimension.

To Sri Aurobindo, the observer is the 'I' evolving in Nature as well as the result of Nature. As such the observer cannot know itself for it is too embedded in Nature's fabric to see independently. The observer is therefore the apparent self which evolves in the different strata that Nature creates for a determined and evolving purpose. An ant, a flower, a cat, a savage, an artist, a philosopher, are different gradations of an evolving

consciousness that Nature wields. Between the savage and the philosopher there are aeons of time in which the experience of the observer undergoes continuous change and transformation. At each gradation, consciousness enlarges itself and perceives reality more widely and deeply. With the birth of the Purusha, the spirit, the soul, the observer undergoes a major transformation and henceforth is no longer a product of Nature. These dynamics between Soul and Nature are essential to grasp in order to understand who we actually are in our integral self.

An essential factor in the peregrination of the soul in Nature is the Joy of adventure, the cosmic Lila, the delight of the cosmic Dance deploying its creative energy. According to Sri Aurobindo it is from the principle of *Ananda*, Bliss, that the universe came into being with the interplay of Spirit and Nature. At any given moment in the infinity of time the observer is an expression of the delight of the Spirit hidden within the form. While the bird delights in its flight, indeed it is the Spirit all along who is present in the joy of flying!

The observer is the eternal traveler on the road in the infinity of time in order to disclose what lies dormant in the timeless being. The observer is the crossroads of what we were and what we will be, while being completely absorbed in the present moment with what we actually are. But above all, the observer in the guise of a man or a woman is a potential of infinite possibilities growing more and more into the supernal treasures of Spirit, the divine being. Spirit is the true Observer who lies behind the veil of our ego, directing it to its appointed divine destiny:

A hidden Power is the true Lord or over-ruling Observer of our acts and only he knows through all the ignorance and perversion and deformation and degradation brought in by the ego their entire sense and ultimate purpose. (Ibid: 92)

To remedy our present state caught in the observer-observed complex, Krishnamurti advocates Choiceless-Awareness or pure attention without the thinker, and Sri Aurobindo reveals that '*the Witness Spirit behind Nature*' is the key to free the observer, the ego from all its conditionings. To see that the observer, the ego, is a product of *Prakriti*, (lower Nature), and at the same time to discover the true Observer, the Psychic Being, both sages advocate the awakening of intelligence, which has the power to discern instantaneously the true from the false, the entanglement of *Prakriti* with *Purusha*.

Self-Knowledge according to Sri Aurobindo and Krishnamurti.

Krishnamurti tells us that without self-knowledge there is only falsehood, conditioning, conflict and chaos, in short, our present condition. Krishnamurti's approach to self-knowledge is negative in the sense that it is not by an act of will, saturated with desire, that we can know ourselves but by passive or choiceless awareness. In this state we see our 'me', like in a mirror, as it actually is, from moment to moment, without condemnation, acceptance or judgment. This passive and extensive awareness is a state of pure attention which requires a silent mind. Only in passive awareness can we seize the truth of our ego for the 'me' is caught off guard.

The total process cannot be understood by the part, by the entity that is observing, that is translating. That is why a silent mind is necessary, a mind that no longer condemns, judges. Then the whole process of consciousness reveals itself through every action, through every word." (*Talks, London, 1953: 13*)

In fact, passive awareness corresponds to the second stage of the yoga of Sri Aurobindo which is like a bridge "between the human and the divine working, there will supervene an increasing purified and vigilant passivity, a more and more luminous divine response to the Divine Force..." (CWSA

23: 87) That passive awareness brings the silence of the mind through the surrender of the ego which becomes receptive to the higher Light.

To experience the immeasurable, the unknowable, the mind must go beyond and above itself. (Krishnamurti, *Talks, Ojai*: 24)

A silent mind cannot be induced by thought or will with its endless chattering and desires. Therefore, a cultivated silence is not the quality of silence which Krishnamurti advocates. It naturally 'occurs' when the desirer is understood and his or her network of identifications dissolved. Insight into the very nature of the 'me' dissolves the content of consciousness which now becomes empty, silent, open and receptive to the higher reality.

Instead of telling us what is true, Krishnamurti makes us aware of the false. If the false is discerned, truth naturally comes into being. The false is like a cloud which hides the sun, remove the obscurity and light prevails! From the false, the fragmented, we cannot get to truth, the whole. The false is our conditioned self and in our desire to attain truth, we, in fact perpetuate the false. The conditioned cannot attain the unconditioned, but through the understanding of the conditioned the unconditioned reveals itself.

