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Sri Aurobindo's Formulations of the Integral Yoga

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Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950) developed, practiced and taught a form of yoga, which he named *integral yoga*. If one peruses the texts he has written pertaining to his teaching, one finds a variety of models, goals, and practices which may be termed *formulations* or *versions* of the integral yoga. This article compares three such formulations, aiming to determine whether these are the same, but in different words, as meant for different audiences, or whether they represent different understandings of the yoga based on changing perceptions. The article also tries to compare the versions in terms of differences in emphases and/or responses to the problem of integrality, which Sri Aurobindo tried to answer through practices and resultant experiences.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo, Integral Yoga, psycho-spiritual transformation, conscious evolution

Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950) lived an enigmatic life, both in terms of his external biography and his inner life, which in his own words “has not been [lived] on the surface for men to see” (Sri Aurobindo, 2006, p. 11). Yet, for those who wish to derive the epistemology of a practice from his life, he has left behind a copious legacy of his writings on the *integral yoga*, the name he used for his system of practice. However, in trying to make sense of this archive, one encounters a variety of versions which are related, yet often distinct. At the outset, one may identify three such epistemological frameworks that may be enumerated chronologically (in his own terms to be discussed later): (1) the *Sapta Chatusthaya* or “Seven Quartets,” a structure of practice described in his diaries and used to organize his experiences (published in *The Record of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo, 2001); (2) the *triple transformation* (a processual structure described in an eponymous chapter in his philosophical text *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005); and (3) a surrender to the embodied *supramental Shakti*, the Mother, as part of a two-way evolutionary process leading to integral union with her in consciousness, instrumentation, and

action (elaborated in the publication *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo, 2012b).

Chronology

The following discussion is an attempt to outline these versions with an emphasis on their chronology. From 1912 to 1920, through the entire period of the First World War, Sri Aurobindo wrote the bulk of his public writings while at the same time writing diaries of his own yoga practice in a hybrid English lavishly peppered with Sanskrit (Sri Aurobindo, 2001). In the first pages of these diaries, he named and summarized the framework of this self-study *Sapta Chatusthaya*, which I have loosely translated as Seven Quartets (Banerji, 2012). Among his public writings, written concurrently, Sri Aurobindo (1955/1999) presented his system of yoga in a text written in four parts called *The Synthesis of Yoga*. The first three parts of this text could be mapped to the Gita’s triple path of *jnana yoga* or yoga of knowledge, *karma yoga* or yoga of works, and *bhakti yoga* or yoga of love, though provided with a philosophical and practical scope in keeping with his “integral” goals and experiences. The fourth part, titled by him “The Yoga

of Self-Perfection" (p. 607), represented his formal introduction to the *Sapta Chatusthaya*. As one might imagine, the seven quartets deal with seven aspects of yoga. However, in "The Yoga of Self-Perfection," he dealt with only four of these seven parts, and mentioned later that he left this section incomplete (Heehs, 2008; Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1955/1999; Vrekhem, 1997). Most who have commented on this discrepancy have opined that he simply never got around to writing about them. I, however, contend, that he did not feel a compulsion to complete the three remaining parts, because he had introduced them in other sections of *The Synthesis of Yoga*.

There are three landmark events that occurred in quick succession in Sri Aurobindo's life in Pondicherry. First, in 1914 Mirra Alfassa (1878–1973), later designated "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo, came to Pondicherry with Paul Richard, her husband at that time. As a result of their interactions together, Sri Aurobindo began writing articles for a journal called *Arya* co-produced by them all (Sri Aurobindo, Richard, & The Mother, 1990). All his major public works were written for this journal, published in India and in France. The Richards had to leave India in 1914 due to the outbreak of the war. They moved back to Europe and traveled to Japan before returning to India in 1920 at the conclusion of the war. Paul Richard soon went back to France, and Mirra stayed in Pondicherry to work with Sri Aurobindo as his spiritual partner and collaborator. This connection with the Richards, especially with Mirra, represented a new phase in Sri Aurobindo's life and expression, as he subsequently began to assimilate new languages and new terminology into the formulation of his Yoga. He has been explicit in stating that the Mother's coming brought a new turn to his practice (Nandakumar, 1972). However, it also brought a new turn to his expression that culminated in a new terminology and formulation to his Yoga.

Second, in 1926 Sri Aurobindo had a very significant experience which he has referred to as the "descent of Krishna into the physical" as well as the "*descent of the Overmind*" (as cited in Nirodbaran, 1990, p. 189). This double reference is itself interesting, since it brings together two language worlds which are related to the abovementioned first and second versions of Sri

Aurobindo's Yoga. Krishna plays a central role in the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, or the first version, which could be described in a way as the love-play of Kali and Krishna, with the *sadhaka* embodying Kali and experiencing the enjoyment of identity and the relational difference with Krishna.¹ The "descent of Krishna in the body" would then refer to the *siddhi* of the first formulation, the identification of Kali with Krishna in the body of the *sadhaka*. *Overmind*, on the other hand, was a new term that entered Sri Aurobindo's vocabulary only after 1926² and became constellated in his formulation along with a number of other terms. In the identification of these terms I find an intersection of discourses that has important consequences to my attempts at interpretation.

Third, immediately subsequent to this 1926 experience, Sri Aurobindo moved into seclusion (Heehs, 2008, p. 353). In *The Mother's* (Mirra's) version, this was because a penultimate stage in his yoga practice had been reached, and he needed to focus all his energies on the final stage for the goal he had set for himself (Heehs, 2008, pp. 353-355). At this time, he also declared Mirra as the embodiment of the Divine Mother and his "Shakti" (spiritual executor of his will), and placed her in the forefront as the mediator for those who had gathered to practice his yoga while he was available for communication only through written correspondence (Heehs, 2008, pp. 353-355).

The 1926 experience nuanced Sri Aurobindo's understanding of *Supermind* significantly, introducing a new layer of mediating Consciousness, the *Overmind*. In the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, Sri Aurobindo (2001) named one of the specialized forms of attainment after a term from the Upanishad, *Vijnana* (p. 1200), which he interpreted as a *Divine Mind* (Sri Aurobindo, 1999, p. 759) to which One and Infinity were identical, a difference in kind, not degree, from the human mind (pp. 415fn, 481). He also named this Supermind (p. 417). However, though clearly dissimilar in operation from the human (or other creature) mind, the question remained as to how Supermind was related to the *Cosmic Mind*. Prior to the 1926 realization, Sri Aurobindo considered the *Cosmic Mind* to be a seamless subsidiary action

of Supermind, sharing in its kind (Heehs, 2008, pp. 350-351). Now, he saw the necessity of theorizing a distinction between Cosmic Mind and Supermind (Heehs, 2008). The summit of the highest Cosmic Mind reaches into Supermind, but as the Cosmic Mind operates as a precipitational force of difference in manifesting the *Real-Idea* of Supermind, Sri Aurobindo gave it the name Overmind (Heehs, 2008). Until this point, though he had identified symbolic and paradoxical descriptions of Overmind in the Veda and Upanishads, he had not been able to find a clear name for it in the Indian Wisdom traditions.³

