
UNIT 1 THE DIVINE LIFE AND INTEGRAL (PURNA) YOGA

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
 - 1.1 Introduction: Objects of Integral Yoga
 - 1.2 The Foundations of Integral Yoga
 - 1.3 The Triple Transformation
 - 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
 - 1.5 Further Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to provide an insight into The Divine Life and Integral Yoga as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo. Systems of yoga are as old as human civilization itself. Several systems of Yoga have evolved over the ages and each one is a systematic technique to take human life to its highest state of perfection. The Integral Yoga is a unique method of Yoga invented, practiced and taught by Sri Aurobindo in the light of his yogic experiences. This unit shall contain the following units:

- Objects of Integral Yoga
- The Foundations of Integral Yoga
- The Triple Transformation

1.1 OBJECTS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

Yoga is a union with the Divine. It is a joining of the limited human consciousness with the infinite divine consciousness. The word 'yoga' for Aurobindo, has a wider, significance. To him, yoga is a complete union in the soul as well as nature by a moulding of the entire being into an image of the Divine. Not a partial union in the inner existence alone but an integral union in all elements of our being is the aim of Yoga. This calls for a change of the inner and outer life so that it may become a channel of joy of the Divine and a fit instrument of his works. All the elements of our personality – soul, mind, sense, heart, will, life and body - must fulfill themselves in a supreme perfection by their complete turning and self-giving to the Divine. The object is a complete spiritual change so that the being by degrees may become ready to express the Divine in its every thought, feeling and action.

Our life is a series of struggles to outgrow its ordinary limitations for rising to a higher status of existence. The true progress of life consists in an evolution from darkness to light, from sorrow to bliss, from weakness by limitation to the perfection of the infinite. The whole of life according to Aurobindo, is yoga, a series of mental, vital, or psychic movements towards full development of all our latent divine possibilities. The evolution going on in universal nature is also yoga, because it is an unconscious effort for revealing the spirit hidden within herself. Both man and Nature are evolving towards the same ultimate goal of perfect expression of the Divine in every sphere or plane of existence. But human beings need not follow the tardy method of cosmic evolution; they can hasten the slow natural process of his individual evolution by applying to it his own intelligence, will and endeavor.

Nature is leading man in a double evolution, one relating to his outward life and nature and the other to his occult inner being and nature. According to Aurobindo, the latter is now at a preliminary stage, for only a few have evolved beyond the mental into the spiritual level. The human mind has been for a long time past increasing in range, height and subtlety. Man's vital and physical parts are pressing on for expression of their yet unknown powers and capacities. This shows that Nature intends a full growth of the entire being in all its parts, which must also be the aim of Yoga. The Integral or Purna Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is therefore identical with Nature's Yoga, because the ultimate aim of both is a divine perfection of the human being. The object is not merely an outward or mundane perfection of the normal human mind, life and body. The aim is the full development of all members of the being, both inner and outer, for the greatest fulfillment of embodied existence. The demands of the spirit must not be ignored nor of material nature, for a balanced growth of our personality. A perfect yoga requires a perfect balance, a harmonious growth of all the parts.

Human fulfillment lies in uniting with God who is the only true being, and participating in His perfect purity, peace, light, force and bliss. One should seek for perfection because perfection is the nature of the Divine and the more one grows into His perfection, the more one feels Him manifest in the natural being. By turning our whole being to the Divine, we shall unite with the being, consciousness and delight of the Divine through every part of our human nature which will be moulded into an image of the divine Nature. The outcome will be that we shall always feel the Divine presence within us and become a perfect channel for the expression of the Divine in the world. The whole meaning of Integral Yoga is in fact a growth into the happy perfection of likeness to the divine, which means a rendering of the human into divine nature.

