

Chapter One

The Jivatman in the Integral Yoga

The Jivatman or Individual Self

By Jivatma we mean the individual self. Essentially it is one self with all others, but in the multiplicity of the Divine it is the individual self, an individual centre of the universe — and it sees everything in itself or itself in everything or both together according to its state of consciousness and point of view.

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The self, Atman, is in its nature either transcendent or universal (Paramatma, Atma); when it individualises and becomes a central being, it is then the Jivatman. The Jivatman feels his oneness with the universal but at the same time his central separateness as a portion of the Divine.

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The individual Self is usually described as a portion of the Transcendent and cosmic Self—in the higher and subtler ranges of the consciousness it knows itself as that, but in the lower where the consciousness is more and more clouded it identifies itself with surface forms of personality, creations of Prakriti, and becomes unaware of its divine origin. Self, when one becomes aware of it, is felt as something self-existent and eternal which is not identified with forms of mental, vital and physical personality,— these are only small expressions of its potentialities in Nature. What people call themselves now is only the ego or the mind or the life-force or the body, but that is because they think in the terms of the formations of Prakriti and do not see behind them.

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For the most part the Supreme acts through the Jiva and its

nature and the Jiva and the nature act through the ego and the ego acts through the outer instruments — that is the play of the Ignorance.

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Essentially one Jiva has the same nature as all — but in manifestation each puts forth its own line of Swabhava.

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The Jivatma is above all planes. It has no fixed form or colour, though it may represent itself in a form.

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The Jivatma has always calm and peace — it is the nature (prakriti) that is not quiet.

The Jivatman, the Psychic Being and Prakriti

The Spirit is the Atman, Brahman, Essential Divine.

When the one Divine manifests its ever inherent multiplicity, this essential Self or Atman becomes for that manifestation the Jivatman, the central being who presides from above over the evolution of its personalities and terrestrial lives here, but is itself an eternal portion of the Divine and prior to the terrestrial manifestation — *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*.

In this lower manifestation, *aparā prakṛti*, this eternal portion of the Divine appears as the soul, a spark of the Divine Fire, supporting the individual evolution, supporting the mental, vital and physical being. The psychic being is the spark growing into a Fire, evolving with the growth of the consciousness. The psychic being is therefore evolutionary, not like the Jivatman, prior to the evolution.

But man is not aware of the self or Jivatman, he is aware only of his ego, or he is aware of the mental being which controls the life and the body. But more deeply he becomes aware of his soul or psychic being as his true centre, the Purusha in the heart; the psychic is the central being in the evolution, it proceeds from and represents the Jivatman, the eternal portion of the

Divine. When there is the full consciousness, the Jivatman and the psychic being join together.

The ego is a formation of Nature; but it is not a formation of physical nature alone, therefore it does not cease with the body. There is a mental and vital ego also.

The base of the material consciousness here is not only the Ignorance, but the Inconscience — that is, the consciousness is involved in form of matter and energy of matter. It is not only the material consciousness but the vital and the mental too that are separated from the Truth by the Ignorance.

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The body is not the individual Self — it is the basis of the external personality or of the physical self, if you like so to express it; but that is not the individual Self. The individual Self is the central being (Jivatma) manifesting in the lower nature as the psychic being — it is directly a portion of the Divine.

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The soul, representative of the central being, is a spark of the Divine supporting all individual existence in Nature; the psychic being is a conscious form of that soul growing in the evolution — in the persistent process that develops first life in matter, mind in life, until finally mind can develop into overmind and overmind into the supramental Truth. The soul supports the nature in its evolution through these grades, but is itself not any of these things.

The lower Nature, *Apara Prakriti*, is this external objective and superficial subjective apparent Nature which manifests all these minds, lives and bodies. The supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti*, concealed behind it is the very nature of the Divine — a supreme Consciousness-Force which manifests the multiple Divine as the Many. These Many are in themselves eternal selves of the Supreme in his supreme Nature, *Para Prakriti*. Here in relation to this world they appear as the Jivatmas supporting the evolution of the natural existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, in the mutable Becoming which is the life of the Kshara (mobile or mutable)

Purusha. The Jiva (= Jivatma) and the creatures, *sarvabhūtāni*, are not the same thing. The Jivatmas really stand above the creation even though in it, the natural existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, are the creatures of Nature. Man, bird, beast, reptile are natural existences, but the individual self in them is not even for a moment characteristically man, bird, beast or reptile; in its evolution it is the same through all these changes, a spiritual being that consents to the play of Nature.