On that matter, Sri Aurobindo shares the same view: "The ego person in us cannot transform itself by its own force or will or knowledge or by any virtue of its own into the nature of the Divine." (CWSA 23: 86)

God is something which comes to you without your invitation. But that is when your mind and your heart are absolutely still, not seeking, not probing, and when you have no ambition to acquire. (Krishnamurti, *Talks, Madras*, 1950: 8)

The unconditioned pure Being *comes into being* when the ground is clear and our 'me' does not obstruct its pristine light. The key factor for getting out of this conundrum, is to directly see that no action from the ego can

free oneself. This 'insight' into the ego frees the mind instantaneously and effortlessly from its chattering. It becomes silent, choiceless and simultaneously undergoes a spiritual transformation. Desire and will have dissolved with awareness and insight. Krishnamurti nonetheless distinguishes the 'will of desire' from the 'will of discernment'; the first is self-centered and motivated, the second is the movement of pure intelligence whose main objective is the understanding of life as a whole without the interference of desire. 'Choiceless awareness' and 'insight' are key terms in the teachings of Krishnamurti and require a deep investigation.

Thought is a residue of past experiences. Thought is the result of the process: perception - object – contact - sensation, then when identified with and named, it becomes a thought stored in memory. For example, there is the perception of a beautiful shirt, then thought identifies itself with the sensation, the pleasure of seeing the shirt, and turns it into desire: wanting the shirt. Desire and thought are concomitant and create the desirer, that is what Krishnamurti calls the psychological self, or the desire-self in Sri Aurobindo's terms. In fact, Krishnamurti makes us aware that sensations are natural and should not be shied away from as in Buddhism. The problem starts when thought intervenes with its image-making and attaches itself to the sensation which as a result becomes desire. That is why Krishnamurti urges us to live and to die from moment to moment, that is to live each sensation as it arises without turning it into desire.

Thoughts are therefore the experiences of past impressions or sensations of various objects. Accordingly, when the dynamic, ever-present reality meets the individual, it is thought, the product of the past experiences, which *reacts*. In fact, it is memory itself or more precisely psychological memory which reacts to each new moment! In other words, thought meets the eternal present with its past conditioning, which are only sensations identified with different objects. Thought is always old and therefore

second hand and should not be confused with insight which is spontaneous direct seeing in the stream of the present.

Sri Aurobindo shares the same insight than Krishnamurti but giving to thought the secondary function of communication:

As the physical sight can present to us the actual body of things of which the thought had only possessed an indication or mental description and they become to us at once real and evident, *pratyaksa*, so the spiritual sight surpasses the indications or representations of thought and can make the self and truth of all things present to us and directly evident, *pratyaksa*... The seer does not need the aid of thought in its process as a means of knowledge, but only as a means of representation and expression, — thought is to him a lesser power and used for a secondary purpose. (CWSA 24: 833)

If thought, product of the past, is not a suitable instrument to meet freshly and adequately the eternal now, *how* can we get out of this conundrum and be in touch, in communion, with the ever-changing reality?

For Krishnamurti the 'how' is a wrong question, for it perpetuates the thought-process that we are trying to free ourselves from and prevents us from directly seeing reality. In fact, the clue is to remain with the 'what is', which requires the capacity 'to look' at a fact without thought intervening. It is a state of pure attention without the thinker, the past momentum of thought. Furthermore, the 'how' implies a method or practice, which not only in time becomes mechanical, but also involves a becoming where our 'me' insidiously continues to function and condition what we observe.

Paradoxically, self-knowledge arises in a pure state of Choiceless-Awareness, when the self, the ego, is in abeyance. Therefore, genuine self-knowledge can only come about when choice is not operative, for choice implies the chooser infused with desire. It is a direct seeing of the whole

dynamic process of the self with its reactions to the challenges of life. Usually, we are unaware of our unconscious motives or cravings. This pure seeing or direct understanding requires a distinct poise of being in which the intellect and the heart function in unison and the 'me' is totally absent.

Thought is therefore not an adequate instrument to realize self-knowledge. Rather, 'insight' into the nature of thought itself liberates the mind of its limitations and becomes pure intelligence. Thought is indirect perception; insight is direct awareness. Attention, insight and pure intelligence are almost synonymous to choiceless-awareness. Thought is not to be rejected, but, with the advent of this new consciousness, it is no longer subjected to the influence of the separate 'me' and desire. Instead of being the leader it becomes a servant of universal intelligence.

Krishnamurti makes a distinction between 'experience' and 'experiencing', experience being the leftover or residue of experiencing. Experiencing is an active state of undivided attention where the experiencer is inconspicuous; as soon as the experiencer comes into being the non-dual experiencing ceases, and the experience takes over. Thus, experience, which is thought, is the memory of experiencing. When the individual is cut off from experiencing, that is from a choiceless state of awareness, the non-dual experiencing becomes an experience, which reinforces the ego, the experiencer. When the thought-process dominates, we are no longer in the flowingness of direct living.