The primary need of man is a harmony among the discordant elements of his personality. A ceaseless fight is going on among them, each pressing for its own delight and fulfillment in disregard of the total welfare of the whole being. For instance, the vital part runs after many low and self-seeking pleasures which the mind does not accept as the true enjoyment of life. Human beings thirst for many objects and satisfactions which conflict with one another. He is constantly wavering between the right and the wrong; his nature contradicts what his soul regards as the true object of life. His knowledge, will and emotion show great disparity, which must be replaced by a divine harmony. The jarring elements must be harmonized by union with our inner Self who is the divine individual within us. That alone can bring peace, joy and harmony into being. Life in ignorance brings sorrow, suffering, limitation, weakness and mortality. An inner divine urge compels man to seek for light, power, peace, perfection and delight of existence. The soul within has an inherent longing for God; it needs self-giving, love, devotion, and union, which can only be satisfied by the Divine. The root cause of all evils of life is the separation of the finite being from its infinite source which possesses all bliss and power and knowledge. The remedy lies in the re-union of the individual with the Divine, the origin of his being, master of his life and beloved of his heart. Yoga is the path that leads to such union and spiritual fulfillment of life. The Divine confers on us the rich treasures of his spirit as recompense for all our toil and trouble. He is the giver of spiritual gifts that are infinitely more valuable than any material riches. Yoga gives us the delight of the Divine and the divine consciousness, which means the joy of peace and silence, of inner light, of growing inner knowledge and power, of divine love and bliss and numerous other spiritual experiences. The central object of the Yoga is union with the Divine. All other aims are only part of this one supreme fulfillment. Not personal power, liberation or perfection but integral union with the divine is the object of the yoga. Yoga

should be done for the fulfillment of God's will in us, His manifestation in the world and not for a personal achievement. We seek God not to attain an egoistic aim but to serve him, to manifest him in our lives and carry out his will in creation.

To attain the above objective, three yogic movements are necessary. First is to live in the tranquil inner self instead of the restless outer nature for an opening to the divine. One must by inner concentration awaken the inmost soul or the psychic being so that it may use its power to purify and change the ignorant nature and make it ready for divine union and spiritual transformation. Secondly to develop the cosmic consciousness by which the yogi becomes conscious of his union with the universal self and Nature. Thirdly to come in contact with the divine beyond the cosmos through the consciousness of the supermind, which is the ideal or divine mind in full possession of the truth. The supermind upon descending into nature will begin a miraculous operation for a divine change of the human being. By opening to the action of the supermind, the human consciousness will be changed into the divine and the ignorant nature into the supreme Supernature. The Supermind will change our mind, life and body for their complete conversion to divinity. This implies that the entire being will turn towards the divine, live and act for him and become full of the divine consciousness. All the elements will be recast into moulds of the divine consciousness growing ever more in peace, light, force love and bliss. The divinization of the whole human personality is the ultimate aim of this yoga which is therefore called purna or integral yoga.

Three processes become necessary for effecting an integral transformation. First, psychic change by direct action of the inmost psychic being; secondly spiritual change by descent of a higher consciousness from the upper planes; thirdly, supramental change by the transforming action of the Supermind which is the creative power of the Divine. The influx of light, peace, power, knowledge and delight from higher principles will convert the lower human consciousness into the higher consciousness and its higher working. The outer being by virtue of this essential change will learn to know, feel and act in terms of the higher principles. But the highest principle of Supermind alone has the power bringing about a radical transformation. Hence for the final perfection, which consists in the divinization of man, descent of the supermind into human consciousness is indispensable.

The descent of higher consciousness from upper spiritual planes is a remarkable element in Integral yoga. An internal realization may lead to liberation or some such change of the inner being but cannot transform the outer nature. An ascent of the lower consciousness to the higher planes followed by the descent of forces from them is the means of transformation. For complete transformation the whole higher consciousness with its Peace, Power, Light, Knowledge and Ananda must descend into the entire being – mind, life and body – for its transformation. Here the ultimate object is change of the life and existence, for which a full descent of the Divine consciousness into the whole nature is indispensable. Man must receive into himself the power and presence of spirit and by the direct action of that power become a fit instrument of its self-expression. His whole being must be tuned with the Divine and turned into a channel for the outpouring of divine love and power in the world. The legitimate activities of Nature are not to be suppressed or stopped; all the members must be allowed to function and express their powers in full, but in growing harmony with the divine truth. Vedanta seeks for an inner realization and identity of our spiritual self with the divine being with the object of release from rebirth. The Tantra aims higher at the mastery over nature and its spiritual change; it also seeks for release

