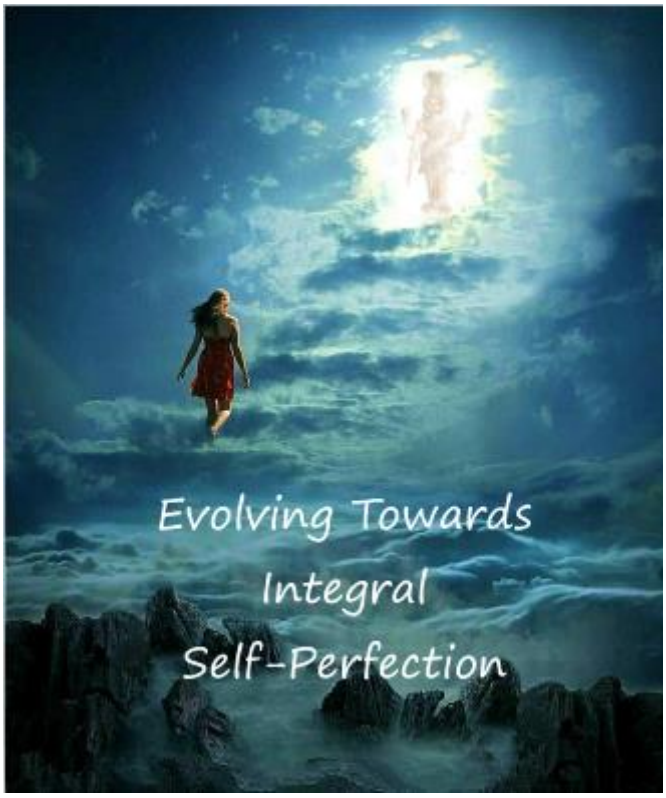


Evolving Towards Integral Self-Perfection

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Abstract

For those who have received the clarion call for union with the Divine and self-consecration for His work here on earth, daily life changes completely. To become a suitable servitor of the Divine Consciousness requires a proactive and single-minded aspiration of evolving towards integral self-perfection. The terms 'evolving', 'integral' and 'self-perfection' have specific, and yet very comprehensive imports in the Integral Yoga lexicon that need to be appreciated, internalized and put into daily practice towards Siddhi. 'Freedom from' has to be complemented by a higher 'Freedom to', the practice of which has to be deployed both in inner and outer action, for spiritual and material perfection, with the embodied soul operating committedly in the world but from a station untroubled by its vicissitudes. Psychicisation is the first step, but has to be accompanied or followed by spiritualisation which entails the realisation of the Self both in the static and dynamic poise. This paper outlines the principles and practices to embark on the vertical commerce required for the transformation of the nature, and orients the Yogin towards the attainment of spiritual equality and the receipt of spiritual power, the two foundational requirements for the divine action.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo, Integral Yoga, Siddhi Chatusthaya

Abbreviations and Terms Used

SA	Sri Aurobindo
TSoY	The Synthesis of Yoga
TLD	The Life Divine
EotG	Essays on the Gita
CWM	Conversations with the Mother, Q & A series of volumes
EDaH	Essays Divine and Human

Yoga	Union with the Divine for his work in the world
divine	When used as an adjective rather than as the noun (Divine)
Purusha	Soul or consciousness, usually static and aloof of movement
Prakriti	Nature or power of consciousness, dynamic and ever-changing
Adhara	That in which the consciousness is contained, the mind-life-body complexus
Sadhana	The concentrated spiritual effort undertaken for the Yoga
Sadhaka	The spiritual aspirant who conducts the Sadhana
Jivatman	The Individualized Atman/Self, whose delegate in the manifestation is the soul
Tamasic	Relating to Tamas – the quality (mode of nature) of inertia and sloth
Sattvic	Relating to Sattva – the quality of balance and harmony
Rajasic	Relating to Rajas – the quality of kinesis and passion
Gunas	The three modes of nature's working in man's lower status of existence
Swabhava	Inner nature, essential character, spiritual temperament
Swadharma	Outer occupation, work or avocation

Evolving Towards Integral Self-Perfection

Appreciating Integrality

The Integral Yoga, in the opinion and experience of the writer, is the most comprehensive and complete consummation of the hidden impulsion behind, and aeonian labour of manifest creation in the cosmos. There are at least four dimensions of 'integrality' that merit a reasonably thorough understanding for the aspiring Yogin so that the difficult and prolonged endeavour of Yoga becomes meaningful and enjoyable.