In the state of experiencing, there is neither the experiencer nor the experienced. The tree, the dog and the evening star are not to be experienced by the experiencer; they are the very movement of experiencing. There is no gap between the observer and the observed; there is no time, no spatial interval for thought to identify itself. Thought is utterly absent, but there is being. This state of being cannot be thought of, or meditated upon, it is not a thing to be achieved. The experiencer must cease to experience, and only then

is there being. In the tranquility of its movement is the timeless.
(*Commentaries on Living, First Series: 32*)

This state of non-dual experiencing resembles in some respect to what Sri Aurobindo would call 'knowledge by identity': "In the mind the action of intelligence involves, at the outset, separation and otherness between the knower, knowledge and the known; but in the supermind its movement still takes place in the infinite identity or at least in the cosmic oneness."
(CWSA 23: 863)

It is knowledge derived directly from the Oneness of life and not through thought. According to Sri Aurobindo, the observer or experiencer is not eliminated but transformed into a unified divine consciousness where the form does not vanish into the essence but participates in the on-going creation of Nature. The individual has a leading role to play in the cosmic scheme which 'seems' not to be the case for Krishnamurti. The universe grows and unfolds itself with the evolving consciousness of the individual.

In Sri Aurobindo's vision, the whole creation is a wonderful adventure of the pilgrim's soul in search of the Self. In fact, on the Supramental plane there is no actual separation as we experience in the ego state. It is only on the Mind plane that ignorance and division take place and the ego sees things as if separated. But even that separation and ignorance, which the individual is subjected to, has a divine function in the teleological plan of becoming. Thus, the experiencer takes many positions according to his or her understanding of these hidden truths. But each relative position, even the ignorant dual illusion of separateness, has its importance and value in the unfolding of the divine intentions.

The conscious unity of the three, God, Soul and Nature, in his own consciousness is the sure foundation of his perfection and his realisation of all harmonies: this will be his highest and widest state, his status of a divine consciousness and the starting point for his

entire evolution of his self-knowledge, world-knowledge, God-knowledge. (CWSA 22: 729)

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga demonstrates with unequal genius that self-knowledge cannot be complete without the knowledge of our world, the cosmic Self, and the knowledge of the Transcendence in which lies all the 'Real-Ideas'. Only then can the truth of our Self, the individual, be complete. The 'Real-Ideas' are truths in archetypal forms which lie in seed in the timeless Absolute and are unfolding in the universal stream of the creative becoming in Time. Only this triple Knowledge can reflect the truths of our being and trigger an authentic Becoming. It is for this reason that the yoga of Sri Aurobindo is called Integral, for it encompasses the Transcendent, the Universal and the Individual reality without separating any of these principles from each other in the pursuit of Truth.

To know oneself in the integrality of self-knowledge is to be able to perceive these three principles, in their distinctness as well as in their interplay. The ancient wisdom of India called the Ultimate reality *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, — pure Existence, pure Consciousness and Bliss. The knowledge of the Self in the Vedantic school of Indian spirituality concentrated on the *Sat* principle, — pure self-existence, whereas in the Tantric school it focusses on the *Chit* or *Shakti* principle, — Consciousness-Force. The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo synthesizes these two aspects and merges them into the *Ananda* or Bliss principle. In fact, Sri Aurobindo considers these three aspects of the trinity of *Satchitananda* to be undividable in their absolute form. However, as soon as a manifestation occurs, they appear divided and one principle may predominate over the others.

These three principles form the core of Sri Aurobindo's yoga in his integral perception of reality. The pristine manifestation of *Sachchidananda* is luminously expressed on the Supramental plane of consciousness. On that plane, truth is a unified field of undiluted pure consciousness, love and beauty. In Sanskrit terms, it is the *Vijnana* and *Ananda* plane of

consciousness, in which no division and separation exist and it can only be known through knowledge by identity. It is a state of pure Self or Bliss where everything coexists undivided in the one substance of being.

We have evolved from the material plane and successively to the vital and the mental planes, and we are, as a result, composed of these three factors which condition our being, which Sri Aurobindo respectively names the physical mind, the vital mind and the mind proper. In each of us the configuration of these three aspects is unique. This explains why human communication is complex and most often problematic for each one perceives the other according to his or her make-up. These three minds in us are more or less unconscious, sub-conscious or partly conscious. Needless to say, at that level of consciousness there is no possibility of authentic self-knowledge which preexists in its pure form in the Supramental consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo tell us that to attain genuine self-knowledge, we must disentangle ourselves from *Prakriti*, Nature and discover *Purusha*, the Soul. For while in *Prakriti* we are completely manipulated, like puppets, by its mechanisms. It is in the world of forms (*Prakriti*) that we draw our experiences of life which gave birth to our ego. To discover the unified field of being which inhabits each form, each existence, is to free our ego from identification with our body-mind apparatus as a separate entity. Distinguishing being from nature is the essential factor which leads to true self-knowledge.