The 1926 realization therefore marks a cross-braiding and a crossover between the first and second formulations of the Integral Yoga. Bringing the two discourses together, Sri Aurobindo asserted in letters written to his disciples (e.g., Sri Aurobindo, 2012a) that Krishna was the *Anandamaya Purusha*, or the *Person of Bliss*, who was working through the Overmind and, furthermore, he had become identified with Krishna at all levels of his being, down to the body. Though in the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, he envisaged this realization to be the goal of his yoga, now he awoke to a higher pitch of its being where the ontology and the relation between *Devi* and *Deva* had absolute freedom and expressed infinite forms of unity. This realization he equated with Supermind and thus made the transition from the first to the second formulation of the yoga where Overmind and Supermind, along with a number of other terms, became the more common vocabulary in Sri Aurobindo's articulation.⁴

Important Post-1926 Reformulations

While the aforementioned terms initially made their appearance in his letters to his disciples, their consolidation into a yogic system saw its clearest expression in some of the later chapters he added to a revised edition of *The Life Divine* (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005). The most important of these was a thick chapter titled "The Triple Transformation" (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 922) added in 1940 (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1940/2005, p. 1113), which can be thought of as the epistemic framework of the new formulation of his Yoga. Here, he introduced a number of new coinages

intermixed with some specialized terms more familiar to a modern French cultural milieu. For instance, the triple transformation relates to three statuses, or dimensions, of existence—each of which can become a vantage point for the transformation of human nature. These three centers of existence were all given names (i.e., the psychic being, Overmind, and Supermind)—not found before in his *Sapta Chatusthaya* formulation. Increasingly, his emphasis fell on the awakening and emergence of the psychic being, or "soul personality," as he referred to it alternatively. More specifically, the psychic being is the monadic immanence of the Divine in each being—the reincarnating "innermost person" (Sri Aurobindo, 1989, p. 3). It is capable of catalyzing a complete surrender to the Overmind (access to the Cosmic Consciousness) and Supermind (access to the Transcendental Consciousness)⁵ statuses of the Divine by identifying with these forms of consciousness that, in turn, bring down their power to transform *the (human) nature*.

However, in his post-1926 letters to his disciples written from seclusion, Sri Aurobindo also invoked a more specific version of the Yoga—relating the surrender of the psychic being to the physical personality of Mirra Alfassa as the embodied Divine Mother. Surrender to the Mother was here held up as the central, and even sole practice for the integral Yoga. These letters were compiled into a text entitled *The Mother* (Sri Aurobindo, 2012b).⁶ So, to understand the significance of these revisions, one might ask a series of questions. For instance, why did he make these changes? Are they changes at all? There are further considerations to be posited to help filter one's hermeneutic quest. For instance, did these changes come about due to conversions in his understanding? Did they come about due to the fact that he was addressing different audiences? Or, did they come about because they represent shifts in practical emphases that he felt were related to different audiences' and or to his own stage of development? It must be noted that all these epistemologies are framed around the idea of the integral. This being the overriding attractor in Sri Aurobindo's cognitive and experiential processes,

it would be important to ask how he understood this term, and how it was to be achieved in the case of each of these versions of the Yoga.

First Version of the Integral Yoga: The *Sapta Chatusthaya*

The *Sapta Chatusthaya* is an architectonic framework with its seven components organized according to a structure. This structure, however, is not static; rather, it is dynamic, the structure of a process. Such indeed is the nature of the Tantric *yantra*, or meditation idea-diagram, which translates literally to “instrument” or “machine.”⁷

Sri Aurobindo (2001) divided his seven principles into “general” approaches and “specific” approaches (*adhara siddhi*; p. 23). Three Quartets constitute the general approaches which he termed: (1) the *Quartet of Yoga* or alternately, the *Quartet of Siddhi* (fulfillment); (2) the *Quartet of Brahman* (Conscious Being); and (3) the *Quartet of Karma* (Works). The most universal of these, the Quartet of Yoga (*Yoga Chatusthaya*) can be thought of as the center of the entire system around which the others revolve. He also referred to the latter as the Quartet of Siddhi, since by “siddhi” he meant the fulfillment of his Yoga. The specific approaches are constituted by the remaining four Quartets: (1) the *Shanti* (peace) or *Samata* (equality) *Chatusthaya*; (2) the *Vijnana* (knowledge) *Chatusthaya*; (3) the *Sharira* (body) *Chatusthaya*; and (4) the *Shakti* (power) *Chatusthaya*. To arrive at the diagrammatic engine (*yantra*) of this system, one must ask if Sri Aurobindo provides a principle to align these specific approaches around the general approaches.

Reconciling the Duality of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*

If one were to contemplate the above-stated question against the backdrop of the fourth part of *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo, 1955/1999), one would find exactly such a principle in Chapter Three, entitled “The Psychology of Self-Perfection” (p. 623). Here, one finds the related experiential concepts of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* which originated in a system called *Sankhya* but were used extensively in Indian spiritual metaphysics (*darshan*). The most well known and common formulation of

these terms has come in the form of Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*. These terms also had gendered connotations in Sanskrit. For instance, *Purusha* means “male,” and *Prakriti* connotes “female.” Sri Aurobindo translated *Purusha* and *Prakriti* as “Soul” and “Nature” respectively (1955/1999, pp. 426-435). *Sankhya* and many other Indian systems based on *Sankhya* use these terms as a way of distinguishing human nature as a body-mind-life complex characterized by automatism, from the conscious element or soul (Dasgupta 2013, pp. 1–30). By enabling a separation between these two principles, there arises the freedom of the soul as a conscious agent whose agency can be used to put the movements of nature to sleep (Dasgupta, 2013, pp. 26–27). This separation is a dualism in which, in a gendered way of speaking, the masculine is given freedom from the entrapment of the feminine while the latter is put to sleep. Though *Sankhya* and Yoga are treated as metaphysical systems independent from Vedanta, this kind of exclusive transcendentalism is also shared by certain interpretations of Vedanta, such as Advaita (Rambachan, 2006, p. 111). Of course, such a way of thinking has its obvious problems, and not all schools of Indian philosophy and praxis are in agreement with it. For instance, Tantric systems reverse the equation: There the *Purusha* (male) is seen as dead (*shava*) unless animated by *Prakriti* (female), which alone can change its status to *Shiva* (Lord) by granting it mastery over itself (Avalon, 1950, p. 27). These variant uses of these terms show that *Purusha* and *Prakriti* in the Indian metaphysical systems are an inextricable pair which generally has an uncomfortable relationship in the human experience that is given to us.

Integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* at all Levels of the Human Psyche

In the same chapter (“The Psychology of Self-Perfection”), Sri Aurobindo (1955/1999) held that the consciousness needs to be separated from the nature—not so as to put the latter to sleep but, rather, to allow for each to attain its own independent line of progress (pp. 767–770). One might also note that in world spirituality, one finds two kinds of spiritual drives: the drive towards

“freedom” and the drive towards “enjoyment.” The drive towards freedom leads to transcendence—an extra-cosmic realization. The drive towards enjoyment, on the other hand, represents the pole of magic (or occultism). Magic is the way of approaching Nature as a system of animistic laws that can be manipulated and enjoyed depending on one’s level of consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo (1999) upheld the legitimacy of both these drives relating transcendence to

“*Purusha/Vedanta*” and enjoyment to “*Prakriti/Tantra*” (pp. 43–44). This integrated duality of “*Purusha-Prakriti*,” or metaphysically-practically speaking of “*Vedanta-Tantra*,” can now be seen as an appropriate organizing principle for the architectonic of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*. One may align the general approaches of Sri Aurobindo’s system to the vertical dimension with the “*Yoga-Siddhi Chatusthaya*” at the center, with the “*Brahma Chatusthaya*” and “*Karma Chatusthaya*” forming its

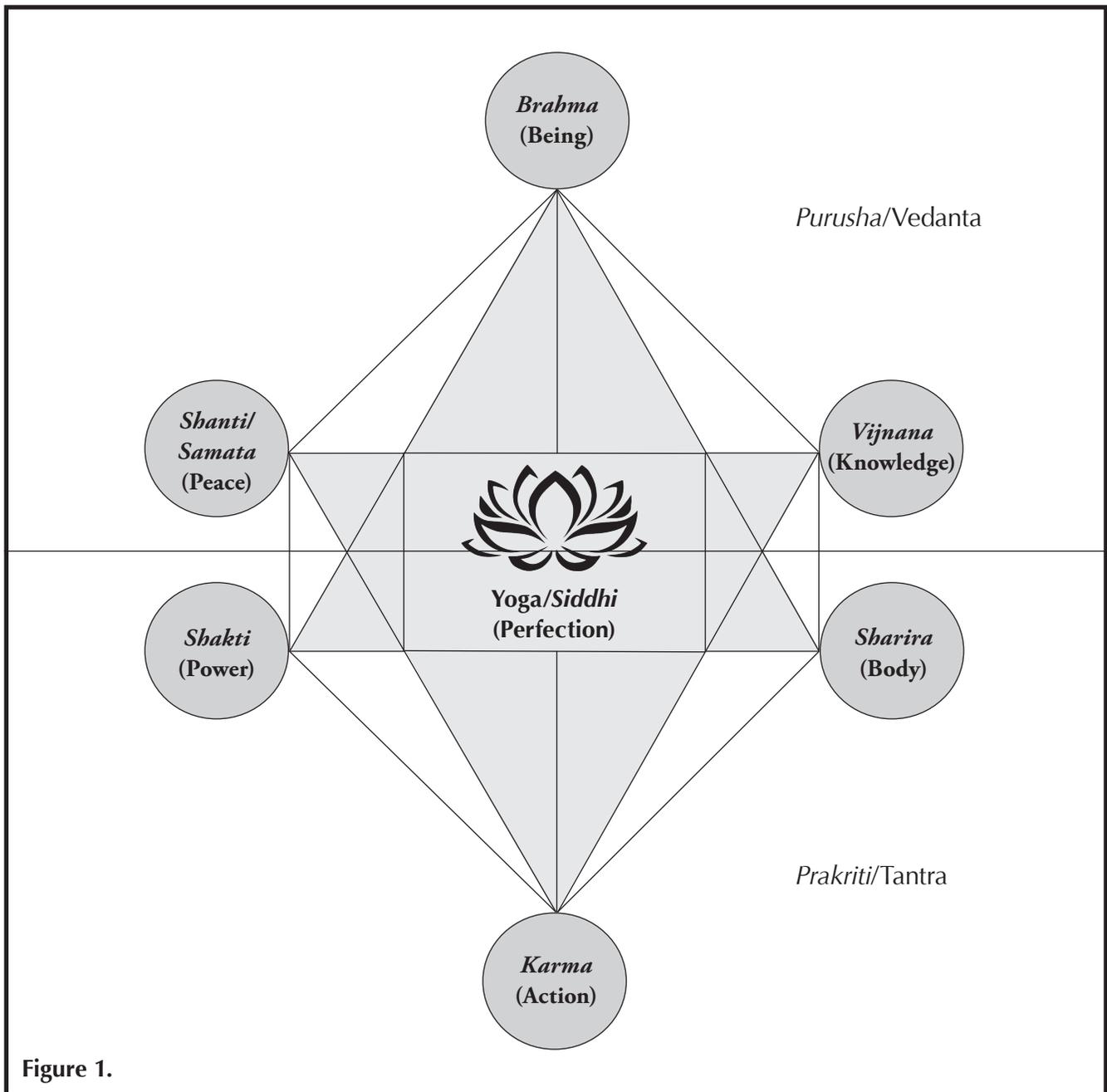


Figure 1.

upper and lower peripheries respectively. Of these, *Brahma Chatusthaya* would form the “Vedantic pole” while *Karma Chatusthaya* would form the “Tantric pole.” The specific approaches would then array themselves around these two poles: “*Shanti/Samata Chatusthaya*” and “*Vijnana Chatusthaya*” would flank *Brahma Chatusthaya* (Vedantic), and *Shakti* and *Sharira Chatusthaya*s would flank *Karma Chatusthaya* (Tantric). Adding all the connecting lines together, one might recognize the framework of Sri Aurobindo’s *yantra* as being the foundation of his own symbol which consists of intersecting upward and downward pointing triangles (Fig 1).

These two interlocking triangles of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are also a sign of their inextricability and involvement in each other, though now structured in a way that is conducive to their free interplay. The fractal involvement of these two principles may also be found at the micro-level, something Sri Aurobindo acknowledged in his architectonic through the naming of the “quartets” (*chatusthaya*). As can be imagined, these are the goals or “*siddhis*” of each of the seven approaches of yoga. Here one finds the four quartets portioned equally between *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. It would be beyond the scope of this essay to go into detail about these divisions in each case, but the example of the central approach, *Yoga* or *Siddhi Chatusthaya*, can illustrate the point. The four goals or *siddhis* of the *Siddhi Chatusthaya* are: (1) *shuddhi* (purification); (2) *mukti* (liberation); (3) *siddhi* (fulfillment); (4) and *bhukti* (enjoyment; Sri Aurobindo, 2001, p. 23). Here, the goals of purification and liberation belong to the transcendental, or *Purusha* pole, and those of enjoyment and fulfillment belong to the *Prakriti* pole. This division not only allows each of these poles to be developed independently, but it also reveals effective operational relations between them—eventually integrating them into a higher unity. Thus, one can see from the goals of the *Yoga*, or *siddhi Chatusthaya*, that purification and liberation, “Vedantic goals,” become the means for achieving enjoyment and fulfillment, “Tantric goals.” Sri Aurobindo (1955/1999) spoke of this relationship in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: “This [yoga] starts from the method of Vedanta to arrive at the aim of the Tantra” (p. 612).

