

Chapter One

Distinctive Features of the Integral Yoga

The Meaning of Purna Yoga

Purna Yoga means (1) that instead of approaching the Divine through the mind alone (Jnana) or the heart alone (Bhakti) or through will and works alone (Karma Yoga), one seeks the Divine with all the parts and powers of the consciousness and the being, uniting these three ways and many others in a single Yoga (way of union with the Divine) and receives the Divine in His presence, consciousness, force, light and bliss in all the consciousness and the being.

(2) That one seeks not only the realisation of the Divine in the soul and self but also in the whole nature (that means the transformation of this lower human into the Divine spiritual nature).

(3) That one seeks the Divine not only beyond life (by the cessation of birth) but for life, so that life also may become a realisation of the Divine and a manifestation of the Divine Nature.

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As for the book itself,¹ I am unfortunately ignorant of the Telugu language and cannot read the original, but from the account given in English I have formed some idea of the substance. I gather that it is in the main a statement and justification of the Purna Yoga and of my message; I believe you have rightly stated the two main elements of it, — first, the acceptance of the world as a manifestation of the Divine Power, not its rejection as a mistake or an illusion, and, secondly, the character of this manifestation as a spiritual evolution with Yoga as a means for

¹ *A book by a disciple living outside the Ashram. — Ed.*

the transformation of mind, life and body into the instruments of a spiritual and supramental perfection. The universe is not only a material but a spiritual fact, life not only a play of forces or a mental experience, but a field for the evolution of the concealed spirit. Human life will receive its fulfilment and transformation into something beyond itself only when this truth is seized and made the motive force of our existence and the means of its effective realisation discovered. The means of realisation is to be found in an integral Yoga, a union in all the parts of our being with the Divine and a consequent transmutation of all their now jarring elements into the harmony of a higher divine consciousness and existence.

This-Worldliness and Other-Worldliness

One thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about "this stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness". I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by this-worldliness, but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my Yoga have always been, since my coming to India, both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time, since I set foot on Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and intimate bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is the Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Everyone has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness

only and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed. I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my purview, the spiritual and the material, and to try to establish the divine Consciousness and the divine Power in men's hearts and in earthly life, not for personal salvation only but for a life divine here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the integral Yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness excluding any kind of this-worldliness altogether, but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible. My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the universal Sachchidananda, and attain to the essential results of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of the divine life and this material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach him with love and devotion and bhakti, to serve him with one's works and to know him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience, is also essential in the path of the integral Yoga.

The Importance of Descent in the Yoga

I meant by it [*the phrase “a far greater Truth”*] the descent of the supramental Consciousness upon earth; all truths below the supramental (even that of the highest spiritual on the mental plane, which is the highest that has yet manifested) are either partial or relative or otherwise deficient and unable to transform the earthly life, they can only at most modify and influence it. The supermind is the vast Truth-consciousness of which the ancient seers spoke; there have been glimpses of it till now, sometimes an indirect influence or pressure, but it has not been brought down into the consciousness of the earth and fixed there. To so bring it down is the aim of our Yoga.

But it is better not to enter into sterile intellectual discussions. The intellectual mind cannot even realise what the supermind is; what use, then, can there be in allowing it to discuss what it does not know? It is not by reasoning, but by constant experience, growth of consciousness and widening into the Light that one can reach those higher levels of consciousness above the intellect from which one can begin to look up to the Divine Gnosis. Those levels are not yet the supermind, but they can receive something of its knowledge.

The Vedic Rishis never attained to the supermind for the earth or perhaps did not even make the attempt. They tried to rise individually to the supramental plane, but they did not bring it down and make it a permanent part of the earth-consciousness. Even there are verses of the Upanishad in which it is hinted that it is impossible to pass through the gates of the Sun (the symbol of the supermind) and yet retain an earthly body. It was because of this failure that the spiritual effort of India culminated in Mayavada. 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 a divine transformation possible in the earth-consciousness.

