

## SRI AUROBINDO'S SYNTHESIS OF YOGA: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Pankaj Srivastava

*General fellow (I.C.P.R.), Department of Philosophy, Panjab University, Chandigarh*

*Author's Note: This research paper is an attempt to make intelligible Sri Aurobindo's conception of Integral Yoga and critically examine how a synthesis of different dimensions of yoga is possible. Yoga is not a homogeneous term. Rather it is the generic one for the various paths of self-realization or is a method of gradual transmutation of consciousness from the lower level to the higher level.*

The central question of all philosophies is: what is reality? Since human beings have come into existence as self-conscious beings they have addressed this very pertinent question. But the answer to this question still remains an enigma if it is merely explored at the theoretical level. In India, philosophy is not merely a speculative deliberation. Rather its main concern is how transformation is possible at the level of consciousness, so that human beings realize the nature of reality. Almost in all philosophical traditions and particularly in Indian philosophy, many attempts have been made not only to understand theoretically but also to realize practically the nature of reality. That is why in every system of Indian philosophy (darśan), theory (siddhānt) and practice (vayvahār or ācharan) complement each other. Life is an activity and without taking recourse to action, it is not possible to reach understanding in its true sense. Therefore, much emphasis has been laid on practice, and the practice to realize the nature of reality is known as yoga.

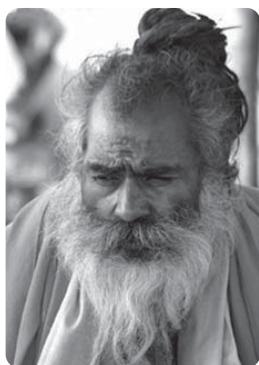
Practices of yoga vary from school to school in different yogic traditions. The term 'yoga' refers to a multitude of yogic paths and orientations with contrasting theoretical frameworks, and occasionally with even divergent goals. For example, the ideal of Raja yoga is to realize one's true identity as the transcendental Self which stands eternally apart from the Nature (Prakṛiti), whereas the ultimate aim of Jñāna yoga is to identify the individual self with supreme Self, and the ultimate concern of Bhakti yoga is to attain love-participation in the beloved Lord. Raja yoga operates on the basis of dualist metaphysics that distinguishes between the many transcendental selves and the Nature (Prakṛiti), but the metaphysics of Jñāna yoga is strictly non-dualistic. In Jñāna yoga, the term 'yoga' is understood as the union of the individual self (Jīvā ātman) with the supreme Self (Param ātman). However, the notion of union has a great influence on the tradition of Vedānta, but it does not fit in the system of Raja yoga. In Pātañjali's Yoga sutra, there is no mention of union with transcendental Reality, even it is contrary to Pātañjali's metaphysics which strictly separates the transcendental Self from the Nature (Prakṛiti) and its products. Raja yoga approaches self-realization primarily through transformation of mind, whereas

Hatha yoga mainly focuses on transformation of the body and has as its primary concern to create an immortal body. While Jñāna yoga is a path of self-realization through the means of discriminative wisdom (viveka), Bhakti yoga is a way to be in communion with the Lord by directing one's emotion toward the Lord. Karma yoga is a path of salvation from doer-ship (kartā bhava—that I am doing). It is a journey of action without a sense of attachment for its fruits. The sole aim of Laya yoga is the total dissolution of the different functions of mind into the ocean of the transcendental Self through contemplation and meditation. Similarly, in the non-theistic schools like Buddhism and Jainism there are methods and techniques to attain the ultimate ground of existence.

Even though there are various types and forms of yoga within the yogic tradition, all of them share one common objective, that is, the dissolution of one's ego. This universal aim remains the same irrespective of whether it is achieved through identifying the individual self with the supreme Self (Jñāna yoga), through total self-surrender to the Lord (Bhakti yoga), or by performing action without a sense of attachment for its fruits (Karma yoga).