Duality and Integration in the *Sapta Chatusthaya*

The Indian Yoga traditions have sought to reconcile this duality of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* through several approaches, but it may be argued that these attempts have not been conclusive or satisfying. Metaphysically, the reason for this difficulty has been identified by the Upanishads as the “ontology of separateness” which characterizes cosmic experience at all worldly levels, including the human. The Upanishads saw separative consciousness as the ontological consequence of an operation of *Brahman’s* conscious force, *Maya*, creating the conditions of *Avidya* (Ignorance) for the emergence of plurality.⁸

In Sri Aurobindo’s (2005) view, the dualism of inertial automatism versus consciousness is a consequence of this emergent cosmic experience (pp. 175–177). The Indian traditions of *darshana* and yoga accept the separative experience of *Avidya* as permanent for the cosmos, and hence not transformable. Instead, they propose an escape from *Avidya* in a transcendence, as has been seen with *Sankhya* or Advaita Vedanta (Sri Aurobindo, 2005, p. 695), or else, a soul migration to an extra-cosmic perfect world such as *Vaikuntha* of the Vaishnavs (p. 699), or Amitabha’s *sukhavati vyuha* (“Western Pure Land”) for some Mahayana Buddhists. Tantra proposes a certain degree of integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* through its esoteric anatomy of the *chakras* (nodes of consciousness-modalities along the spinal channel, *shushumna*), allowing for the emergence of a Divine conscious agency at each of these levels so as to employ nature’s instruments to their full extent (Avalon, 1950, pp. 279–286). However, even Tantra acknowledges a partiality to this possibility and holds its ultimate goal to be liberation from the cosmos, achieved in a trance of the *thousand-petalled lotus* (crown chakra) above the head (Avalon, 1950). The crown chakra, situated in relation to the body but outside it, grants access to the extra-cosmic dimension of *Vidya* where *Purusha* and *Prakriti* work in perfect union as a two-in-one pair—*Shiva-Shakti* or *Shiva Ardhanarishwara* of the *Shaiva Agamas* (Avalon, 1950, p. 27). However, whether in *Shakta* Tantra or Kashmir Shaivism, this

state can be experienced in its fullness only in deep *Samadhi* and not in an enduring waking state.

Sri Aurobindo (1955/1999) acknowledged the Vedantic distinction between *Vidya* and *Avidya* and accepted the *Sankhya* duality of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* as an experiential consequence of the ontology of *Avidya* (Sri Aurobindo, 2005, pp. 336–379). However, he refused to accept the permanence of *Avidya* for the cosmos (Sri Aurobindo, 2005, pp. 516–518). As touched on earlier, he saw this property of duality as an emergent evolutionary condition (Sri Aurobindo, 2005, pp. 516–517). Moreover, Sri Aurobindo (1999) believed that an adequate training of both *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, along the lines of one’s psychological makeup, could push the Tantric union of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* to a greater completeness in the individual by facilitating a waking realization in the crown chakra (pp. 805–806; Sri Aurobindo, 2001, pp. 1465–1466). By residing in the freedom (*mukti*) and unity consciousness of the crown chakra in one’s waking life (Sri Aurobindo, 2012, pp. 234–235), the integral yogi would transform the operations of the instrumental nature and thus achieve the *siddhi* of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, enjoying (*bhukti*) a Divine life as a consequence (Sri Aurobindo, 2001, p. 23).

Thus, in his formulation of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, Sri Aurobindo presented an architectonic, or *yantra*, of seven lines of discipline to prepare both the *Purusha* and the *Prakriti* in the *Avidya* so that they might pass seamlessly into a waking possession of the unity of the *Vidya*. Yet, how does this transition from the *Avidya* to the *Vidya* occur? He was not explicit about this process in his notes on the *Sapta Chatusthaya*. Later, in his epic poem *Savitri*, in a passage which appears to be autobiographical, Sri Aurobindo (1950/1997, Book I Canto 3) referred to this transition as occurring as if by a miracle at a certain point:

A static oneness and dynamic power
Descend in him, the integral godhead’s seals
(p. 24)

This conversion marks the integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*—a state that “descends” from the *Vidya* into the *Avidya* to give the fulfillment (*siddhi*) of the Yoga. This fulfillment is the manner in which one can understand the organization and dynamic

process of the first phase of Sri Aurobindo’s Yogic formulations—the formulation of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*.

At this point, three questions of interest can be addressed: Firstly, what was Sri Aurobindo’s understanding of the integral at this point? As has been seen, at this time the integral for him is the integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* at all levels of the human psyche. Secondly, for whom was the *Sapta Chatusthaya* written, who was its intended audience? As a private diary record, Sri Aurobindo wrote the *Sapta Chatusthaya* for himself; it was not written for public readership. However, this is not an entirely satisfactory answer, as Sri Aurobindo has himself repeatedly asserted: “there are multitudes within oneself” (Sri Aurobindo, 1999, p. 182); from this viewpoint, it is the Indian tradition that he could be said to be addressing. The *Sapta Chatusthaya* builds its *yantric* architecture from major strands of the Indian Yoga traditions—Vedanta, Tantra, Gita and Pancharatra Vaishnavism—and could be said to be addressed to a community of modern yogi-scholars well versed with the Indian Yoga discourse and engaged in an East-West discursive hermeneutics that may be thought of as “modern Yoga studies.” Such a community of readers was not formalized at the time of its writing, but in retrospect, one may see such an act as the writing of these diaries to be an early step in the direction of a modern Yoga studies, through imagining such a readership. Thirdly and lastly, what, if anything, is the central emphasis in this formulation? It may be that Sri Aurobindo’s (1999) central emphasis was the practice of “equality,” following the Gita’s injunction: *samatwam yoga ucchyate* (equality is called Yoga; p. 692). Not only is the Quartet of equality one that spills over its boundaries and enters every other Quartet, but the central practice of purification (*shuddhi*) in the *siddhi Chatusthaya* rests on the practice of “equality” (p. 669).