It is from this crucial experience of the separation of *Prakriti* from *Purusha* that the notion of self-surrender, a corner stone of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, comes spontaneously. Liberated from the identification process, the ego loses all desire for material things and the overwhelming pull of vital passions. It naturally surrenders and becomes unreservedly the instrument

of pure Being. The awareness of the Soul behind Nature awakens our true Self.

The fundamental principle of self-knowledge in Sri Aurobindo's vision is the discovery of our deeper Self, the psychic being, without which our manifestation, our world, would have no meaning except to escape in a timeless Spirit by the dissolution of the ego. The emergence of the psychic being is decisive for with its birth our existence takes true and ultimate value in an otherwise meaningless, repetitious, conflictual loop of the ego.

Only the psychic being can actualize the truths of the Real-Ideas of the Transcendent reality, for it is a divine spark of Its very Being, the true everlasting individual. Beauty, goodness and truth are the very texture of its nature and, accordingly, only the psychic being can reveal and realize Its splendour on the Earth-plane. When the psychic being comes to the fore and replaces the ego — which was nonetheless a necessary first stage to create an individual centre — evolution becomes conscious, creative and constructive. The individual becomes a centre in which the universal consciousness can function freely and harmoniously, revealing the divine truths in the creation of a new world. With the awakening of the psychic being, the individual is not just a passive observer (which 'seems' to be the case for Krishnamurti) but is now a co-worker with cosmic Nature inspired by the transcendent light to unfold the divine plan on Earth.

As we have seen, self-knowledge for Sri Aurobindo goes very far as it is the expression of an infinity of being in relation to a world which is in the making. With the birth of the psychic being, self-knowledge is not only 'illumination' or 'liberation', by the dissolution of the ego in the static essence of pure Being, but as well it triggers a dynamic 'transformation' of our entire nature, physical, vital and mental. Once the instruments of Spirit are transformed, self-knowledge reaches its ultimate creative value through the principle of 'perfection' which gives everlasting meaning to

our lives. Therefore, for Sri Aurobindo, liberation, transformation and perfection are necessary to fulfill an integral self-knowledge and to realize our divine nature.

« Is There A Path to Truth ? »

This is a very challenging question for our mind which operates in duality.

According to Krishnamurti "*Truth is a pathless-land*". By these terms, he implies that the absolute is unnamable, unknowable. Therefore, no path that the mind follows can bring us to Truth. Truth being infinite, whole, indivisible, beyond categorization, cannot be fathomed by thought. But if there is no path, how can we, limited as we are by our mind, trapped by our thoughts and intellect, attain Truth? Can the finite reach the infinite by a method, a pattern of its creation?

Is it not possible for a mind to be completely not knowing, so that it is capable of sensitivity, so that it can receive? (*Talks, Bombay, 1953: 91*)

We must find the right attitude to overcome this seemingly unsurmountable obstacle in our ignorant and limited nature. For it is only when we are aligned to truth that its rays can reach us. This alignment of our nature is the key for the needed transformation to occur. When the spine is out of alignment, we lose our balance and our body becomes sick, likewise with our mind, any wrong thinking leads us astray.

The natural tendency when one is lost is to ask for help. When there is dependency, there come the so-called professional helpers, the dispensers of advice, who take the role of a guru. Sri Aurobindo warns us against the blind leading the blind, "...the words of the supreme wisdom are expressive only to those who are already of the wise." (CWSA 23: 94). For this very reason Krishnamurti is radical against the authority of gurus to lead the

individual to truth: '*One must be a light unto oneself*'. No one can bring that light from without, for it to be genuine and true, it must actually grow and shine from within.