There are various forms of yoga, which have great influence and impact on the spiritual tradition of India. These include Jñāna yoga, Bhakti yoga, Karma yoga, Rāja yoga, Hatha yoga and Mantra yoga. Though some schools of yoga mention Laya yoga and Kūndlini yoga as independent forms of yoga, these forms of yoga are closely related to Hatha yoga and they can be treated as an integral part of the same. One may notice that in the Sanskrit scriptures many compound words that end with yoga in fact, do not represent any independent schools of yoga, rather they refer simply to a disciplined application or practice. For example buddhi-yoga means the practice of discriminative knowledge, and saṅyāsa-yoga denotes the practice of renunciation, dhyāna-yoga means (practice of meditation), samādhi-yoga refers to the practice of ecstasy, guru-yoga means a practice that has a spiritual teacher as its focus, nāda-yoga is a practice involving inner sound, and kriyā-yoga is a practice of ritual action.

In this regard, it is necessary to mention that there are yogins whose primary interest is to gain some paranormal power (siddhī) rather than enlightenment or ultimate transcendence. Their ways are more related with magical practices than with psycho-spiritual training. There is a strong element of magic that can be seen in the ancient yogic tradition, especially in Tantric practices. In India, yogins have always esteemed as a magus those who are endowed with paranormal powers to bless and curse effectively. Modern scholars of yoga often dismiss this para-psychological dimension of yoga, however, it is integral aspect of yoga and Patanjali devoted a complete chapter (vibhūtipāth) to paranormal powers (siddhis) in his yoga sutra. Therefore, yoga has different levels of experience including the level of paranormal powers, but if one can go beyond that level of experience, then only the real aim of yoga would be achieved.



*Holyman at Ardhkumbh Mela (picturesindia.com)*

Ultimate reality can be viewed in different ways. The seers (Rishis) of the Vedic age said, "Being is one although sages call it by different names."<sup>1</sup> It is not an abstract principle devoid of contents. It has clear contents. Different truth seekers have envisioned the same Truth from different perspectives and attributed to it different names and forms. Bhaktas have perceived it as a personal God, while Jñānis have seen it as the impersonal truth. Some have experienced it as the totality of all that exists while others have envisaged it as the supreme value of equality and liberty. Innumerable experiments have been made in India to reveal the ultimate truth. India has been the land of yogis. Here all conceivable dimensions have been explored for unveiling the nature and purpose of Being. Each perspective highlights certain aspects of the ultimate reality and ignores other aspects. Though each perspective has some value and importance, no perspective can be said to manifest the concrete fullness of Being.

The yogi's ultimate concern is to search sincerely for the common meeting ground towards which all the ways lead. There is an urgency to synthesize all the possible paths of harmonious and creative ways of life that lead to the ultimate truth. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is a marvelous achievement in this connection. It is an attempt to synthesize the traditional systems of yoga. It assimilates into itself the truths embedded in them but drops their partial extreme tendencies. It tries to mobilize the spiritual resources of man in solving his most crucial problems—the problem of human unity, peace and progress.

Sri Aurobindo says, "the aim of this yoga is, first, to enter into the divine consciousness by merging into it the separative ego (incidentally, in doing so one finds one's true individual self which is not limited, vain and selfish human ego but a portion of the Divine) and, secondly, to bring down the supramental consciousness on earth to transform mind, life and body. All else can be only a result of these two aims, not the primary objects of yoga."<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, Integral yoga is an appeal to spiritual impulse of man for active participation in the evolution of super consciousness on the basis of self-integration.

### Different Levels of Integration in Integral Yoga

Integral Yoga is a complete unification of body, mind and life to attain creative life in harmony with the ultimate ground of existence. It is a balanced and creative growth of the whole personality for employment in the cosmic evolution for the constructive development of the latent possibilities of one's nature. Integral Yoga warns against extreme tendencies, which misleads people into lopsided developments. There are people who over emphasize the development of body; on the other hand, there are people who over-exercise mind at the expense of neglecting the body. There are people who ignore the social and humanistic values of life, and on the other hand, there are people who get enmeshed in these affairs without any idea of the eternal. Integral Yoga sets forth the concept of the full flowering of the total individual as a dynamic center of the universal spirit. It emphasizes the need for the balanced integration of the physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical, social and religious aspects of the human personality.