Integrality of Aim and Object

To appreciate the aim and object of the Integral Yoga and how it compares and contrasts with various Godward paths in human history, it would be helpful to examine the mutuality of 'Description' and 'Prescription' through the lens of spiritual philosophy. By 'Description' here is meant the conception of the Divine and his relationship with, and purpose of creation. By 'Prescription' here is meant the specific spiritual path adopted and its constitution commensurate with the 'Description'.

If the Description of the Divine is that of an extra-cosmic entity (one who stands outside the cosmos) who imposes rules or canons on his subjects in a temporary world the obedience of which determine the passage to a more permanent 'Heaven' or 'Hell', then the Prescription would be a sort of moral-ethical compliance under a carrot-stick motivational compass with fear as the dominant vibe of mortal existence.

If the descriptive conception is an ineffable reality that has created a life of transient and fleeting sensations oscillating between pleasure and pain with no reliable foundation of phenomenal permanence, then the logical path would be a tolerant and avoidant renunciation of the creative movements towards the peace of an individual liberation and a comportment of moderation to engineer a safe Karmic passage whilst in the middle of the chaos.

If the Divine is conceived as a monistic spirit whose manifestation is a persistent and deceptive illusion that is meant to ensnare us, (referred to as 'Maya' in a somewhat etymologically incorrect sense), then the prescriptive direction would be a unilateral focus on

the Absolute with a dissociation from, and even abrogation of the spatio-temporal existence to escape the cycle of birth and death.

If the Divine is the sole gravitational attractor for pure union bereft of any other purpose in and of his creation, then the love-lorn heart embarks on self-dissolution and world-aloofness for the sake of the ecstasy of the merger.

A careful examination of the aforementioned four Description-Prescription scenarios, with various permutations and combinations of the constituent elements therein, offers us glimpses of the Abrahamic, Nihilistic, Ascetic-Illusionist and Devotional-Mystic orientations that have dominated the cultural zeitgeist of the East and the West. Since Spirit is infinite, Nature allows and even welcomes infinite approaches to the Spirit, from which the named paths are but approximate generalisations of patterns.

Integral Yoga recognizes the time-appropriate validity of each of these orientations in the evolutionary arc of the self-exceeding human aspiration, and yet proceeds beyond them towards a greater aim and object. The Integral Yogic description of the Divine is a Conscious Being omnipresent in a single reality in which all creation is an unstoppable expression of his delight, which, by virtue of his immanence in us, is also our birth-right and ultimate possibility and inevitability. Our path, then, is an ongoing and integral self-perfecting of our faculties and unleashing of our latent capacities towards a total fulfilment in our becoming, till we are able to experience what the Divine experiences, full-spectrum and ad-infinitum. Unlike in the other four scenarios which entail a disavowal of the manifest universe in some way or the other, Integral Yoga is a totally affirmative vision and praxis in which nature or Prakriti is the instrumentation of soul or Purusha to be cultivated and perfected and not an impediment to be rejected and discarded.

'Spirit is the crown of universal existence; Matter is its basis; Mind is the link between the two. Spirit is that which is eternal; Mind and Matter are its workings. Spirit is that which is concealed and has to be revealed; mind and body are the means by which it seeks to reveal itself. Spirit is the image of the Lord of the Yoga; mind and body are the means He has provided for reproducing that image in phenomenal existence. All Nature is an attempt

at a progressive revelation of the concealed Truth, a more and more successful reproduction of the divine image.' (SA, TSoY, p. 29)

There have been other affirmative paths of compassion and humanistic service, harnessing and enjoyment of the powers of nature, purification and chiselling of the mind-life-body complexus, consecration and ego-effacement in work – but for reasons too complex to enumerate in this paper, they fall short of the total transformation remit of the Integral Yoga down to the outermost elements and lowest recesses from the highest summits.

Integrality of the Journey

Having appreciated the aim and object, the question arises whether the journey delivers to that – to which the answer is a resounding 'Yes'. The Triple Transformation process is the quickest construct for appreciating the integrality of the journey, even though the construct can only come alive in the experience of the Sadhana.

The Psychic Transformation is the centralized governance and harmonisation of the various parts of the being from the inmost true self, the soul, and the consent of the nature, both outer and inner, to be a soul-infused and soul-led instrumentation for the work.

The Spiritual Transformation is the ascension and turning of the mental into the consciousness of the spiritual being, a realisation of the Self in static and dynamic terms, with a descent of the higher peace, light, power and bliss down to the lower reaches of the nature.