What is original and eternal for ever in the Divine is the Being, what is developed in consciousness, conditions, forces, forms, etc., by the Divine Power is the Becoming. The eternal Divine is the Being, the universe in Time and all that is apparent in it is a Becoming. The eternal Being in its superior nature, Para Prakriti, is at once One and Many; but the eternal Multiplicity of the Divine when it stands behind the created existences, *sarvabhūtāni*, appears as (or as we say, becomes) the Jiva. That is the meaning of the *parā prakṛtir jīvabhūtā*. In the psychic on the other hand there are two aspects, the psychic existence or soul behind and in front the form of individuality it takes in its evolution in Nature.

The soul or psychic is immutable only in the sense that it contains all the possibility of the Divine within it, but this it has to evolve and in its evolution it assumes the form of a developing psychic individual evolving in the manifestation the individual Prakriti and taking part in the evolution. It is the spark of the Divine Fire that grows behind the mind, vital and physical by means of the psychic being until it is able to transform the Prakriti of Ignorance into a Prakriti of Knowledge. This evolving psychic being is not therefore at any time all that the soul or essential psychic existence bears within it; it temporalises and individualises what is eternal in potentiality, transcendent in essence in this projection of the spirit.

The central being is the being which presides over the different births one after the other but is itself unborn, for it does not descend into the being but is above it — it holds together the mental, vital and physical being and all the various parts of the personality and it controls the life either through the mental

being and the mental thought and will or through the psychic, whichever may happen to be most in front or most powerful in action. If it does not exercise its control, then the consciousness is in great disorder and every part of the personality acts for itself so that there is no coherence in the thought, feelings or action.

The psychic is not above, but behind — its seat is behind the heart; its power is not knowledge but an essential or spiritual feeling — it has the clearest sense of the truth and a sort of inherent perception of it which is of the nature of soul-feeling. It is our inmost being and supports all the others, mental, vital, physical, but it is also much veiled by them and has to act upon them as an influence rather than by its sovereign right of direct action; its direct action becomes normal and preponderant only at a high stage of development or by Yoga. It is not the psychic being which, you feel, gives you the intuitions of things to be or warns you against the results of certain actions; that is some part of the inner being, sometimes the inner mental, sometimes the inner vital, sometimes, it may be, the inner or subtle physical Purusha. The inner being — inner mind, inner vital, inner or subtle physical — knows much that is unknown to the outer mind, the outer vital, the outer physical, for it is in a more direct contact with the secret forces of Nature. The psychic is the inmost being of all; a perception of truth which is inherent in the deepest substance of the consciousness, a sense of the good, true, beautiful, the Divine, is its privilege.

The central being — the Jivatman which is not born nor evolves, but presides over the individual birth and evolution — puts forward a representative of himself on each plane of the consciousness. On the mental plane it is the true mental being, *manomaya puruṣa*, on the vital plane the true vital being, *prāṇamaya puruṣa*, on the physical plane the true physical being, *annamaya puruṣa*. Each being therefore is, so long as the Ignorance lasts, centred round his mental, vital or physical Purusha, according to the plane on which he predominantly lives, and that is to him his central being. But the true representative all the time is concealed behind the mind, vital and physical — it is the psychic, our inmost being.

When the inmost knowledge begins to come, we become aware of the psychic being within us and it comes forward and leads the sadhana. We become aware also of the Jivatman, the individual Self or Spirit above the manifestation of which the psychic is the representative here.

The Central Being and the Psychic Being

The central being is above the Adhara — most people are not aware of their central being (Jivatma) — they are aware only of the ego.

The psychic is the soul — it is a portion of the Divine that supports the mind, life and body in the evolution. The psychic gets the Divine's help directly from the Divine.

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The central being is that which is not born, does not evolve, but presides over all the individual manifestation. The psychic is its projection here — for the psychic being is in the evolution and from within supports our whole evolution; it receives the essence of all experience and by that develops the personality Godward.

The Self is at once one in all and many — one in its essence, it manifests also as the individual self which may be described as in Nature an eternal portion of the Divine; in spirit a centre of the manifestation, individual but extending into universality and rising into transcendence.

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It is the central being above the evolution (always the same) that we call the Jivatma — the psychic being is the same in the evolution, it is the spark of the Divine there growing into its full divinity as a portion of the Divine.

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The central being and the soul are both in different ways portions of the Divine. They are in fact two aspects of the same entity,

but one is unevolving above Nature, the other evolves a psychic being in Nature.

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The phrase “central being” in our Yoga is usually applied to the portion of the Divine in us which supports all the rest and survives through death and birth. This central being has two forms — above, it is the Jivatman, our true being, of which we become aware when the higher self-knowledge comes, — below, it is the psychic being which stands behind mind, body and life. The Jivatman is above the manifestation in life and presides over it; the psychic being stands behind the manifestation in life and supports it.

The natural attitude of the psychic being is to feel itself as the child, the son of God, the Bhakta; it is a portion of the Divine, one in essence, but in the dynamics of the manifestation there is always even in identity a difference. The Jivatman, on the contrary, lives in the essence and can merge itself in identity with the Divine; but it too, the moment it presides over the dynamics of the manifestation, knows itself as one centre of the multiple Divine, not as the Parameshwara. It is important to remember this distinction; for, otherwise, if there is the least vital egoism, one may begin to think of oneself as an Avatara or lose balance like Hriday with Ramakrishna.