Integral Yoga aims at dynamic and complete self-integration. There are three essential modes of this dynamic and complete self-integration: psychic integration, cosmic integration, and existential integration.

Psychic integration means man's union with the deepest power and potentialities of the human psyche. It is a harmonization of the different aspects of the human psyche. There are conflicts between the conscious and unconscious mind in the human psyche. Indeed, instinctual drives, impulse and urges are inherent and deep-rooted in the unconscious mind. Against these there is the rational will of the conscious mind, which is shaped by the social and cultural forces of the community to which the individual belongs. The unconscious is the source of limitless energy. Besides the sexual impulses, it also includes the vital impetus to grow and develop. It is the center of repressed desires and wishes as well as of original creative urges. The unconscious is indeed the region where the sexual, sublime and holy dwell side by side. Psychic integration is an attempt to reconcile these seemingly opposite phenomena and to discover the deeper principle of one's own existence. This is the principle of the higher Self. It does not encourage the one-sided growth of intellect at the cost of emotions, or of sentiments at the sacrifice of judgment. Psychic integration channelizes the hidden energy which lies in the unconscious mind for the constructive and harmonious development of the human psyche.

The psyche cannot be fully integrated without the realization of its relationship to nature and society. According to Sri Aurobindo, the individual psyche and the cosmos are inseparable aspects of one concrete reality. The fundamental reality is neither the psyche alone nor the cosmos but the psyche-cosmos continuum. It is the neither the isolated self nor the independent universe, but the self in the universe or the universe for the self. It is atman-brahman (Thou art that or I am that). The integral yogi tries to maintain the total

relationship with the environment including society and nature. Integral Yoga emphasizes the harmony with nature which generates a feeling of kinship with the animal and plant kingdoms. Mankind is not only closely related to other beings (plants and animals) but also we are dependent on them for our existence or Being. In fact, a person kills the spirit within himself by killing animals and destroying trees. By disturbing the ecological system of Nature, we create division and discord with our own inner being. A feeling of oneness and a reverence for all are indeed vital for the holistic growth of human personality. Being compassionate to others, we can integrate ourselves with all (animals, plants and other human beings). The more we are concerned and care for our fellow beings, the more we enlarge our own being.

However we rationally and emotionally may convince ourselves that there should be social and cosmic harmony, there seems to be a fundamental and irreconcilable discrepancy between self and society, between psyche and cosmos. But it could be resolved by the realization of the timeless Source of the cosmic flow of the Eternal which is dynamically in evolution in history. The ultimate unity of the psyche and the cosmos lies hidden in the timeless depth of Being. It is only through an existential integration with the timeless Being that the social and cosmological harmony would be revealed. Thus we see that the final step in the integral self-development is existential integration, i.e. integration with the ultimate ground of existence which is timeless. The process of self-adjustment to the psyche and the cosmos can be consummated only through contact with the Eternal.

According to Sri Aurobindo a person has many sides to his personality, each of which is to be expressed, but in view of their discordant movements, each comes in the way of others when they are expressed through mind. This is a big problem in the way of constructive development of the whole personality. In a letter to a disciple,<sup>3</sup> Sri Aurobindo identified a variety of different personalities that expressed themselves in this person's life. These included a vital personality, a psycho-vital personality, a personality of a poet, musician and seeker of beauty, a mental-vital personality, a physical-mental personality, and a mental-emotional personality. His vital personality aimed at success and became engaged with it after getting it, ignoring other aspects of his personality. The vital personality sought engagement of a deeper kind and suggested that it would be well to give up the other personalities. The psycho-vital personality was that of a vaishnava that wanted the Divine (Krisna), Bhakti and Ananda. The personality of the poet and musician tried to satisfy its emotional urges through works of art. The mental-vital personality was approving of Vairāgyā and Nirvāna and insisted on a grim struggle of Tapasyā when it saw that the vital personality stood in the way. The physical-mental personality was an extrovert and skeptical. The mental-emotional personality had strong belief in the Divine, Yoga, Bhakti and Guruvada. We see from this example how each of us is composed of many different personalities with differing tendencies, often in conflict with one another.