The Supramental Transformation is the complete, unveiled manifestation of the Truth-Consciousness of the Supreme and its working in the material universe, effected by the ascent into Supermind and transforming descent of the Supramental power into the entire being and nature. It represents the total basis of realisation of the original purpose of creation, wherefrom the evolutionary march continues forever but on a foundation of knowledge rather than ignorance-tainted part-knowledge.

While the psychic and spiritual transformations are personal in nature, the supramental transformation has both an individual and collective dimension, even though

the effectuation in the collective may take its time due to the harmonisation of the entire slew of cosmic forces and propensities in the unity of the Supermind.

Integrality of the Synthetic Method

The human being has three core faculty imperatives, three primary drivers for becoming inbuilt in his being – the cognitive imperative to know, the affective imperative to love and the conative imperative to do. The Gita dwells on the three types of Yoga stemming from these – Jnana Yoga of knowledge for the Purusha realization, Bhakti Yoga of devotional union with the ultimate Beloved, Karma Yoga for the instrumental fulfilment of the All-Will. Esoteric Christianity also recognizes the complementary roles of these three faculties in the development of the spiritual consciousness.

The Integral Yoga builds on the synthetic unity of the three aspects of the whole being and raises the bar of their functioning through the centralizing soul-principle of the Jivatman and the centralizing power of the Executive Force of creation, the Divine Mother herself. This synthesis is not an undiscriminating combination in block, not an obsessive pre-occupation with the forms of practice, but an intelligent orchestration of the flowering and of the three principles in inter-relational synergy and sequence towards the fulfilment of the soul-purpose. On the foundation of that synthesis commences the journey of Integral Self-Perfection under the Divine Mother's direct working in the Sadhaka's Adhara.

Said differently, in this Yoga all planes and parts of the integral cosmology, in which the individual constitution mirrors the cosmic constitution, has to become conscious.

Integrality of applicability to the Sadhaka

'All life is Yoga' has many significances. The Integral Yoga makes itself applicable to every individual in their own unique way; it is not a fixed stipulation or a mechanical to-do list but is precision-customized to every nature and soul-purpose, catering to all soul purposes in the divine economy of Nature. Since Nature is multifaceted both within and across individuals, everything essential is accepted and divinized and nothing left unaddressed in the ambit of transformation. However, the speed and efficacy of transformation depends on whether the aspiration and surrender is conscious or not. As the

Sadhaka consciously and willingly turns to the Divine and tunes into the divine will, every moment potentially becomes an occasion-opportunity for progressive self-perfection, especially the adverse events and happenings.

The Mechanics of Ascent and Descent

With the background of the vast integral vision it becomes necessary to understand, at a high level, the principle of creation within which is hidden its purpose and dynamic of unfoldment. Three aspects of the spiritual reality are indispensable for the integral experience: the transcendent, the universal and the individual. The Transcendent is the fount and continent which is outside and beyond and yet hidden within all creation. The Transcendent enters creation in two forms of multiplicity: as a universal field and condition of diffused cosmic forces and functioning, and as individual portions or concentrated instruments which influence and are influenced by the universal field of forces. During this process of entry into creation, the Transcendent which is inherently infinite, free and blissful, seems to lose itself in finitude, bondage and suffering in a process of involution. Along with this involutionary self-loss, the individuated unit of the One Consciousness suffers from a perception of separativity from both the source as well as other units in the creation. Due to these two primal reasons, the individual soul in its courtship with universal nature find itself in an inferior mode of existence, chequered by ignorance, error and anxiety. Evolution is the mirror movement as a consequence of the involution, through which the individuated unit tries to reclaim its unity horizontally with other units in universal nature and vertically with the transcendent.

The seven planes of Sat (existence), Chit-Shakti (Consciousness-Force), Ananda (Bliss), Supermind, Mind, Vital Life, and Body are distinct principles but not separate from each other but ‘involved’ in each other. The Supermind is the creative plane which links the upper three planes of the Divine unmanifest with the lower three planes of the mortal manifest. The Supermind plays its orchestration role by virtue of being ‘involved’ in each of

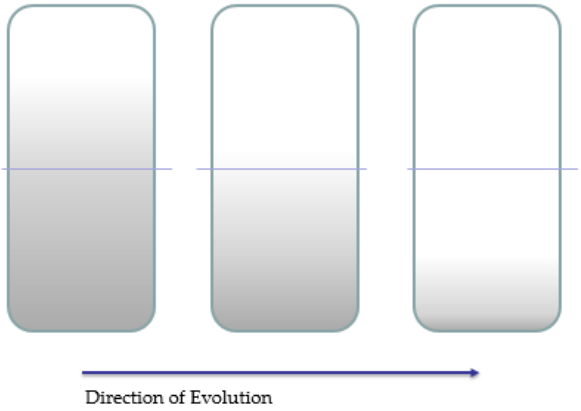
the three lower planes of mind, life and body, which explains the occult intelligence in the ordered evolution of nature.