The Surrender of the Central Being

The central being is that on which all the others depend. If it makes its surrender, that is, renounces its separate fulfilment in order to be an instrument of the Divine, then it is easier for the mental, vital and physical to surrender.

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It [*the central being's surrender to the Divine*] has nothing to do with suitable circumstances. If the will of the central being turns towards union with the Divine, then it renounces its separate fulfilment.

The Central Being after Liberation

What will remain [*after liberation*] is the central being — not the ego. The central being will live in the consciousness of the Divine everywhere and in all other beings also; so it will not have the consciousness of a separate ego but of one centre among many of the Divine Multiplicity.

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On the higher spiritual planes there is no ego, because the oneness of the Divine is felt, but there may be the sense of one's true person or individual being — not ego, but a portion of the Divine.

The Karana Purusha

The Karana Purusha is what is called the central being by us, the Jiva. It stands above the play, supporting it always.

The Jivatman and the *Caitya Puruṣa*

Jivatma is not psychic being — we have fixed on *caitya puruṣa* as the equivalent in Sanskrit of the psychic being. Jivatma is the individual Self — the central being.

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Caitya puruṣa means rather the Purusha in the *cit*, the fundamental (inner) consciousness.

Jiva is the fundamental, or as we call it, the central being. But the fundamental being is not *combined* of the mental, vital, psychic etc., these are only expressions of the Jivatman; the Jivatman itself is self-existent in the Divine; *essential* in its being, it cannot be regarded as a combination of things.

The Jivatman and the Mental Purusha

When the Atman is individualised — i.e. supporting from above the play of individual being, it is called the Purusha or sometimes

the Jivatman. It is the central being. Usually however it is the mental Purusha one first becomes aware of and through that the nature is led. To become aware of the psychic being or the central Purusha is more difficult.

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The mental being within watches, observes and passes judgment on all that happens in you. The psychic does not watch and observe in this way like a witness, but it feels and knows spontaneously in a much more direct and luminous way by the very purity of its own nature and the divine instinct within it, and so, whenever it comes to the front it reveals at once what are the right and what the wrong movements in your nature.

The being of man is composed of these elements — the psychic behind supporting all, the inner mental, vital and physical, and the outer, quite external nature of mind, life and body which is their instrument of expression. But above all is the central being (Jivatman) which uses them all for its manifestation; it is a portion of the Divine Self, but this reality of himself is hidden from the external man who replaces this inmost self and soul of him by the mental and vital ego. It is only those who have begun to know themselves that become aware of their true central being; but still it is always there standing behind the action of mind, life and body and is most directly represented by the psychic which is itself a spark of the Divine. It is by the growth of the psychic element in one's own nature that one begins to come into conscious touch with one's central being above. When that happens and the central being uses a conscious will to control and organise the movements of the nature, it is then that one has a real, a spiritual as opposed to a partial and merely mental or moral self-mastery.

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I don't think the Jivatma is concentrated anywhere, — except in this sense that in the waking state it is the mental Purusha that leads and the seat of the mental Purusha is in the head, behind the centre between the eyebrows. In the dream state what

remains active in the body is the externalising consciousness (or something of it) and the centre of that is in the neck (throat). In the *suṣupti*, if it is real *suṣupti*, not merely unconscious of dreams, but absence of dreams, the consciousness is deep within in the heart centre or behind it — for that is the veiled centre of the innermost being.

The Jivatman, Spark-Soul and Psychic Being

The Jivatman, spark-soul and psychic being are three different forms of the same reality and they must not be mixed up together, as that confuses the clearness of the inner experience.

The Jivatman or spirit is self-existent above the manifested or instrumental being — it is superior to birth and death, always the same; it is the individual self or Atman, the eternal true being of the individual.

The soul is a spark of the Divine in the heart of the living creatures of Nature. It is not seated above the manifested being; it enters into the manifestation of the self, consents to be a part of its natural phenomenal becoming, supports its evolution in the world of material Nature. It carries with it at first an undifferentiated power of the divine consciousness, containing all possibilities, but at first unevolved possibilities, which have not yet taken form but to which it is the function of evolution to give form. This spark of Divinity is there in all terrestrial living beings from the earth's highest to its lowest creatures.

The psychic being is a spiritual personality put forward by the soul in its evolution; its growth marks the stage which the spiritual evolution of the individual has reached and its immediate possibilities for the future. It stands behind the mental, the vital, the physical nature, grows by their experiences, carries the consciousness from life to life. It is the psychic Person, *caitya puruṣa*. At first it is veiled by the mental, vital and physical parts, limited by them in its self-expression by their limitations, bound to the reactions of Nature, but, as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body. In the ordinary man it still depends on them for expression and is not

able to take them up and freely use them. The life of the being is animal and human, not divine. When the psychic being can by sadhana become dominant and freely use its instruments, then the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body, not merely their liberation, becomes possible.