You cannot organize Life or Truth. If I want to go to London, I make use of an organization which will give me tickets. But if an organization claimed that it could take me to heaven, I should not use it, because I know that heaven is not a place outside myself. Do you see what I mean? (Krishnamurti, *Early Writings*, Vol.2: 180)

It seems that Sri Aurobindo, as an Integral thinker, mitigates Krishnamurti's position of no compromise. It is true that the Infinite cannot be captured by thought, but a preparation (a *Sadhana*) creating the right disposition of our nature may bring us into communion with the Incommensurable. Sri Aurobindo proposes a *Sadhana* 'for those who are ready' to embark on the great adventure of self-discovery. In some respect, his *sadhana* is not contradictory to Krishnamurti's attitude, for the *Sadhak* also must become 'a light into oneself' by the awakening of one's unique nature (*Swabhava*) which belongs to no other, even though we all share the same essence. We are tackling the mystery of being that requires a sensitive, open, unbiassed mind. Let us quote Sri Aurobindo own words:

For the Sadhaka of the integral Yoga it is necessary to remember that no written Shastra, however great its authority or however large its spirit, can be more than a partial expression of the eternal knowledge. He will use, but never bind himself even by the greatest Scripture ... But in the end he must take his station, or better still, if he can, always and from the beginning he must live in his own soul beyond the limitations of the word that he uses. The Gita itself thus declares that the Yogin in his progress must pass beyond the written Truth, — '*sabdabrahmativartate*—beyond all that he has heard and all that he has yet to hear,— '*srotavyasya srutasya ca*. For he is not the sadhaka of a book or of many books; he is a sadhaka of the Infinite. (CWSA 23: 55-56)

We can see how carefully Sri Aurobindo weighs his words which express a non-dogmatic approach to corroborate the delicate and complex issues concerning the evaluation of Truth. He says that we may use but '*never bind ourselves*' to even the greatest book ever written on truth or spiritual matters! History confirms this very fact, that as soon as one identifies oneself to a sacred book or to a personality who claims to give the truth, dogmatism, fanaticism, sectarianism grow with it. In a way, through identification, it is not Truth itself that we are searching but ultimate security that we do not want anyone to question — and that explains the countless religious persecutions.

It seems that both sages advocate self-reliance, as it is through one's own direct experience and not through indirect means that the light within can shine without. Followers can destroy their master's wisdom by applying their insights to the letter, for they require growth of being and not conformity to words.

And for the soul that has passed the shining portals and stand in the blaze of the inner light, all mental and verbal description is as poor as it is superfluous, inadequate and an impertinence. (Ibid: 94)

Learning to think directly by oneself is the most difficult thing to achieve and that is why we prefer to follow like good school children doing virtuous deeds, taking the form for the essence. That is why a Zen master admonishes his disciples to metaphorically kill the Buddha, for in merely following they will never awaken to their deeper self nor discover their own unique nature. One day each one of us will have to embark on the great adventure towards the Unknown and leave all our crutches behind.

What is his [the supreme Guide and Teacher, secret within us] method and his system? He has no method and every method. (Ibid: 61)

While the Infinite which is our ultimate nature can work through us in our lower egoistic nature, it cannot be limited to a pattern or mechanized action. During a time, a given framework may be necessary, yet the individual must not be attached to it for the freedom of Spirit needs space and largeness of being to grow within us. In fact, Sri Aurobindo stated that at the last stage of his yoga "there is no effort, no set method, no fixed Sadhana." (Ibid: 87)

The sadhaka of the integral Yoga will make use of all these aids according to his nature; but it is necessary that he should shun their limitations and cast from himself that exclusive tendency of egoistic mind which cries, "My God, my Incarnation, my Prophet, my Guru," and opposes it to all other realisation in a sectarian or a fanatical spirit. All sectarianism, all fanaticism must be shunned; for it is inconsistent with the integrity of the divine realisation. (Ibid: 66)

Sri Aurobindo does not separate the essence from the form, which is its expression. As we have seen, each being has a unique becoming or path, (*Swabhava*) according to his or her own nature. In a way, each one must pave one's way to Truth. Sri Aurobindo gives a practical and general guideline, a *Sadhana*, which must be uniquely adopted by the *Sadhak*. It is not a photocopy of *Sadhaks* that Sri Aurobindo envisioned, but the realisation of a uniqueness of individuality, where each one of us sets upon our own unique path, which must be fluid and plastic as Life itself. Truth is multifaceted and multidimensional, likewise must be the path.

In fact, path or no path can coexist in the experience of the timeless-time which must be realized simultaneously in our being. Paradoxically, Path and no Path intermingle in the great adventure of Consciousness; what is achieved must be let go, but nonetheless integrated into our nature to further our journey in the infinity of being.

Transformation and Mutation of Consciousness

For most spiritual schools the realisation of Pure being is the ultimate aim of life. In fact, many sages have attained this height but unfortunately at the expense of Creation which is either denied or neglected. The outcome is that Life in manifestation is undermined. To my knowledge, more than any other thinker, Sri Aurobindo has reinstated the creative value of Life and excels in presenting a complete map of the universe with its many planes, stages, gradations and worlds, a ladder of being which has inspired and influenced many trends of modern philosophy and transpersonal psychology. Sri Aurobindo in his *Life Divine* explores, as a meticulous scientist, the creative process of Evolution which, though hidden in its primary stages, reveals itself to be the expression of a divine plan.