Second Version of the Integral Yoga: The Triple Transformation

After the return of the Mother in 1920, and more so, after the experience of 1926, a new vocabulary and formulation began to find expression in Sri Aurobindo’s writings. The Sanskrit

terminology of the Indian Yoga traditions continued alongside this new terminology. As such, this terminology gradually assimilated some of the older vocabularies but thinned out the rest of the Sanskritisms, to become the second formulation of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga—which may be called the beginnings of a “transpersonal languaging.” As mentioned earlier, the epistemological framework of this version, using the new vocabulary, found its most complete expression in the chapter titled “The Triple Transformation,” which was added as part of the 1940 revision (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1940/2005, p. 1113) of *The Life Divine* (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, pp. 922–952). Regarding the new terminology, perhaps he invented only the term Overmind; the rest of his vocabulary was current among philosophical, countercultural, and occult circles in Europe. A majority of these terms were current in France at the time, particularly in the circles in which the Richards were active—and continue to be current in French philosophical traditions. These terms are the distinctions of *material*, *vital*, and *psychic consciousness*, which were used by Sri Aurobindo to refer to the discontinuities and heterogeneities of consciousness within the human being. In using these more internationally accessible terms, Sri Aurobindo was partly translating the schemata of consciousness (i.e., *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *chaitya*) from the Upanishads. But, for him, these distinctions were also related to philosophical ideas of evolution that he had developed, in which these forms of consciousness were emergent modes.

One can find striking similarities of terminology and understanding in some contemporary French thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) and Gilbert Simondon (1924–1989). Simondon's (1989) process metaphysics of individuation, for example, refers to material, vital, and *psychic individuation*—terms borrowed by him from an earlier generation of French thinkers such as Henri Bergson (1859–1941). Bergson's (1911/2007) *vitalism* and Nietzsche's (1896) *Übermensch* (“superman”) undoubtedly played their part in Sri Aurobindo's new vocabulary and formulation as well—adapted to his original (albeit related) purposes. The term *psychic*, which began to take center stage in this new formulation, was also current

in the French intellectual milieu. The continuing legacy of this use may be found in the term *psychic individuation* employed by recent philosophers such as Simondon (1989) and Bernard Stiegler (2006). Their use is derived from earlier uses from a time in France contemporary with Sri Aurobindo's use where the word had the more general sense of subjectivity. As with the other terms such as *vital* or *superman-Supermind*, Sri Aurobindo adapted *psychic* to his own purposes, which he related to its original Greek sense of “soul”—the innermost personal essence of a being. Moreover, as with other such terms, he made an attempt to inflect the word so as to hold cross-cultural connotations. In the chapter on the triple transformation, for instance, Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005) included a number of starting quotes that provide Indian antecedents for this term—though, it is also evident that there is no simple word in Sanskrit that translates to the content he attributes to “*psychic*” or covers the full metaphysical scope which he gave it in this chapter (p. 922). What is clear from these quotations (e.g., Rig Veda, *Katha Upanishad*, and *Bhagavad Gita*) is that the *psychic* being is a “fire within” which needs to be extracted carefully from its involved state, that it is the reincarnating element in us, and that it is the innermost person (p. 922).

Some overlap has already been shown between this terminology and that of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, specifically in the relations between Krishna and Overmind, and Vijnana and Supermind. But in this phase, terms such as Overmind and Supermind receive much greater elaboration and the emergence of the *psychic* being takes precedence over all else as the initiating condition of the integral Yoga. In the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, it is only in the *Shakti Chatusthaya* (the Quartet of the Goddess) that one can find elements relating directly to the *psychic* being. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, this concept is further elaborated in the chapter, “Soul-Force and the Fourfold Personality” (Sri Aurobindo, 1955/1999, p. 740) where an aspect of the *psychic* being (viz. *viryā*) is discussed. Here, one can find the expressive capacities of the *psychic* being and its intimate relations, including identity with the Divine Mother and her expressive modes as the differentiating consciousnesses of Knowledge (*Maheshwari*),

Power (*Mahakali*), Delight (*Mahalakshmi*), and Skill-in-Works (*Mahasaraswati*). The manifestation of the soul requires a consideration of these expressive modes—a cultivation that is enjoined through surrender to the Divine Shakti.

In the chapter on the triple transformation (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, pp. 922–952), an expanded scope of the psychic being is explicated. Here, it is seen that the central being in the human, the innermost person, who is also his/her Divine immanence, has the function of integrating the mind-life-body complex in an individuation of the cosmic nature. However, in this new taxonomy of integration, one finds the psychic integration to be the first of three levels of integration. The psychic integrates the personality from within. It does so by its capacity to integrate the mental, vital, and physical personalities of the human being—each of which has emerged separately in evolution and hence is discontinuous with the others. The psychic is also a first level of integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, as it is a being with qualities—a soul person with a soul personality. The emergence of the psychic being becomes the key to this integration of the personality.⁹

However, this internal integration is not enough. There is the heterogeneity of the cosmos and the question of seeing the One in all things. In a Cosmic Consciousness, for instance, each being, thing, or phenomenon is perceived as an aspect, hence a portion of the Whole. The One is experienced behind each being, and behind the entire cosmic manifestation (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, pp. 950–951).¹⁰ Arriving at that experience is the foundation of the spiritual transformation, which draws on the power of an ascending series of cosmic mind planes culminating in the Overmind, to spiritualize the human nature. In each of these transformations, there is a double achievement—the realization of a consciousness and the transformation of the nature by that consciousness. For example, there is the realization of the psychic being and the psychic transformation of the nature through the control of the psychic being. Similarly, there is identification with the Overmind and the transformation of the nature by that consciousness. This transformation, indeed, is the significance of the 1926 realization

of Sri Aurobindo when the Overmind, as he put it, “descended in his body” (Nirodbaran, 1990, p. 189). Sri Aurobindo wrote of a further transformation that went beyond the mixed Knowledge and Ignorance (*Avidya-Vidya*) of the cosmic reality (Sri Aurobindo, 1955/1999, p. 255; Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, p. 292) into what he called the “Identity Consciousness of Supermind” (*Vijnana*) (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, pp. 951–952). In this realization, all is experienced as the manifestation of the One. In each particle is the One, making itself into everything, and accessing itself in all things.¹¹

In a theoretical way, in contemporary philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) have adapted the term “rhizome” to describe such effects of “multiplicity” (pp. 6–8). Rhizomatic power means that the whole is present as creative power in each particle. For example, a rhizome can become a leaf, a root, or any part of the plant at any point (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The “omni-possibility” of the plant is present in its manifesting power at each point. In contemporary biology, the stem cell is an example of this kind of power. The “possibilities of a whole” are not the same as “parts of the whole” (as in the Overmental case), but the whole is present as real creative power self-manifesting dynamically in each of its possibilities. This creative power can be understood as the analogue of the *Supramental*, or *Identity Consciousness*, where everything is present in each point—not only as a perception, but also as a power, expressed as the ability to become. However, even the Overmental and Supramental realizations are integrated within the expanded development of the psychic being, which is the true person in us who becomes identified with Overmind and-or Supermind. This is Sri Aurobindo’s epistemic formulation of the triple transformation.