From an experiential standpoint, the soul embodied in nature suffers from a spiritual claustrophobia as a result of the separative ignorance and the involutionary degradation down the planes of existence. The soul, being a spark of the Divine, is essentially infinite and eternal, but finds itself in manifest creation hidebound in a skin-encapsulated physical-vital-mental apparatus with a seething and apprehensive trepidation of the 'other', which is its first perception of the rest of creation from its individuated coordinating mechanism called the ego. This ego is at the root of the separative ignorance. The involutionary degradation happens as a result of a higher planar principle being initially besieged by and subject to a lower principle. For example, the higher life energy principle is subject to the rigidity, slothfulness and dullness of the lower body principle, the higher mind principle is subject to the turbulence and revolt of the lower life energy principle directly as well as the body principle indirectly. The Integral evolutionary imperative is the urge of transforming the spiritual claustrophobia into plenitude and victory in Nature, not out of Nature. This is operationalized through the mechanics of ascent and descent.

To appreciate the mechanics, one can conceive of the interface between any two planes as a container in which two fluids, one pure and the other impure, undergo subjection and substance modification in a two-way osmotic process of enrichment and degradation.

Figure 1

Evolution as the gradual upgrade in the energy substance mix



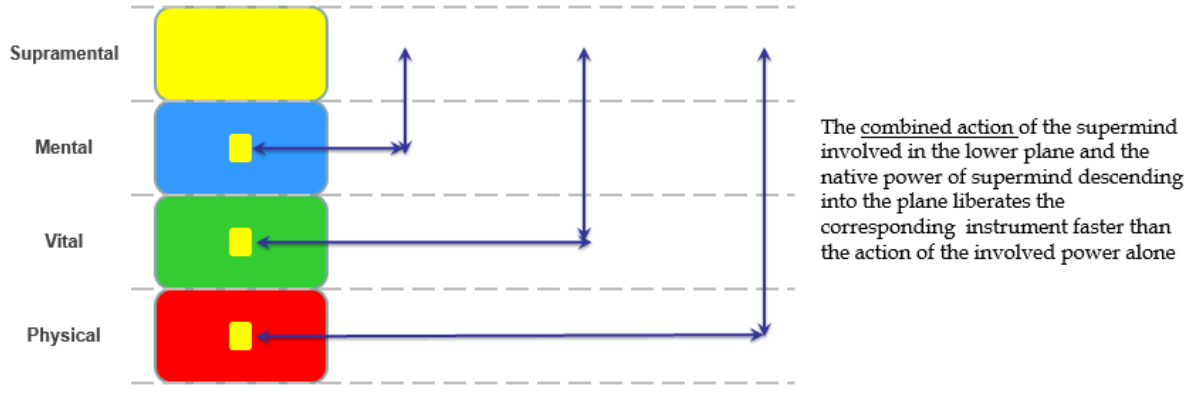
Vital – Physical Interface	Mental-Vital Interface	Spiritual-Mental Interface
Enthusiasm dulled by inertia and inconscience	Clarity distorted by emotional turbulence	Gap between knowledge and will
Muscles animated by ambition and drive	Energy channeled by focus of intent	Revelation, inspiration, intuition, discrimination

In the initial state the higher principle (clear fluid) is largely subjected to the lower principle (muddy fluid), but with the evolutionary urge in the container, the higher principle extricates itself from the downward pull of the lower and imposes itself on the lower with the lower aspiring and accepting to be so imposed upon, thereby filling the container with a greater proportion of its working (hence clarification of the fluid mix). Taking the example of the interface between the vital plane and the physical plane, evolution enables the higher (vital) to free itself from the influence of dull inertia and impose its vitality on the lower (physical) with increasing effectiveness and power.