Our Earth is not the result of a material process or nebulous formation, but takes its origin in the divine consciousness. Understanding this truth is of capital importance to give a direction to our present-day humanity, either lost in the maze of materialism, consumerism, and robotization or else influenced by sages like Buddha, Shankara, Sri Maharshi, and others, whose exclusive vision is set on the transcendental. Definitely, Sri Aurobindo and J. Krishnamurti are a challenge to our modern times, they give us the right perspective by proposing a change of consciousness: the only solution to resolve mankind's unprecedented predicament and not an escape into a cloudy euphoria.

In his *Early Writings*, Krishnamurti draws a metaphysical account of the universe and the place of the individual in the scheme of creation not unlike Sri Aurobindo:

Life is creation, and Nature conceals Life - that is, everything that is in manifestation conceals life in itself. When that life in Nature develops and becomes concentrated in the individual, then Nature has fulfilled itself. The whole destiny and function of Nature is to

create the individual who is self-conscious, (...), who knows that he is an entity in himself, conscious and separate. (...) To the separate individual, life becomes subject and object, but the end of life, the fulfilment of life, is to realize the totality of the whole -objectiveless, subjectiveless being - which is pure life. (...). In him is all potentiality, and his task is to realize that totality in the subjective; that is, in his own consciousness. (*Early Writings*, Vol. 4 : 96-97)

For Sri Aurobindo the concealment of Spirit (that Krishnamurti calls Life in this quotation) by Nature is a strategic maneuver for the playful joy of Hide and Seek, of self-oblivion and self-discovery of the Eternal in time. Without it, the ignorant separate individual would never have been born:

That purpose for which all this exclusive concentration we call the Ignorance is necessary, is to trace the cycle of self-oblivion and self-discovery for the joy of which the Ignorance is assumed in Nature by the secret spirit. (CWSA 21: 612)

Both sages confer ultimate value to Creation imbedded in the source of Pure Being. While Krishnamurti sketches the main principles, without going into details, Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga makes it the core of his Spiritual philosophy giving it a thorough and extensive development, of which his remarkable book *The Life Divine* is a testimony.

According to Krishnamurti, it is neither by law, nor government, nor control of the environment that we will obtain a lasting peace and harmony but by a change of consciousness, which he also calls the mutation of the mind. But can thought, the instrument of mind, produce that transformation?

The 'me', which is the outcome of an identified thought — I am tall, English, Catholic, so on — cannot have an insight, as long as it is a conditioned intelligence through specific relative, psychological data stored in the brain. The problem is that the conditioned individual persists in believing that knowledge will somehow bring enlightenment. But the 'me', being a

creation of thought, cannot evolve and reach heaven, for the 'me' is an illusion! It is this very understanding that provokes an insight which in turn initiates a transformation of consciousness.

Therefore, the 'me' cannot trigger a mutation of consciousness. In a dialogue between David Bohm and Krishnamurti, recorded in *The Ending of Time*, both agreed that self-centredness cannot fathom the immensity of life which, according to Krishnamurti, is the expression of something even greater than and beyond the universe, which he calls the 'Ground'. In other words, the 'Ground' is the source of all things and is completely beyond the reach of thought.

Krishnamurti points out that when we search for truth, our limited self or ego reduces everything to thoughts, ideas and abstractions. Furthermore, notions like Atman, God, the Ultimate or Absolute, etc., whether true or not, are reduced to conceptual thinking and because they are only the replica of thought, an image of the real, they do not change the inner core of the individual!

Continuing the discussion with Bohm, he concludes that after all this time, regardless of the countless gurus and teachings, mankind has not fundamentally changed, we are still caught in self-centredness! We talk of divine wisdom, but remain caught in the pettiness of our daily affairs! This is a typical contradiction that the ego is unawarely caught in. It seems that unconsciously the ego resists the confrontation of an ultimate change of consciousness while conceptually embracing the idea of transformation! In fact, the ego hates change and even if we complain, we actually strive for continuity however mediocre our present situation may be!

For transformation to occur, we must feel it as a deep yearning, an urgency, an imperative, arising from what Krishnamurti calls '*creative discontentment*' and Sri Aurobindo, '*the divine call*', '*Adesh*', which requires

at the same time a letting go or a surrendering of our petty self. Otherwise, it is the 'me' who prays, meditates and goes to the temple! The very awareness of the problem is its solution. But the awareness has to be direct and acted upon. Only when the 'me' dissolves through insight or awareness, the Source, the Ground of being is.