but by identification with the divine shakti. The Integral Yoga aims at union in both aspects so that the human being may become divine and manifest fully the eternal truth in all its movements. The Integral Yoga by adoption of the dynamic ideal of self-perfection, becomes a yoga of expression. We must know and possess the highest truth and also express it in our life and action. We should love and serve our fellowmen as visible forms of the divine. Our life should be divine example to others, an expression of the supreme law of love and harmony. The object here is not merely the joy of inner communion with God but the delight of expression of the realized Self in the material world.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) What are the three important yogic movements that are necessary for the fulfillment of God's will in us?

- 2) What is the importance of the descent of higher consciousness in Integral yoga?

- 3) 'The primary need of man is a harmony among the discordant elements of his personality'. Explain.

1.2 THE FOUNDATIONS OF INTEGRAL YOGA

Qualities such as faith, quietude, sincerity etc are regarded as basic requisites for all spiritual progress. They are psychological states that dispose and prepare the mind for getting spiritual experience. Integral yoga prescribes certain effortful practices for the attainment of these qualities or movements that lead to perfection in Yoga. All of them are helpful for getting rid of mental or vital oppositions and disturbances that prevent our opening to the true consciousness. Anything that disturbs us for example fear, anger, greed, lust, hatred, jealousy is a wrong movement which can be countered by the cultivation of certain spiritual virtues that prevent its occurrence. The following are the essential qualities along with the disciplines required for their attainment in order that an aspirant may properly qualify himself for a systematic practice of Integral Yoga:

- a) Faith – Faith is certitude in the soul, belief in some truth that does not depend on reason or experience. It is a call or influence from the Supreme Spirit accepted by the inner soul. When the whole being assents to the truth seen by it or offered to its acceptance, the faith becomes perfect. A faith supported by the mind, heart and life-mind is an irresistible force for realization. Belief in divine grace or divine power will bring all rich and boundless perfections of the Spirit. Also it will ensure protection against all dangers, difficulties and apparent failures.

- b) Quiet and Calm – Calmness and quietude are essential for sadhana. Yoga is impossible if the mind is restless. A mind that is tossed about by restless and unruly thoughts, by vital desires and passions and by impulses of the body, is unfit for yogic practices. But quietness does not mean absence of all thought or mental or vital movement. By a quiet mind Aurobindo means a mind free from disturbance and trouble, steady, light and glad so as to open to the force that will change the nature. We have quietude (*achanchalata*) when the mind and vital are free from constant restlessness, over-activity or trouble that keeps them in a state of ceaseless agitation. The next step is calm, *sthirata*, which is a positive condition. It is a state that remains unaffected by any movement on the surface. This denotes a strong and firm quietude that can exist in spite of superficial disturbances. The mind is said to be calm when thoughts, feelings etc may pass through it, but it is not disturbed. It feels that the thoughts are not its own, it observes them but is not perturbed by anything. A more positive condition is *shanti* which carries with it a sense of settled and harmonious rest, a feeling of liberation and full satisfaction. This is a calm deepened into a secure quietude where no disturbance can come. Quietude, calm and peace in the mind and therefore in the vital, are the indispensable first conditions for success in yoga.
- c) Wideness – Consciousness must become not only calm but also wide. It should be felt as spreading out and enveloping everything so that one may dwell in it. Wideness is a sign of the extension of consciousness out of ordinary limits. The ordinary consciousness in each person is narrow and shut up in the mind, life and body. It sees itself as the centre of everything and does not know the truth of anything. But when by yoga the true consciousness which is that of the Self or Atman comes, the barrier begins to break down. The mind, the vital and even the physical consciousness grows wider and wider until one feels the whole universe within oneself. The wideness of consciousness which results from the realization of the Self within or above the being is of utmost importance in the yoga. This wideness will help the calm and peace to be stable even amidst activity. The limiting ego sense which is the root cause of all evil, will disappear on entering into cosmic vastness. A wideness of being is the secure foundation of the permanence of all higher spiritual experiences.
- d) Silence – Silence, *nischala niravata*, is a higher state of consciousness than calm or quietude and belongs to a higher state of yoga. Silence is a state in which either there is no movement of the mind or vital or else a great stillness which no surface movement can pierce or alter. The mind is altogether free from thoughts, desires or impulses or these are felt as surface movements that cannot touch the inner peace or calm. Complete silence can be gained by banishing thought altogether from the inner mind, keeping it vacant and voiceless. The ordinary mind is never silent; the silent mind is a result of yoga. The state of silence comes by the practice of a silent concentration in the inner being or Purusa. This yogic discipline leads to a division in the being; the inner self or Purusa is silent and watches, while the outer nature is the field of all active movements. The former is then felt as something separate from and unaffected by the activities of outer nature. The agitations of the mind and vital are regarded as surface movements which do not disturb the inner calm and silence. Afterwards one has to proceed to silence or quiet the prakrti or external nature. This can be done by the help of the will in the Purusa, one has the native power of rule or mastery over nature. This Rajayogic discipline of separation of the Purusa from prakrti is a most helpful practice for establishing peace and silence in the entire consciousness. But silence like peace is more easily established by a descent from