As the Self or Atman is free and superior to birth and death, the experience of the Jivatman and its unity with the supreme or universal Self is sufficient to bring the sense of liberation; but for the transformation of the life and nature the full awareness and awakening of our psychic being also is indispensable.

The psychic being realises at this stage its oneness with the true being, the Self, but it does not disappear or change into it; it remains as its instrument for psychic and spiritual self-expression, a divine manifestation in Nature.

The *bindu* seen by you above may be a symbolic way of seeing the Jivatman, the individual self as a drop of the Sea, an individual portion of the universal Divine; the aspiration on that level would naturally be for the opening of the higher consciousness so that the being may dwell there and not in the ignorance. The Jivatman is already one with the Divine in reality, but its spiritual demand may be for the rest of the consciousness also to realise it.

The aspiration of the psychic being would then translate this demand entirely for the opening of the whole lower nature, mind, vital, body to the Divine, for the love and union with the Divine, for its presence and power within the heart, for the transformation of the mind, life and body by the descent of the higher consciousness into this instrumental being and nature.

Both aspirations are necessary for the fullness of this Yoga, the demand of the self on the nature from above, the psychic aspiration of the nature from below. When the psychic imposes its aspiration on the mind, vital and body, then they too aspire and this is what was felt by you as the aspiration from the level of the lower being. The aspiration felt above is that of the Jivatman for the higher consciousness with its realisation of the One to manifest in all the being. Both aspirations help

and are necessary to each other. But the seeking of the lower being is at first intermittent and oppressed by the obscurity and limitations of the ordinary consciousness. It has by sadhana to become clear, constant, strong and enduring; it then compels realisation, makes it inevitable.

The sense of peace, purity and calm felt by you is brought about by a union or strong contact of the lower with the higher consciousness; it cannot be permanent at first, but it can become so by an increased frequency and durability of the calm and peace and finally by the full descent of the eternal peace and calm and silence of the higher consciousness into the lower nature.

The Jivatman in a Supramental Creation

I have used the words Jiva and Jivatman in these and all the passages¹ in exactly the same sense — it never occurred to me that there could be a difference. If I had so intended it, I would have drawn the distinction — the two words being similar — very clearly and not left it to be gathered by inference.

In the passage from the chapter [*in* The Life Divine] on the triple status of the Supermind I was describing how the Supermind working as a force of the highest self-determination of the Divine manifested it in three poises and what was the consciousness of the Jivatman in a supramental creation. There is no statement that the place of the Jivatman is in the supramental plane alone — if that were so, man could have no knowledge of his individual Self or Spirit before he rose to the supramental plane; he could not have any experience of the Self, though he may have the sense of the dissolution of his ego in something Universal. But he can become aware of his unborn non-evolving Self, a centre of the Divine Consciousness, long before that; the Self cosmic or individual is experienced long before rising to Supermind. If it were not so, spiritual experience of that high

¹ *The correspondent cited passages from two of Sri Aurobindo's works: The Life Divine, volume 21 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 157, and Essays on the Gita, volume 19, p. 445 and p. 542.*

kind would be impossible to mental man, liberation would be impossible; he would first have to become a supramental being. As for the Purusha it is there on all planes; there is a mental Purusha, *manomaya*, leader of the life and body, as the Upanishad puts it, a vital, a physical Purusha; there is the psychic being or Chaitya Purusha which supports and carries all these as it were. One may say that these are projections of the Jivatman put there to uphold Prakriti on the various levels of the being. The Upanishad speaks also of a supramental and a Bliss Purusha, and if the supramental and the Bliss Nature were organised in the evolution on earth we could become aware of them upholding the movements here.

As for the psychic being it enters into the evolution, enters into the body at birth and goes out of it at death; but the Jivatman, as I know it, is unborn and eternal although upholding the manifested personality from above. The psychic being can be described as the Jivatman entering into birth, if you like, but if the distinction is not made, then the nature of the Atman is blurred and a confusion arises. This is a necessary distinction for metaphysical knowledge and for something that is very important in spiritual experience. The word "Atman" like "spirit" in English is popularly used in all kinds of senses, but both for spiritual and philosophical knowledge it is necessary to be clear and precise in one's use of terms so as to avoid confusion of thought and vision by confusion in the words we use to express them.

If I had meant that it is an individual consciousness that determines all this working, as you tell me, then I should be in contradiction with my own teaching of the Divine as the Master of all and the need of surrender — for an individual who can do everything himself, can carry out his own salvation — he has no need of surrender.