Comparison Between the Triple Transformation and the *Sapta Chatusthaya*

To summarize a comparison of the triple transformation with the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, both systems continue to hold the ultimate goal of a realized dynamic integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* in the “*Vijnana*-Supermind” plane of the *Vidya*, experienced in a waking life on earth. The *Sapta Chatusthaya* attempts this dynamic integration

through a disentanglement of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* components for the different psychological aspects of the nature while allowing each of these to realize its own full spiritual development. This development is seen as the preparation for a transition to the realized integration in *Vijnana* (Supermind). The triple transformation identifies three ontological centers not made explicit in the *Sapta Chatusthaya*. The triple transformation utilizes the realization of two of these centers (i.e., the psychic being and Overmind) along with their transformative powers as preparation leading to the realization of the third center (Supermind) and its power of transformation and integration. The triple transformation thus privileges an individuation process with the full emergence to Divine Consciousness of the psychic being through three stages, akin to the “triple strides” of Vishnu in the *Atharva Veda* (VII: 26) or the three steps of the *Vamana Avatara* in the *Vishnu Purana*. This explicit personal ontology is missing or left implicit in the *Sapta Chatusthaya* but is foregrounded as the method of the triple transformation.

The three questions set out earlier may now be answered: First of all, what was Sri Aurobindo’s understanding of the integral at this point? It continues to be the integration of *Purusha* and *Prakriti* but through the identification of three progressive sources of integration that also represent a development of the “person”—the psychic being, the Overmind, and the Supermind. Second, for whom was it written or who was his audience? The audience here continues to be what could be called a community of modern scholar-practitioners, but now more international than in the first case, through a consideration that may be called transpersonal studies. Finally, what, if anything, is the central emphasis in this formulation? The central emphasis seems to be placed on the emergence of the psychic being, or soul personality, its power to integrate the inner being and then to integrate its identifications with the Overmind and Supermind.

A fact to note in both the formulations of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* and the triple transformation is that the question of how or by whose agency the transition from *Avidya* to *Vidya* occurs is not answered. In both cases, the assumption seems to be that sufficient preparation along the lines indicated

would automatically eventuate in this transition. However, one might identify a third formulation belonging to the post-1926 phase in which this question becomes central to Sri Aurobindo’s formulation. After his entry into seclusion in 1926, and the Mother’s concurrent assumption of the leadership role over the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo wrote many letters on the Mother’s spiritual place in his Yoga and his Ashram. Some of these letters—articulating powerfully the spiritual-metaphysical content that he had put into the Mother’s presence and place in his Yoga—were compiled into a small book titled *The Mother* (Sri Aurobindo, 2012b). The very first lines of this booklet prepared the way for this new articulation. Sri Aurobindo (2012b) wrote, “There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavor, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below, and a supreme Grace from above that answers” (p. 3). In essence, this formulation is a reduction of the yoga to the relation between the psychic being and the Divine Mother, with the agency of the latter given the supreme position and that of the former expressed primarily as surrender and in a slightly more expanded form as “aspiration, rejection, and surrender” (p. 6) or, in another place, “faith, sincerity, and surrender” (p. 8).

Third Version of the Integral Yoga: Surrender to the Divine Shakti

Chapters Two and Six of *The Mother* (Sri Aurobindo, 2012b) are the most explicit in terms of the metaphysical role of the Mother. For instance, in Chapter Two, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

In Yoga also it is the Divine who is the Sadhaka and the Sadhana; it is his Shakti with her light, power, knowledge, consciousness, Ananda, acting upon the adhara and, when it is opened to her, pouring into it with these Divine forces that make the Sadhana possible. . . . In proportion as the surrender and self-consecration progress the Sadhaka becomes conscious of the Divine Shakti doing the Sadhana, pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the freedom and perfection of the Divine Nature. The more this conscious process replaces his

own effort, the more rapid and true becomes his progress. But it cannot completely replace the necessity of personal effort until the surrender and consecration are pure and complete from top to bottom. (p. 7)

And in Chapter Six, he added:

The One whom we adore as the Mother is the Divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence, one and yet so many-sided that to follow her movement is impossible even for the quickest mind and for the freest and most vast intelligence. The Mother is the consciousness and force of the Supreme and far above all she creates. (p. 14)

This chapter also maps to the chapter titled “Soul Force and the Fourfold Personality” from *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo, 1955/1999, p. 740) in its delineation of the lines of manifestation of the Divine Mother and the expressive powers of the psychic being. In terms of the *Sapta Chatusthaya*, then, it leans most heavily on the *Shakti Chatusthaya*, the Quartet of the Mother. The inner attitudes of faith, sincerity, and surrender that are the primary properties of the psychic being are already enjoined in the *Shakti Chatusthaya*. One can thus see the *Shakti Chatusthaya* as another instance where—without naming it as such—Sri Aurobindo was invoking the psychic emergence. In the *Karma Chatusthaya* (Quartet of Works) that draws on the yoga of the Gita, surrender to Krishna and Kali (the Divine and his *Shakti*) form the central practice. This surrender also plays a key role in the *Shakti Chatusthaya* in the guise of *sraddha* (faith) in the Divine Mother. The emergence of the psychic being, as the first step of the triple transformation, is also made the primary concern in the second formulation (Sri Aurobindo, 1940/2005, pp. 934–939) of the yoga. However, here, this emergence is invoked through any contact with the Divine (pp. 934–935), not specifically through reliance on the Grace of the Mother, as in the third formulation, represented by the text *The Mother* and in letters pertaining to the Mother (Sri Aurobindo, 2012b). In fact, Sri Aurobindo made this relationship explicit, as he elucidated in a letter that the Mother, by her gaze, connects a person to his or her psychic being and, by her touch, she brings the

psychic being to the surface.

One might say that the goals of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* and the triple transformation continue to be highlighted in Sri Aurobindo’s third formulation, which held that surrender to the Mother represented the principal method of his Yoga, but the agency of the Yoga shifted in this formulation from the individual with his or her psychological capacities, to the Mother. In a way, one may see this displaced agency as the central method of Tantra, which views the Mother as the exclusive actor in the cosmos. Thus, one might be justified in saying that in this formulation of his Yoga, Sri Aurobindo had shifted from using the method of the Vedanta to using the method of the Tantra as a means to achieving the ends of the Vedanta and the Tantra. In Chapter Six of *The Mother*, Sri Aurobindo (2012b) made this primary role and agency of the Mother most explicit:

The Mother’s power and not any human endeavor and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal’s Ananda. (p. 26)

The phrase “rending the lid,” was a reference to verse 15 of the *Isha Upanishad*: “The face of Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of the Truth, for sight.”¹²

Sri Aurobindo identified this “golden lid” as the line dividing the *Vidya* and the *Avidya*, or to use the terms of the *Sapta Chatusthaya* and the triple transformation, the line dividing the *Vidya-Avidya* consciousness of Overmind from *Vijnana* of Supermind. The “Fosterer” who is identified as the agent in the Upanishad that can remove this lid, is “the Sun,” *Surya*, who is also qualified as the “sole seer” (*rishi*), “ordainer” (*yama*), and “power of the father of creatures” (*prajapati*). According to Sri Aurobindo, the Sun is the Vedic image for the Supermind (*Vijnana*). However, it is rather the “power” or *Shakti* of Supermind, *Vijnamaya Shakti*, that he equates with agency that can “rend the lid” in *The Mother* (p. 26). In his view, a pre-existent Power keeps the division between the *Vidya* and