Integral Yoga is an attempt to harmonize these personalities and to bring about a complete development of the whole personality of a person. It does not encourage the growth of one type of personality at the cost of other types. But this harmonization cannot be done from outside, and it cannot be done by the ordinary mind and vital mind because they are sure to bungle the affair. It can be done only from within by the spirit, who is the ultimate controller. Sri Aurobindo emphasizes that each of these personalities has a truth and the truth of one can be harmonized with the truth of the others. For example, there is a truth in Nirvana. Indeed Nirvana is nothing but the peace and freedom of spirit which can exist in itself, be there world or no world, world order or world disorder. Bhakti and the love for divine also have a truth. It is the truth of the divine love and Ananda. The will for Tapasyā has a truth in it—the truth of the spirit's mastery over its members. The musicians and poets stand for a truth; it is the truth of the expression of the spirit through beauty. There is a truth behind the mental asserter and there is a truth even behind the mental skeptic. Even behind the two vital personalities there is a truth—the truth of the possession of the inner and the outer world not by the ego but by the Divine. That is the harmonization for which Integral Yoga stands. It cannot be achieved by any outward arrangement. It can only be achieved by going inside and looking, willing and acting from the psychic and the spiritual centers.

Before Integral Yoga, the Bhagavad Gītā made a magnificent synthesis of all the aspects of personality and prepared a way for harmonious growth of the holistic human personality into the fullness and perfection of the Divine. The Gītā in its effective and powerful attempt of synthesis incorporated many modes of human personality and placed them in various sorts of yogas such as Samkhya-yoga, Jñāna yoga, Karma yoga, Rāja-yoga and Bhakti-yoga.

Action, knowledge and love cured of their treacherous tendencies must be blended and fused into a single movement of self-offering to the Supreme. The impersonality of the Brahman and divine personality, the silence of the immutable and the ceaseless flux of the cosmic movement, the beatific state of liberation and the continued performance of mundane action—these were some of the most outstanding reconciliations effected by the Bhagavad Gita at a crucial stage of the spiritual culture of India. It is worth noticing that this synthesis was achieved, not by any religious or philosophical deliberations, but by an embracing and unifying spiritual vision, and it stood unparalleled in comprehensiveness in the annals of ancient mystical achievement. Sri Rishabhchand, in his evaluation of the Gītā, says:

Gita's synthesis had registered a magnificent success even in the midst of an apparent failure;—it had outlined an ideal, the shining ideal of a harmonious perfection and divine fulfillment of man, and left it as a seed, in the terrestrial atmosphere to germinate and grow and prepare its future efflorescence in the evolving life of humanity; and if it failed at all, it was because man was not



evolved enough for such a global spiritual endeavor: his mind, life and body needed a long individual preparation and development, an intense churning and psychic conversion and correlation before they could consent to enter into the harmony of the integral orientation.<sup>4</sup>

Sri Krishna in the Bhāgavad Gītā says, “A yogi is greater than the ascetic, greater than the empiricist and greater than the furtive worker. Therefore, O Arjuna, in all circumstances be a yogi.”<sup>5</sup> It implies that a true yogi is a person who is dynamically united with the divine in the field of action. In fact, yoga is an act dedicated to the cosmic purpose of evolution.

The Gītā's synthesis prepared a background for the development of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. This dynamic conception of yoga inscribed in the Gītā has been carried to its full logical development in the Integral Yoga (Pūrṇa yoga). When a yogi's union with his Ultimate Being becomes balanced and complete, the inner transformation takes place and the yogi becomes a dynamic personality. Integral vision of the truth turns him into creator of new values. It inspires him to participate in life with a new sense of urgency and a new grasp of its meaning.