a higher consciousness in which silence is an inherent state unaffected by any movement. The descent may come as a result of a calm and deep aspiration or an act of grace of the divine. One has to open the mind upward lifting the consciousness out of the body and call calmly and steadily for peace and silence of the higher self above. These things will then descend first into the mind and then into the lower planes, even into the body. At the time of meditation the sadhak must not fight with the mind or make mental efforts to pull down the peace or silence. He should remain quiet, keeping only a silent will and aspiration for them.

- e) Sincerity – Sincerity is also an indispensable condition of success in sadhana. To be sincere means to have the sole aspiration of finding the divine giving up all personal demand or desire. Usually some vital demand is mixed with our sadhana for the divine. Many do yoga for personal reasons, some because they are disgusted with life, others because they are unhappy, some others because they wish to have more knowledge, others again because they wish to have more knowledge, others because they want to be spiritually great, yet others because they want to learn things so that they may teach them to others. Aurobindo says that to be entirely sincere means to desire the truth only, to surrender yourselves more and more to the Divine mother, to reject all personal demand and desire other than this one aspiration, to offer every action in life to the divine and do it as the work given without bringing in the ego. Every movement of the being – every thought, every feeling, every impulse – should flow towards the divine as the river towards the sea, that means a surrender of the whole being in all its parts.
- f) Surrender – Surrender is the chief secret and the central process of yoga. The Integral yoga seeks to realize the divine truth not beyond but here in earthly life. For this purpose it is necessary to transform the mind, life and body. But transformation is not possible unless one opens and surrenders to the divine being and to the divine mother, the supreme shakti. For the shakti, the divine consciousness force and world-mother is the mediatrix between the eternal one and the individual soul in the manifestation. Surrender is giving oneself to the divine – to give everything one is or has to the divine and regard nothing as one's own, to obey only the divine will and no other, to live for the divine and not for the ego. A complete trust and confidence in the divine power is indeed the main condition or essence of surrender. The inward acceptance or consent to receive is what we mean by the inner surrender of the mind, the vital and the physical being. But there is also the outer surrender. This means the giving up or rejection of all that conflicts with the spirit or need of the sadhana. It also implies obedience to the guidance of the Guru or of the divine whether through the psychic or at a later stage by direct intervention. Complete surrender is done in order that the whole being may become a fit temple for the divine presence and a faultless instrument for divine work. The chief obstacles to surrender are desire and ego.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the role of faith in process of Integral Yoga?

2) Explain the widening of consciousness in the process of Integral Yoga.

3) What is the importance of silence in Integral Yoga?