Avidya in place at the cosmic level, and it is only this Power that can remove the veil it keeps in place. At the individual level, such a rending of the lid is an “abnormal” and extraordinary achievement, possible by the power of Yoga and the Grace of the *Shakti*. But Sri Aurobindo (2013) envisaged any such individual *siddhi* as a possibility opening the way for a transformation of cosmic Nature—a generalized possibility for all humans and eventually all creatures (p. 414). The veil is an act of God, and only God can remove the veil. The traditions that discuss this divine aspect speak of it as a feminine power—the *Shakti* that is the Will, or *tapas*, of the Divine Being, or the *Maya* of *Brahman*. In this way, it is only the *Maya* that can remove the power of *Maya*.¹³ This revelation is why Sri Aurobindo held that surrender to the Mother is the sole agency by which this realization can be achieved.¹⁴

To wrap up this discussion, the three guiding questions are presented as follows: First, what was Sri Aurobindo’s understanding of the integral at this point? It continues to remain the achievement of the *Vijnana*, or Supramental consciousness of the *Vidya*. Second, for whom was it written? Documented in the form of letters during his seclusion, his writing was clearly for the people practicing his Yoga in his Ashram, or outside, those who had accepted him and the Mother as their gurus and the physical embodiments of the Yoga. Third, is there a change of emphasis? Yes, the entire emphasis falls on the surrender to the Divine Mother in her physical embodiment as Mirra Alfassa, the Mother, as Sri Aurobindo had declared her.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is clear that though there are profound continuities in the objectives and practices of these versions of the Integral Yoga, and though these versions were directed at different readerships and communities of practice, there are also major shifts in nuance and understanding represented by them. In his last written works, such as *The Supramental Manifestation on Earth* (Sri Aurobindo, 1950/1998, pp. 517–588), one may observe what may be yet another incipient version, perhaps appropriate for future generations. Indeed, such an “incalculable” trajectory is symptomatic

of the integral yoga, following in his own case a hermeneutic praxis based on scholarship, intuition, and experience. One of the conclusions pointed to by this study is that Sri Aurobindo viewed his personal yoga practice as one of continuous and unending evolution, and by example demonstrated for others how they could do the same. In attempting to practice the integral yoga today, one needs to keep this in mind and ought not to expect a mentally predicable journey. Still, given this caveat, the formulations of the integral yoga will remain primary hermeneutic guideposts for practice.

Given this, and in the wake of the physical lives of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, what is one to make of this legacy, if one wishes to practice the integral yoga? I would say one needs to integrate all three formulations. The achievement of the integral yoga is contingent on the waking transition from the condition of *Avidya* (Ignorance/divided consciousness) through the *Vidya-Avidya* (Overmind/Cosmic Consciousness) to the *Vidya* (Supermind/waking transcendental Integrality). The separation and independent development of the *Purusha* and *Prakriti* elements of the different psychological constituents of the human nature as described in the *Sapta Chatusthaya* is a preparation towards the ontological developments of the triple transformation and the detailed working of the “engine” of aspiration and surrender to the Divine Mother. The purification of the nature to allow for the emergence of the psychic being and its aspiration and surrender to the Divine Mother is the central practice of the yoga. For some, the Mother may mean the astral reality of the embodied Person, Mirra Alfassa; for others, it could be the eternal supreme Divine Mother, Parashakti of the Tantras. The integration of the body-life-mind complex around the psychic being and its expansion into the cosmic consciousness (the Overmental realization) and consequent transformation can give ontological content to the process of aspiration and surrender. These preparations can lead one to the gates of the supramental consciousness, where the final transformation becomes possible by the Grace of the Divine Mother.

In concluding, some lines of further research may be indicated for the exploration of the

concerns raised here. This study of Sri Aurobindo's formulations and their intended audiences has provided an indication for the spectrum of possible practitioners for the integral yoga. These include those accepting Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as gurus and/or divine embodiments; those not necessarily accepting them as gurus and belonging to Indian yoga traditions; and those not necessarily accepting them as gurus and open to a creative contemporary transpersonal praxis.

Through a consideration of Sri Aurobindo's formulations, I have indicated that surrender to the Divine Mother can be seen as a powerful, perhaps central component of the integral yoga. Yet, depending on the community of practice, the specific focus may differ. For disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, this surrender is made to the living presence of Mirra Alfassa, seen as a physical embodiment of the Supreme Mother. I have indicated that for those belonging to Indian yoga traditions who do not accept Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as their gurus, some aspect of the Tantric *Parashakti* may serve this role. In the *Sapta Chatusthaya* phase, it was Kali who served this role for Sri Aurobindo. In his later formulations, such as in his letters or his text *The Mother* (Sri Aurobindo, 2012b) or *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Part IV, Chapter XVIII) "Faith and Shakti" (Sri Aurobindo, 1999, pp. 771–782), he has used a language that can be said to trace a continuity with the *Sapta Chatusthaya* in its Tantric and *Agamic* terminology.

Yet, there is no requirement here for a surrender to any physical embodiment. Moreover, the language is transpersonal enough to lend itself to a formulation adaptable to non-Indian cultures or contemporary creative traditions of Mother worship. The caveat here would be the attention to integrality in the conceptualization of the Mother, which Sri Aurobindo defines in this context as the integration of the transformative powers of Wisdom, Strength, Love, and Skill (represented by the Indian goddesses Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, and Mahasaraswati but adaptable by the practitioner in his/her own terms). One may push the boundary further towards abstraction and ask whether this surrender needs to be to a goddess at all or whether it can be an ungendered formless

Consciousness expressing these qualities that can be the subject-object of adoration and surrender. An integral yoga, founded in the physical body and its transformation is strongly facilitated by a post-anthropocentric conception of divinity into which one grows through the practice. This, in my opinion, is the primary reason for the relations with gendered and physically conceived deities in Tantric and *Agamic* yoga practice. However, in Sri Aurobindo's view, there are no absolute rules, and the proof of a path is in its success. Hence, when thinking of further lines of research, this cannot be merely researched through scholarship but must include experimental praxis.

In the area of scholarship, for the *Sapta Chatusthaya* phase, a careful study of the diary entries in Sri Aurobindo's (2001) *Record of Yoga* corresponding to the formulation of the Seven Quartets would be very useful in correlating his praxis and experiences to his formulations of the yoga. Other evidence of his personal notes on yoga may be found in the texts *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (Sri Aurobindo, 2011) and *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest* (Sri Aurobindo, 2006) from his *Complete Works* (Sri Aurobindo, 1997–2018).