The ending of thought is the beginning of that essence. (...). It must cease for the essence to be." (*Krishnamurti's Notebook: 57*)

Krishnamurti distinguishes modification from mutation. Modification is a change within the same pattern without altering the inner content. We may be violent, for example, and practice non-violence. While 'practicing' being non-violent, actual violence still lies repressed in the subconscious. The outer form, our behavior, appears peaceful while the inner core of violence is still present. Only the form has changed but not the essence. For example, a business man takes the robe of a sannyasin and believes that he has become spiritual! A society which changes its outer structures and laws to ameliorate the economic conditions of life without altering the greed in the human heart would have modified its outer form without touching the source of this economic unbalance caused by the general greed.

Whereas mutation is a real change or transformation produced by going to the inner core of the problem and eliminating it altogether. That is why mutation of mind and self-knowledge go hand in hand. A new mind can only arise from the ashes of the old mind, symbolically like the Phoenix, therefore it is through the penetrating light of pure awareness that the 'me' can be dissolved. That new egoless mind is itself the Ground, the reservoir of Goodness, which can lead mankind to perfect harmony, love and beauty. I feel, that is what Krishnamurti meant by Mutation, the death of the ego with all its content which, allows a new consciousness to emerge aligned to the Ground. In fact, he defines the true individual as indivisible, whole and without hiatus, a universal-being.

Sri Aurobindo tackles the issue of mutation, transmutation or transformation in a different manner than Krishnamurti, apart from some similarities concerning the dissolution of the ego and the meeting with the ultimate ground of Being. According to Sri Aurobindo, all the steps of evolution are elicited by Nature (*Prakriti*) or Cosmic intelligence for a definite purpose and what seems to be an illusion (*Maya*) is, in a wider view or in the perspective of the unfolding design of the divine plan, a hidden truth. Let us appreciate Sri Aurobindo's own insight into the matter:

The cosmic consciousness and its action will appear no longer as a huge regulated Chance, but as a field of the manifestation; there the Divine is seen as a presiding and pervading Cosmic Spirit who receives all out of the Transcendence and develops what descends into forms that are now an opaque disguise or a baffling half-disguise, but destined to be a transparent revelation. The individual consciousness will recover its true sense and action; for it is the form of a Soul sent out from the Supreme and, in spite of all appearances, a nucleus or nebula in which the Divine Mother-Force is at work for the victorious embodiment of the timeless and the formless Divine in Time and Matter. (CWSA 23: 263)

For example, while after careful analysis we realize the nature of the separate self to be an illusion, Sri Aurobindo alleviates this conclusion by explaining that the ego is a primary self-centred development necessary to consolidate a self-formation in nature. In the evolutionary-process this self-centredness is strategically necessary to overcome the pulling force of unconsciousness and the overpowering force of subconsciousness from which it emerges and threatens to submerge it. Furthermore, the sense of a separate identity allows us to refer all experiences to ourself, which stabilizes the sense of selfhood, necessary to continue our journey as a temporary solo. Wonderful qualities such as strength, courage, self-abnegation, and many others, are acquired because of desire and self-interest that push us to fulfill our ambitions. Even though the ego is

intrinsically false and will have to be surpassed, essential virtues are developed in the vicissitude of life which at a more evolved stage will be converted into Divine value, freed from all egotism.

This is one aspect of the issue. Sri Aurobindo further explains that Nature has evolved out of matter, life and mind, a physical self, a vital self and a mental self which respectively become the physical ego, the vital ego and the mental ego. The configuration of these three parts of our nature is unique to each one of us according to our self-development. In the lower evolution conducted by Nature through our ego, the purpose is to develop a body, a life-force, emotion and mind in order that they become instruments for the accomplishment of the separate self. This formation of a separate self and its development are essential to the divine plan. If we had been created in full knowledge of the truth of being and truth of nature, we would have been 'made' as perfect as a machine! To search and to find our true self, is the whole meaning of living in this world.

This is the first part of the scenario of the divine plan actuated by *Prakriti*, the second part is an evolution of the true individual, the *Purusha*, that we must uncover as it lies hidden in the deepest recesses of our being. Nature works through paradox which the riddle is left for us to decipher: an artificial self, the ego, 'a baffling half-disguise', which hides a divine Self! If we prematurely get rid of the ego by thinking that the world including oneself to be an illusion, we lose the gist, the intricate plot of evolution, and, with it, the true meaning and purpose of our existence on Earth.

This primary evolution of Nature happened to us subconsciously, that is, without being informed of Nature's hidden intentions. It is an evolution unfolding in cosmic Ignorance (Avidya). The next stage in Evolution must evolve in Knowledge (Vidya) with our full participation and awareness.