This evolutionary process can reach its acme only when the highest principle is able to impose its working on all the lower principles in synchronized unison, which can only happen when all the lower planes opens themselves willingly to the highest influence and allow themselves to be 'trans-substantiated' accordingly to the wisdom of the highest. To appreciate the mechanics of the full range of ascent and descent in conscious evolution, one has to understand the double working of involved highest and the descending highest in response to ascending urge and surrender of the lower planes.

Figure 2

Yoga as accelerated evolution due to the combined action



Since the creative supermind represents the outlook of the absolute on the relative, we can consider the four planes instead of seven as in Figure 2. The highest plane in yellow represents the supermind in its native status, while the little yellow blocks within the mental, vital and physical planes represent the 'involved' supermind veiled in mind, life and matter.

The veiled action of the supermind without the conscious participation of the individual is the unconscious yoga of Nature. In man, due to the developed reflective capacity of the mind, as aspirational ascent towards the supermind becomes possible due to psychic-induced urge for divine union and fulfilment. In response to this ascent and surrender, the supermind eventually descends into the lower planes, thereby accelerating the evolution by combining the involved occult action with its direct native action. That is man's real role in the creation. *"What is necessary is a working that brings the lower gradation of being to a point at which the higher can manifest in it; at that point a pressure from some superior plane where the new power is dominant may assist towards a more or less rapid and decisive transition by a bound or a series of bounds,—a slow, creeping, imperceptible or even occult action is followed by a run and an evolutionary saltus across the border."* (SA, TLD, p. 739) *"The increased rapidity is possible only because the conscious participation of the inner being is there and the power of the Supernature is already at work in the half-transformed lower nature, so that the steps which would otherwise have had to be taken tentatively in the night of Inconscience or Ignorance can now be taken in an increasing light and power of Knowledge."* (SA, TLD, p. 966)

Self-Perfection for the Mental Man

Having understood that ascent and descent are movements that axiomatically follow from the involution-evolution dynamic in the creation, we now have a foundation to turn to a conscious working on our nature in keeping with the integral vision. As mentioned earlier, psychicisation and spiritualisation are the two processes one has to undergo before the direct supramental action can begin. Psychicisation is an inward movement in the horizontal-concentric dimension of the parts of being, a subject for another paper (NM, https://bit.ly/3QfAV2E), whereas the transformation of the self-perfecting nature through vertical commerce with the higher planes is our focus in this paper.

The distinction of the meaning of 'perfection' in the Yoga from its conventional notion is important to note. Since we are in an evolutionary frame of ongoing progress,

perfection is a dynamic adaptation and plasticity to the will of the Spirit rather than a static milestone of egoist achievement or social approbation.

'We may say that perfection will be attained in the individual, the collectivity, on the earth and in the universe, when, at every moment, the receptivity will be equal in quality and quantity to the Force which wants to manifest. That is the supreme equilibrium. Hence, there must be a perfect equilibrium between what comes from above and what answers from below, and when the two meet, that is perfect equilibrium, which is the Realisation—a realisation in constant progress.' (CWM Vol4, p. 16)

Since the Yoga is for bringing the manifestation closer to the divine perfection, it is critical to achieve an equipollence in both spiritual and material ends of the perfectibility progression rather than lose sight of one end while focusing on the other. Historically we see that the West has generally progressed in the material end with outer plenitude through technological and economic development, while the East has seen a relatively greater uplift on the contemplative and self-offering aspects often at the cost of outer scarcity. At an individual level, we find that spiritual adepts tend to be remiss or even clumsy with worldly activities while the materially adept have little or no spiritual orientation or aspiration, as if development on other side justifies the negligence of the other. In the Integral Yoga this imbalance is not acceptable, even though the individual nature is free to find and cultivate the precise equipollence suited to the soul-purpose.

To initiate his journey towards self-perfection, one has to find the most potent personal leverage point within his being. The Integral Yoga recognizes and ascribes the governance of the nature to the soul or the inmost being, but since psychicisation takes a fair amount of time and effort, it chooses the intelligent will as the best launch-pad for the Sadhana. The intelligent will is a reasonably well-developed faculty in man, and it distinguishes him from other sentient life. It is aware of its limitations but also gets glimpses of its higher possibilities through paranormal experiences.