A systematic perusal of the historiography of Sri Aurobindo's major texts would be fruitful to trace the shifts in emphasis, goal, and practice from version to version. A good example of this is the earliest *Arya* version (Sri Aurobindo, 1955/1990) of Part One of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, "The Yoga of Works" which, compared with the final version prepared for publication in 1949 (Sri Aurobindo, 1955/1999), sheds light on major areas of new understanding added during the last thirty years of his life. Sri Aurobindo's epic poem *Savitri*, on which he worked till close to his last days, is considered to contain his and the Mother's spiritual autobiographies (*The Mother*, 2004, p. 24), particularly through the personae of Aswapati and *Savitri* respectively. A close study of the experiences of these two and their correlation with *The Record of Yoga* (Sri Aurobindo, 2001) in the case of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's (1983) *Agenda* in the case of the Mother are likely to yield updated correspondences and perhaps new data in terms of representations of the integral yoga.

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo's (1950/2009) *Collected Poems* contain records of several of his experiences, which could be fruitfully correlated with statements of the objectives of his yoga and its formulations.

Notes

1. In an aphorism written around 1913, the period of maintaining the diaries, Sri Aurobindo (1997) wrote: "427. I did not know for some time whether I loved Krishna best or Kali; when I loved Kali, it was loving myself, but when I loved Krishna, I loved another, and still it was myself with whom I was in love. Therefore, I came to love Krishna better even than Kali" (p. 483).
2. The earliest instances of the use of "Overmind" can be found in his diary entries from 29th October, 1927 (Sri Aurobindo, 2001, p. 1272).
3. In one of his letters to a disciple, Sri Aurobindo (2012a) stated his opinion that the distinction between Overmind and Supermind had been traditionally missed due to the similarities between the two (p. 83).
4. Sri Aurobindo's early revisions of his major *Arya* texts, *The Life Divine* and the *Synthesis of Yoga*, the first undertaken in 1939–1940 (Sri Aurobindo, 2005, pp. 1111–1113) and the second in 1932 (Sri Aurobindo, 1999, p. 914) introduce his new terminology overmind and psychic being along with a more uniform use of supermind. This terminology becomes more frequent in his descriptions and teachings as found in his letters to disciples from this period on.
5. Overmind and Supermind relate to the Cosmic and Transcendental statuses of Consciousness respectively and grant access to these ranges for human beings. Regarding Overmind, Sri Aurobindo (2012a) wrote, "Overmind is the highest source of the cosmic consciousness available to the embodied being in the Ignorance" (p. 152). And regarding Supermind, "In the ancient Indian system there is only one triune supernal, *Sachchidananda*. Or if you speak of the upper hemisphere as the supernal, there are three, *Sat* plane, *Chit* plane, and *Ananda* plane. The Supermind could be added as a fourth, as it draws upon the other three and belongs to the upper hemisphere" (p. 83).
6. It may be argued that *The Mother* or its constituting essays did not specifically mention Mirra Alfassa, so to designate it/them to the central message of surrender to Mirra Alfassa may be suspect. The letters were written and the book was published in 1928, shortly after Sri Aurobindo established the practice of referring to Mirra as the Mother and had designated her the spiritual and material guide of his followers in the ashram. In response to a devotee who asked on 17 August 1938, "Do you not refer to the Mother (our Mother) in your book *The Mother*?" Sri Aurobindo (2012b) replied explicitly and monosyllabically, "Yes" (p. 31).
7. "The ordinary mental standards will be exceeded on the basis of this dynamic equality. The eye of his will must look beyond to a purity of Divine being, a motive of Divine will-power guided by Divine knowledge of which his perfected nature will be the engine, yantra" (Sri Aurobindo 1955/1999, p. 705).
8. *Maya* and *Avidya* are categories that pepper the Upanishads. Due to the oral traditions to which these texts belong and the cryptic and proto-philosophic nature of their language use, the relations between these categories, and between them and the rest of reality, are not explicitly made. They have been inferred and clearly articulated in later texts, e.g. *Samskhepa Saririka* I.20. Sri Aurobindo (2005) also accepted this view (pp. 175-177).
9. Sri Aurobindo (1940/2005) also described and discussed the role of the psychic being in another chapter of *The Life Divine* titled "The Double Soul in Man": "It is the concealed Witness and Control, the hidden Guide, the Daemon of Socrates, the inner light or inner voice of the mystic. It is that which endures and is imperishable in us from birth to birth, untouched by death, decay or corruption, an indestructible spark of the Divine. Not the unborn Self or Atman, for the Self even in presiding over the existence of the individual is aware always of its universality and transcendence, it is yet its

deputy in the forms of Nature, the individual soul, caitya purusa, supporting mind, life and body, standing behind the mental, the vital, the subtle-physical being in us and watching and profiting by their development and experience" (p. 238).

10. "Overmind Energy proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending Unity. It takes each Aspect or Power and gives to it an independent action in which it acquires a full separate importance and is able to work out, we might say, its own world of creation." (Aurobindo, 2005, p. 293).
11. "Above, the formula of the One eternally stable and immutable; below, the formula of the Many which, eternally mutable, seeks but hardly finds in the flux of things a firm and immutable standing-point; between, the seat of all trinities, of all that is biune, of all that becomes Many-in-One and yet remains One-in-Many because it was originally One that is always potentially Many. This intermediary term is therefore the beginning and end of all creation and arrangement, the Alpha and the Omega, the starting-point of all differentiation, the instrument of all unification, originative, executive and consummative of all realised or realisable harmonies. It has the knowledge of the One, but is able to draw out of the One its hidden multitudes; it manifests the Many, but does not lose itself in their differentiations. And shall we not say that its very existence points back to Something beyond our supreme perception of the ineffable Unity—Something ineffable and mentally inconceivable not because of its unity and indivisibility, but because of its freedom from even these formulations of our mind; Something beyond both unity and multiplicity? That would be the utter Absolute and Real which yet justifies to us both our knowledge of God and our knowledge of the world." (Aurobindo, 2005, p. 134).
12. Translated by Sri Aurobindo (2003)—see p. 9.
13. "Liberation is, according to this system, the expansion of the empirical consciousness in

and through and by means of the world into that Perfect Consciousness which is the Experience-Whole. This can only be by the grace of the Mother, for who otherwise can loosen the knot of *Maya* which She Herself has tied?" (Avalon, 1918, ch. 20).

14. "The power that mediates between the sanction and the call is the presence and power of the Divine Mother. The Mother's power and not any human endeavor and tapasya can alone rend the lid and tear the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Light and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda" (Aurobindo, 2012b, p. 26).
15. Referring to his teacher Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, Aurobindo (2011) wrote: "he was made by a Voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will, a principle or rather a seed-force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or system or dogma or Shastra towards where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter" (p. 240).
16. For many of these lines of possible further research, I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers of this article.

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