Obviously, the ego, a product of Nature, continuously reacting to other egos and evolving only within the pattern of the phenomenal world, cannot be the leader of Evolution. Our ego is a mere surface being shaped by the environment! A mutation of consciousness must occur. For this to happen, we must become aware of our deeper self, an interiority beyond the interiority of our introspective mind, which is only the outer looking in. This self, called by Sri Aurobindo the Psychic being, is not the outcome of Nature (*Prakriti*) but is a direct manifestation of the transcendental Spirit, a portion of its very Being.

At the beginning of evolution on Earth, the Soul is in the shape of a divine spark which in time shall grow into a divine flame and become the true Person, the fully evolved psychic being. This Soul is neither the ego nor the body nor the emotions nor the mind; the later are part of a long preparation conducted by Nature to become in time of maturity, through transformation, perfect instruments for the creative expression of the psychic being. In that respect both sages seem to agree about the necessity of that new birth and the coming to the fore of the soul, the psychic being or the true self.

The establishing of that true self is the most difficult important task that lies ahead of us. The ability to hear its faint voice can only be gained by a constant watchfulness, and when once we have caught its whisper, we must act unhesitatingly and uncompromisingly. Thus, we learn to encourage it, to make that voice stronger and more powerful, and so, as times goes on, to make it the one unquestioned and unchallenged ruler of our lives. (J. Krishnamurti, *Self-Preparation*: 38-39)

All must be transitional until a first, though not final, true harmonization is achieved by finding our real centre. For the true central being is the soul, but this being stands back and in most human natures is only the secret witness ... the soul can come forward and control the nature. It is by the coming forward of the

true monarch and his taking up of the reins of government that there can take place a real harmonization of our being and our life. (CWSA 22: 933-934)

The awakening of the psychic being, is the first essential transformation, from there follows the transformation of our physical, vital and mental nature to become perfect instruments of the divine being. Secondly, there must be a descent of the higher spiritual plane of consciousness beyond mind in all parts of our nature to spiritualize them. But this admixture is still not sufficient to assure complete mastery of our lower nature, it must be crowned successively, by the descent of the supramental Force then Consciousness and finally Bliss.

Thus, for the individual consciousness a Force is manifested which can deal sovereignly in it... (CWSA 23: 168)

Only the Supramental Force can transform inconscient Matter and make it a glorious and luminous body of Truth for the final transformation on Earth to assure a divine habitat and blissful living of transfigured humankind. The many transformations disclosed by Sri Aurobindo are very complex for they follow the various stages contained in the Real-Ideas of the Supreme reality which unfold successively in the ripe time. Each stage reveals its hidden meaning and the full meaning of the manifestation will be given to us when we reach the supramental plane.

Many sages have achieved Liberation, leaping into the timeless transcendental reality, not to be confused with the integral Transformation, which is a difficult and long process of transforming all the parts of our nature. Even though one may be liberated, there may remain many anomalies or oddness of behavior, due to the individual's unredeemed nature! Transformation is only a mid-term to further accomplishment. It must be followed by Perfection, for perfection is the creative elan and the true purpose of Creation through our liberated self

and transformed nature. Perfection is infinite and takes ever new forms of beauty, love and goodness. We have reached the verdict of Evolution in a script which never ends, unveiling the reason why Spirit was lodged in the obscurity of Matter. It all started for the mere joy of adventure, of self-discovery, in the seemingly insuperable challenge of transforming darkness into pure Light, the expression of a divine alchemy! Sri Aurobindo humorously points out that our central Being accepted this incredible quest however our ego if asked would never have agreed!

Krishnamurti is a sage of the present for he does not depart from the ego and its resolution. Our civilization, blocked in self-consciousness, cannot go further unless the ego is freed through self-knowledge.

On the other hand, I consider Sri Aurobindo to be the Seer of the future. His spiritual knowledge is not yet accessible for the greater general public. Nonetheless, the divine seed that he has planted on this Earth has already a metamorphic effect. Unaware to most, the world is going through great changes caused by the Supramental descent brought down by Sri Aurobindo. Unknowingly, the individual is pushed to change by the supramental Force acting in the subconscious mind.

Krishnamurti frees us from the negative first phase of evolution by uncovering the illusionary basis of the ego's becoming, and Sri Aurobindo enlightens us on the stages of consciousness above the mind once the ego is conquered. Krishnamurti gives a fatal blow to our conditioning, Sri Aurobindo offers a vision of the adventure of consciousness which remains to be discovered. (Dominique Schmidt, *A New Humanity*: 3)

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