1.3 THE TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

The most important feature of Integral Yoga is the triple transformation. This refers to the process through which reality is transformed into the divine. This is described in *The Life Divine* part 2, ch.25, and *Letters on Yoga* part 4, section 1. The Triple Transformation refers to the two-fold movement of spiritual transformation - the inward psychicization by which the sadhak gets in contact with the inner divine principle or Psychic Being, and the spiritual transformation or spiritualization. For Sri Aurobindo, both these stages are equally necessary and important, as both serve as necessary prerequisites for the third and by far the most difficult element of change in the triple transformation, the Supramentalisation of the entire being.

Psychicisation

Psychicisation is one of the most essential stages of the integral yoga. As described in *The Life Divine* (book II - chapter 25) it refers to a spiritual movement inward, so that one realizes the psychic being - the psychic personality or Divine Soul - in the core of one's being, and enable this to transform the outer being, as well as serve as a spiritual Guide in the yoga. It is thanks to this Psychic transformation that the sadhak can avoid the pitfalls of the spiritual path, such as the intermediate zone. The three central spiritual methods here are Consecration, Moving to the Depths (Concentration), and Surrender. Consecration is to open to the Force before engaging in an activity. Moving to the Depths (or Concentration) is a movement away from the surface existence to a deeper existence within. Surrender means offering all one's work, one's life to the Divine Force and Intent. In connecting with the evolving divine soul within, the sadhak moves away from ego, ignorance, finiteness, and the limitations of the outer being. Psychicisation can serve as a prequel to spiritualisation, although they do not have to follow any sort of order. However, both the psychic and the spiritual transformation are equally necessary for the final stage of Supramental transformation.

Spiritualization

As a result of the Psychic transformation, light, peace, power is drawn into and descends into the body, transforming all of its parts — physical, vital, and mental. This is the Spiritual transformation, or Spiritualization, which refers to the bringing down of the larger spiritual consciousness or spiritual transformation. The spiritual transformation in itself however is not

sufficient to avoid pitfalls of the spiritual path, or bring about Supramentalisation. For that, the psychic transformation is needed as well.

Supramentalisation

Supramentalisation is the ultimate stage in the integral yoga. It refers to the bringing down of the Supramental consciousness, and the resulting transformation of the entire being. The supramental transformation is the final stage in the integral yoga, enabling the birth of a new individual fully formed by the supramental power. Such individuals would be the forerunners of a new truth-consciousness based supra-humanity. All aspects of division and ignorance of consciousness at the vital and mental levels would be overcome, replaced with a unity of consciousness at every plane, and even the physical body transformed and divinized. A new supramental species would then emerge, living a supramental, gnostic, divine life on earth.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain the 'triple transformation' in the context of Integral Yoga.

2) What is psychicization? What is its role in Integral Yoga?

3) Explain spiritualization and supramentalization.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

According to the teachings of Sri Aurobindo integral yoga is directed towards a union of one's self with the divine or the transmutation of all the chaotic elements into higher level of divine consciousness and harmony. It is concerned with attaining union or oneness with the universe and the highest possible level of divinity. While most disciplines of yoga, with a few exceptions, focus greatly on the development of a single aspect of the self, having their aims like achieving a state of liberation and transcendence, or the achievement of optimum physical fitness, integral yoga seeks a complete transformation of the entire being and is therefore regarded as being a wholesome discipline by practitioners. Where most disciplines concentrate on one aspect whilst neglecting others, integral yoga takes a broad and wholesome approach, leaving no area neglected. According to Sri Aurobindo all the areas of one's being need to be transformed. The

main aim of integral yoga is to achieve union and harmony with the karma, the jnana, and the bhakti, which would basically imply a combination of the Physical self, Vital self, Mental, Psychic, and Spiritual arenas. Integral yoga is a lot more complex than most other forms of yoga. It involves every fiber of your being and pervades every area of your life, which is why most people do not have the time or patience for a discipline like integral yoga. Integral yoga treats the discipline as a way of life and one that is learnt through ongoing experience.

1.5 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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