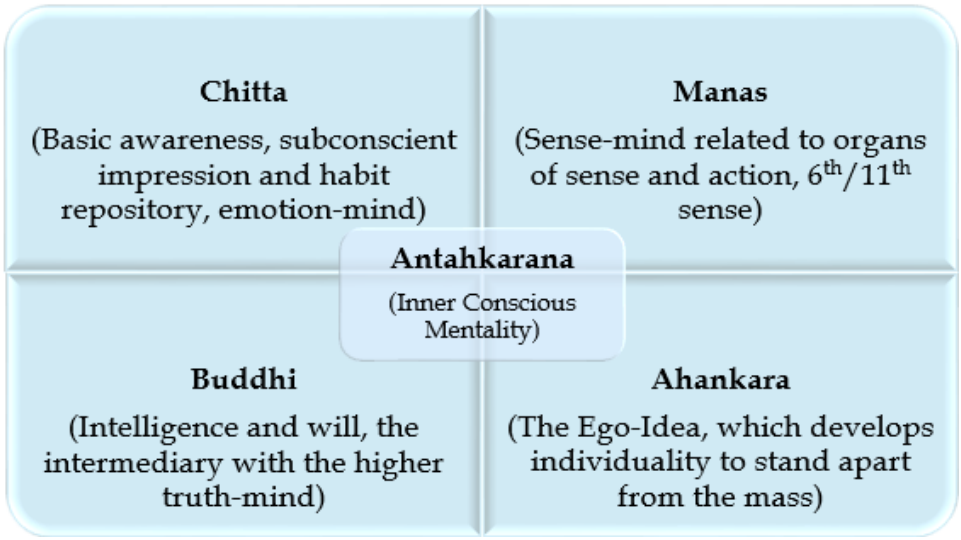
'Therefore it is the Yoga of the buddhi, the intelligence, that is first enjoined on Arjuna. To act with right intelligence and, therefore, a right will, fixed in the One, aware of the one self

in all and acting out of its equal serenity, not running about in different directions under the thousand impulses of our superficial mental self, is the Yoga of the intelligent will.' (SA, EotG, *p. 95*

The inner conscious mentality, in contradistinction to the physical brain, has four psychological components: a basic nervous-emotional component that is connected to the subconscient repository of individual and collective impressions, a physical sense-coordination component interfacing with organs of gross perception and action, a individualisation component that allows a self-concept distinct from 'others', and an intelligent will component that potentially opens to the higher ranges. It is the latter, known as Buddhi, which is the best lever for launching the Sadhana.

Figure 3

Psychological components of the human mind



However, this faculty needs a thorough purification because of the turbid intermixture across planes and parts, for which the Buddhi has to not only extricate itself from the lower pull of the other three components, but also raise the bar of its own internal functioning.

The Buddhi has to first reclaim its sovereignty over the other elements so that it can perceive, judge and discriminate without being held hostage by the senses, by the automatism of habitual emotions, and ego's predilection for self-affirmation; this is the purification of the lower mentality.

'...the higher faculties of the mind can only work at their best when the lower are quieted. If the accumulations in the chitta, the recording part of the mind, are continually active, full as it is of preconceived ideas, prejudices, predilections, the great mass of previous sanskaras, the reflective mind which is ordinarily called the reason is obstructed in its work and comes to false conclusions. It is essential for the faculties of the reason to be freed as far as may be from this ever increasing accumulation of thought-sensations good and bad, false and true which we call mind- manas.' (SA, EDaH, p. 23)

Having done that, the Buddhi itself has three layers of action which have to be bootstrap-upgraded from a lower operating mode to a higher operating mode.

Table 1

Lower and Higher operations of three actions within Buddhi

Layer	Function	Lower Operation	Higher Operation
Habitual, customary action	Quick and automated response to environmental stimuli	Mechanical repetitiveness, lack of adaptation and creativity	Useful automatisms only
Dynamic, pragmatic action	Getting things done, achieving desired results	Short-termism, selfishness, cutting corners, compromise on values	Obedience of divine will, which may include non-action
Truth-seeking action	Understanding of reality and what is	Limiting pre-judgments, impractical abstractions, turning away from life	Luminous veridicality