I never heard of silence descending in other Yogas — the mind goes into silence. Since however I have been writing of ascent and descent, I have been told from several quarters that there is nothing new in this Yoga — so I am wondering whether people were not getting ascents and descents without knowing it! or at least without noticing the process. It is like the rising above the head and taking the station there — which I and others have experienced in this Yoga. When I spoke of it first, people stared and thought I was talking nonsense. Wideness must have been felt in the old Yogas because otherwise one could not feel the universe in oneself or be free from the body consciousness or unite with the Anantam Brahman. But generally as in Tantrik Yoga one spoke of the consciousness rising to the Brahmarandhra, top of the head, as the summit. Rajayoga of course lays stress on Samadhi as the means of the highest experience. But obviously if one has not the Brahmi sthiti in the waking state, there is no completeness in the realisation. The Gita distinctly speaks of being *samāhita* (which is equivalent to being in samadhi) and the Brahmi sthiti as a waking state in which one lives and does all actions.

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It happens that people may get the descent without noticing that it is a descent because they feel the result only. The ordinary Yoga does not go beyond the spiritual mind — people feel at the top of the head the joining with the Brahman, but they are not aware of a consciousness above the head. In the same way in the ordinary Yoga one feels the ascent of the awakened inner consciousness (Kundalini) to the *brahmarandhra* where the Prakriti joins the Brahman-consciousness, but they do not feel the descent. Some may have had these things, but I don't know that they understood their nature, principle or place in a complete sadhana. At least I never heard of these things from others before I found them out in my own experience. The reason is that the old Yogins when they went above the spiritual mind passed into samadhi, which means that they did not attempt to be conscious in these higher planes — their aim being to pass away into the

Superconscient and not to bring the Superconscient into the waking consciousness, which is that of my Yoga.

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I explain this absence of the descent experiences myself by the old Yogas having been mainly confined to the psycho-spiritual-occult range of experience—in which the higher experiences come into the still mind or the concentrated heart by a sort of filtration or reflection—the field of this experience being from the Brahmarandhra downward. People went above this only in samadhi or in a condition of static mukti without any dynamic descent. All that was dynamic took place in the region of the spiritualised mental and vital-physical consciousness. In this Yoga the consciousness (after the lower field has been prepared by a certain amount of psycho-spiritual-occult experience) is drawn upwards above the Brahmarandhra to ranges above belonging to the spiritual consciousness proper and instead of merely receiving from there has to live there and from there change the lower consciousness altogether. For there is a dynamism proper to the spiritual consciousness whose nature is Light, Power, Ananda, Peace, Knowledge, infinite Wideness and that must be possessed and descend into the whole being. Otherwise one can get mukti but not perfection or transformation (except a relative psycho-spiritual change). But if I say that, there will be a general howl against the unpardonable presumption of claiming to have a knowledge not possessed by the ancient saints and sages and pretending to transcend them. In that connection I may say that in the Upanishads (notably the Taittiriya) there are some indications of these higher planes and their nature and the possibility of gathering up the whole consciousness and rising into them. But this was forgotten afterwards and people spoke only of the buddhi as the highest thing with the Purusha or Self just above, but there was no clear idea of these higher planes. Ergo, ascent possibly to unknown and ineffable heavenly regions in samadhi, but no descent possible—therefore no resource, no possibility of transformation here, only escape

from life and mukti in Goloka, Brahmaloaka, Shivaloka or the Absolute.

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Perhaps you are of the opinion of Ramana Maharshi, “The Divine is here, how can he descend from anywhere?” The Divine may be here, but if he has covered here his Light with darkness of Ignorance and his Ananda with suffering, that, I should think, makes a big difference to the plane and, even if one enters into that sealed Light etc., it makes a difference to the Consciousness but very little to the Energy at work in this plane which remains of a dark or mixed character.

The Inclusiveness of the Yoga

I don't know why it [*a comparison between Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and someone else's*] should be disparaging to my Yoga. My Yoga takes up all the Yoga of the past and goes beyond.

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One can feel the experiences of any sadhana as a part of this one.