### Cosmic Evolution and the Participation of the Yogi

Under the influence of divine wisdom, the earth has evolved from matter to plant life and then to animal life. The evolution from animal to mankind is not the final stage in the cosmic evolution. Indeed mankind is under the sway of dark and ignorant forces and that is the reason for human suffering. Diseases and death are signs of this imperfection. Sri Rishabhchandra very beautifully writes,

if we look with a searching and dispassionate eye into the heart of Nature's universal working in the material world, we perceive that all life is Yoga, a slowly, spirally, precariously evolving stupendous Yoga of Nature aiming at a progressive reproduction and revelation of the divine Image in her own terms. From the incipient surge of energy which sprinkles the space with suns and stars and the emergent life-sparkle which makes the earth smile with verdure, and the mobile wonder and variety of animal creation, its developing gamut of sensibilities and range of expressive faculties and organs, to the phenomenal growth of reason and imagination and intuition in man, his fine, symmetrical body, his rich heart of feelings and emotions, his intrepid, adventurous spirit, his powers of foresight and invention, and above all, his divination of the Godhead in himself and his persistent, though vaguely felt and very imperfectly realised, aspiration for its infinity and immortality, purity and freedom and blissful harmony, is nothing but a mounting travail, a purposive endeavour, a long and labouring Yoga of nature for the unveiled manifestation of the one whom she holds secret in

herself, and an overt, constant, dynamic union with Him in her terrestrial play. Nature is not inconscient and blind, nor her universal strivings a senseless gamble of caprice and chance and a purposeless expenditure of force – she is big with God.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore nature has its teleological function in her every act. According to Sri Aurobindo,

But what Nature aims at for the mass in a slow evolution, Yoga effects for the individual by a rapid revolution. It works by a quickening of all her energies, a sublimation of all her faculties. While she develops the spiritual life with difficulty and has constantly to fall back from it for the sake of her lower realisations, the sublimated force, the concentrated method of Yoga can attain directly and carry with it the perfection of the mind and even, if she will, the perfection of the body. Nature seeks the Divine in her own symbols: Yoga goes beyond Nature to the Lord of Nature, beyond universe to the Transcendent and can return with the transcendent light and power, with the fiat of the Omnipotent.<sup>7</sup>

In this sense, Integral Yoga leads not only individuals but also Nature to evolutionary transformation. The conscious cooperation of the integral yogi with the Divine will accelerate the pace of Nature's evolution. Integral Yoga tries to re-establish the original Vedic ideal of participation in this world as an instrument of the internal divine being. The emancipation from the bonds of the cosmic drive is an incomplete ideal. It is not enough to attain self-realization. There is a much nobler goal of human effort and that is to achieve the manifestation of the Divine in life. The light and power of divine Self-awareness must be applied in the spheres of daily life and social action. It is not enough to gain liberation from the unconscious Nature; there is a much more sublime goal of human endeavor and that is to liberate Nature herself in the growing of creative urge concealed in her breast.

### The Path of Ascent and Descent

Integral Yoga emphasizes the need for supplementing ascent by descent, negation by a deeper and fuller affirmation. Firstly, an integral yogi climbs the path of ascent. It means that he rises to the height of inward illumination. Having reached the height of his vision, an integral yogi attempts to express the glories of the eternal Divine Being in the flux of time. An integral yogi, having glimpsed the creative light of Eternal Being in the higher state of consciousness, descends to the physical and social sphere with an aim to reconstruct human existence in accordance with that light.

Ascent and descent are two aspects of Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo says,

Our yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent; one rises to higher and higher levels of consciousness but at the same time one brings down their power not only into mind and life but in the end even into the body. And the highest of these levels, the one at which it aims is the supermind. Only when that can be brought down is the divine transformation possible in the earth consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

The systems of yoga such as Jñāna yoga, Rāja yoga and Bhakti yoga make a sort of ladder by which one can climb up to a higher level of consciousness and achieve spiritual enlightenment, liberation from this world of bondage. They take body, life and mind as rungs of the ladder and by over-stepping these phases of life one can attain spiritual enlightenment. But the uniqueness of Integral Yoga lies in the fact that it does not take body, mind and life merely as a means to rise up to the highest peak, but also as a means of bringing down and expressing the glory of spirit in life. In Integral Yoga, body, mind and life must be prepared as channels of expression of higher divine values in the world.

### Dynamic Union with Being

In Integral Yoga the union with the divine is dynamic in nature. An integral yogi is not a passive spectator of Samkhya philosophy. He is an active and creative participant in this world. He actively works for the spiritual upliftment of the whole society. Indeed, he accelerates the cosmic evolution with the light of the Divine.