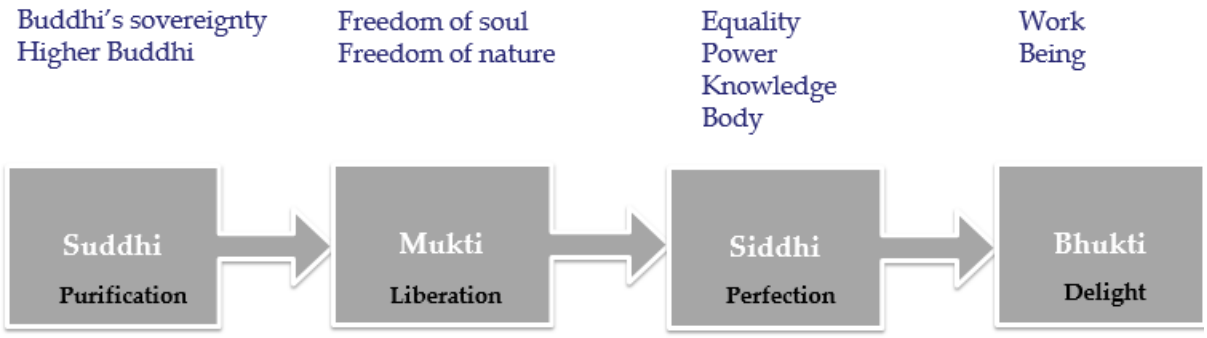
The effect of both these types of purification becomes evident through three practical lenses of reflection in day-to-day under a sincere self-vigilance and feedback mechanism from the Master of the Yoga – the ethical mind is able to detach from desire, sense-suggestion, impulse and social convention, the aesthetic mind is able to detach defeatist realism, sensational gimmickry and vulgarity, and the knowledge mind is able to detach from ideological dogma, confirmation bias and self-interest. It is only then that the purified Buddhi can open itself, receive and hold the truth-light of the intuition, the descent of which transforms it to a higher instrument of the Spirit. The mental man now begins the process of Siddhi, which means self-perfection, in which purification is followed by liberation.

Mastering and Transcending the Gunas

'Siddhi Chatusthaya' is the term for the core framework of self-perfection in the Integral Yoga which is a tetrad having four aspects or stages in its process-texture. There are six other such tetrads in addition to the core, making a total of seven, which together cover all aspects of the human system in oneness and inter-penetration, on its path to divinisation. Taken together, the whole system is called 'Sapta Chatusthaya'; 'Sapta' means seven and 'Chatusthaya' alludes to the four aspects.

Figure 4

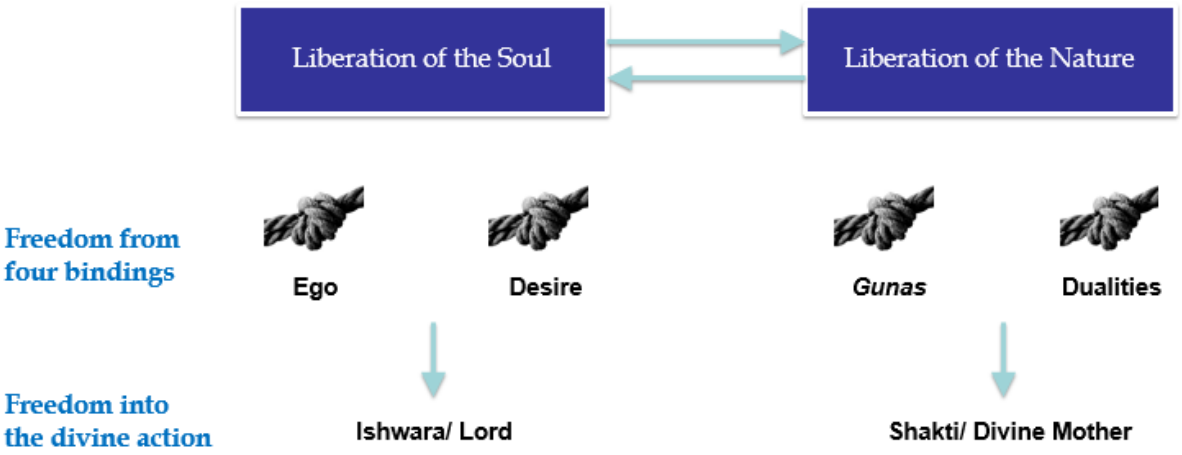
Siddhi Chatusthaya – the core tetrad of self-perfection



Having understood purification of the Buddhi, we can now turn to the significance of liberation in the Integral Yoga. The prevalent meaning of liberation in the spiritual history of mankind is a release from the troubles of this world and an escape into some other-worldly realm closer to spirit. The Integral Yoga discountenances such as approach and facilitates liberation in and for the world, not out and away from it. For liberated action in the world the ego-desire master knot has to be dissolved both in the soul and the nature, a knot which was necessary earlier for the development of the individuality through the Ahankara constituent in the inner conscious mentality as seen earlier. Freedom of the soul from the separative ego and self-serving desire can then, in conjunction with the descending spiritual Shakti from above, enable the freedom of nature from the three lower operating qualitative modes, called the Gunas, and their dualities of working. Transcendence of the Gunas releases and sublimates the various facets of our Adhara into their higher spiritual equivalents for the divine action in the world, and not into suppressed quiescence or ascetic withdrawal.