The main emphasis of Patanjali's yoga sutra is on the functioning of mind, and from the very second sutra it defines yoga as "a complete cessation of thought waves in mind." It recommends the methods of bodily posture (āsana) and breathing control (prāṇāyāma), but all these exercises are for its central purpose of mental calmness and equilibrium. Even prior to bodily posture, it prescribes ethico-religious training which includes two steps: 'yama' and 'niyama,' These are preliminary steps for the fifth important step, which is self-withdrawal of the senses from their external objects. It is the methodological device of temporary setting aside the external world with a view to inquire the sustained energy of spirit. It is the method of putting the whole external world into brackets without paying attention to the question whether the world is real or unreal and without using any judgment that concern spatio-temporal existence. It is a shifting of consciousness from this world to the supra-mundane world. It is to be noticed that these five steps aim at transcending the world of false identification and illusory projection in a deep search for the unconditional reality. Here Patanjali's main stress is on shifting of one's consciousness from this spatio-temporal world by going within in search of deeper realization. Now in order to achieve the ultimate goal of self-realization, prātyāhara has to be supplemented by three inner processes, namely concentration (dhāranā), meditation (dhyāna) and self-integration (samādhi).

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga fully appreciates the perfection of the technique of Patanjali's Raja yoga, but it points out that the methods of Raja yoga are tailored for the static self-realization of the Self in its pure transcendence. They are not apt for its purpose of dynamic self-identification with the divine. Raja yoga emphasizes the methods of mental tranquillization as a means of attaining static self-realization. But Integral Yoga emphasizes active participation in life simultaneously with the processes of self-purification and mental serenity. Social, cultural and humanitarian activities pursued in a self-offering to the divine are an indispensable adjunct to the inward process of concentration and meditation.

The integral yogi has two forms of being, an inward being and an outward being. Inwardly he is integrated with the ultimate ground of existence, while outwardly he is engaged in all sorts of activities for the welfare of humanity and the spiritual upliftment of people. It is to be noticed that traditional yogis in India have always given much importance to the notion of direct union with the Eternal. Hinduism calls it the state of Sāmādhi. Buddhism calls it Nirvana. But the Integral Yoga maintains that this union with the Ultimate Being is only a part of the realization and not the ultimate goal of the spiritual journey. In Integral Yoga, after attaining what may be called "waking union with Divine," the integral yogi brings down the super-consciousness into the heart of the physical consciousness. As a result, the barrier between the natural and the supra-natural disappears.

### Collective Liberation

In Indian philosophical systems (theistic or non-theistic), the notions of personal liberation and collective liberation find their place. Many truth seekers begin their spiritual journey with the aim to attain personal salvation. Once they attain liberation for themselves, they live in complete isolation from this world. They do not concern themselves with the social, historical or evolutionary life of humanity. In Buddhism this is known as the ideal of the 'Pratyekabuddha.'<sup>10</sup> This is the ultimate aim of the Hinayana Buddhism. In Patanjali's<sup>11</sup> Yoga the spiritual ideal is conceived as transcendental loneliness. It is the condition of self-alienation from the world of action and reaction, pain and pleasure. The Vedanta has conceived the ultimate goal as absorption in the eternal 'Brahman-laya.'<sup>12</sup> It assumes that the world of plurality and multiplicity is illusion (Māyā). H.D. Bhattacharya writes "Buddhists have conceived the absolute as an indescribable state that is beyond both existence and non-existence."<sup>13</sup> Thus we see that the dominant schools of yoga in medieval India ignored the value of active participation in this world. They indeed over-emphasized the notion of renunciation and ascetic life. Unlike these ideals, in ancient India, the Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas glorified the active participation in this world. The Upanishads declared that the world came into existence out of the fullness of joy

in the heart of Being. The Puranas proclaimed that the highest goal of life was to act in this world, true to kindred of time and eternity. Integral Yoga tries to reestablish the original Indian ideal of participation in this world as an instrument of the Eternal.

The higher ideal of the spiritual journey involves the collective liberation of humanity. In Vedanta it has been known as 'Sarva-mukti.' In Buddhism this is the ideal of the Bodhisattva. This is the supreme ideal of Mahayana-Buddhism. According to Buddhist stories (Jātak Kathās), after attaining salvation, the Buddha firmly dedicated himself to the service of humanity and the spiritual upliftment of the society. This happened with Shankarachāryā also. After attaining salvation (muktī), he established four pīthas at Kanchī, Dwarikā, Badrināth and Puri for the upliftment of Hindu society. In Christianity also there is a notion of the kingdom of heaven on earth that probably corresponds to what we call the collective liberation of humanity. It is believed in Christianity that the natural order of existence is full of evil, sin and consequent suffering. It is dominated and ruled by Satan. But Christ had living faith in the supreme God—the heavenly Father, who would eventually subdue the evil influence of Satan. Those who follow the teaching of Christ and surrender themselves to God would be able to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom of heaven means the blissful state of consciousness. It implies that Christianity believes in the principle of self-sacrifice for the sake of cosmic welfare. Christ is the ideal of self-sacrifice and vicarious suffering. The concept of collective liberation acquires new height in the teaching of Bhagavad Gītā. We have already noticed that for Christianity and Buddhism the cosmic process is valuable only in so far as it eventually leads to the transcendent. It has no intrinsic value of its own.

Christianity declares that the Kingdom of God is radically different from this world, which is sinful. But the Bhagavad Gītā clearly asserts that the cosmic process has an intrinsic value and significance. Indeed, there is no inherent contradiction between the cosmic process and the transcendence. This natural world is a meaningful sphere through which the Divine manifests itself. Collective liberation does not mean destruction of natural and social values of this world but it only means transformation of these values into spiritually illuminated force. Following the spirit of the Gītā, the Integral Yoga tries to transform nature and human consciousness into divine consciousness, which is hidden in the heart of Nature and human beings. The roots of Integral Yoga could be traced from the ancient teachings of the Vedas and the Puranas. The seers of the Vedas made sacrifices (yajna) to the gods for the manifestation of the divine glory in their collective social existence. According to Sri Aurobindo "It is a continuous self-offering of the human to the divine and continuous descent of divine into the human."<sup>14</sup> That was the motivating factor in the Vedic sacrifice.

In conclusion, we may say that Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga claims to unfold the higher levels of consciousness and to manifest the hidden divinity lying within us. In the journey from the lower level of consciousness to the higher

level of consciousness, a yogi is always dynamically united with Nature as a creative being. The integral yogi is an active participant in this world who accelerates the functioning of the cosmic evolution. Through being an administrator, leader, freedom-fighter, editor, poet, philosopher and ultimately yogi, Sri Aurobindo has shown by his example the nature of a multidimensional integrated personality, and has demonstrated the validity and possibility of Integral Yoga in his practical life.

### References and Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Rg Veda 10,14.

<sup>2</sup>*The Integral Yoga: Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Method of Practice* (Selected Letters of Sri Aurobindo, compiled by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 2003, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *Letters On Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1971, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Rishbhachand, *Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup>*Srimad Bhagvad Gita*, 6, 46.

<sup>6</sup>Rishbhachand, *Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1953, pp. 9-10.

<sup>7</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1973, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *The Riddle of This World*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1951, pp. 2-3.

<sup>9</sup>*Patanjali Yoga Sutra* translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, published by Sri Ramkrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai, 2003, p. 1.

<sup>10</sup>S. B. Das Gupta, *Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1950, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup>Swami Sivanand, *Raja Yoga*, Rishikesh: The Yoga Vedanta Forest University 1950, pp. 371-372.

<sup>12</sup>Swami Madhavanand Mayavati, *Viveka Chudamani of Sankaracharya*, Advaita Ashram, 1944, p. 160.

<sup>13</sup>H.D Bhattacharya, "Early Buddhism" in 'the History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western' edited by Dr Radhakrishna, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957, p. 166.

<sup>14</sup>Sri Aurobindo, *On the Veda*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1956, p. 7.