Figure 5

Mukti or Liberation into the world



Both ego and desire are fundamentally premised on the separative fallacy. The master-knots of ego and desire are mutually supportive and reinforcing and hence present a long and difficult endeavour; but every dissolution-step in one also loosens the hold of the other. Each master-knot straddles all the planes; the denser formations of both are at the pranic-energetic level, the finer formations derive their standing ground from the Buddhi. The Soul-Liberation is slow unless the instrumental purification process is well underway and the Buddhi is free to operate on its own native power, but then even the Buddhi has to allow itself to be governed by the soul within and the spiritual realms above.

For a closer comprehension of the Gunas, one can relate to the atavistic grooves or movements of unregenerate nature within oneself wherein the ego is the false centre of the individuality. The infinite qualities of the Spirit devolve to three primary qualities in the lower triplicity, vacillating between a deficiency and an excess in various combinations of:

1. Inertia, resistance, dullness – Tamas
2. Kinesis, reaction, turbulence – Rajas
3. Equilibrium, acquiescence, balance – Sattva

Tamas is strongest in the physical, Rajas in the vital and Sattva in the mental, but all parts are subject to the dualities and discords of their precarious intermixture in a baffled and

unpossessed working. In the reception of environmental stimuli, these three modes determine the psychological state of the recipient and the resultant quality of the response. These qualities serve the life-operations as long as the individual needs to or chooses to be subject to the universal nature in the early stages of the developmental journey. Transcending the programming of the lower nature requires an understanding of these operating modes, their rationale in the evolution, and the means of freedom from and over them. When the evolving soul musters the capacity to replace the ego as the true center of the individuality, it can refuse to accept their law and dictate of the Gunas, and master them instead. Ruling the Gunas instead of being ruled by them allows the soul to leverage the higher principle, the inner essential power behind each Guna with freedom from and over the dualities.

Table 2

Role of the Gunas and the higher leverage

Guna	Contribution of quality	Temperamental issues/ constraints	Corresponding equivalent in the higher nature
Sattva – Principle of Equilibrium	Balance, harmony, restraint, control	Suboptimal awareness, inadequate power over instruments, unsatisfactory compromise, precarious order	*Jyotih* – spiritual truth-knowledge & luminous choices
Rajas – Principle of Kinesis	Effort, passion, struggle, initiation	Arrogance, ambition, violence, selfish hypocrisy, falsehood, tyranny, perversion, cruelty, bestiality	*Tapas* – spiritual self-possessed dynamis
Tamas – Principle of inertia	Solidity, resistance, imperviousness, grounding	Mechanical obeisance to status quo, weakness of will, cowardice, insensitivity & apathy, self-pity & wallow	*Samata* – spiritual equality and peace

There is no doubt that Sattva is the highest of the three Gunas, and is a necessary station achievable by the purification of the Buddhi before the spiritual journey. But Sattva does not have the power to reach the nether parts in the subconscient, let alone transform all parts into a synthetic harmony sans suppression or disavowal, because it is itself a part of nature, albeit it's loftiest station. Transcendence of the Gunas and their transmutation into their higher equivalents – Tamas into Samata, Rajas into Tapas and Sattva itself into Jyotih-

can only begin through the vertical commerce by ascent of the consciousness into the spiritual ranges above mind and the descent of the Yogic force therefrom into the Adhara. Instead of the dualistic quagmire of the Gunas, the three higher poises of calm, will and light become a single poise, a greater triune unity for the divine action.

Perfect Consensus for Divine Action

The experience of liberation of both the soul and nature from the ego-desire master knot and the attendant dualities of the Gunas allows the cultivation of two fundamental capacities for a consensus between the soul's choice of action as per its Divine-ordained mandate and the nature's cooperative response to the choice. These two capacities, namely spiritual equality and spiritual power, may not be necessary for a world-shunning spiritual path of withdrawal and individual salvation. But these are indispensable for the self-perfecting individual who is prepared to take on the world forces with the iron will of offering his own Adhara as an instrumental channel for the divine change.

Spiritual Equality

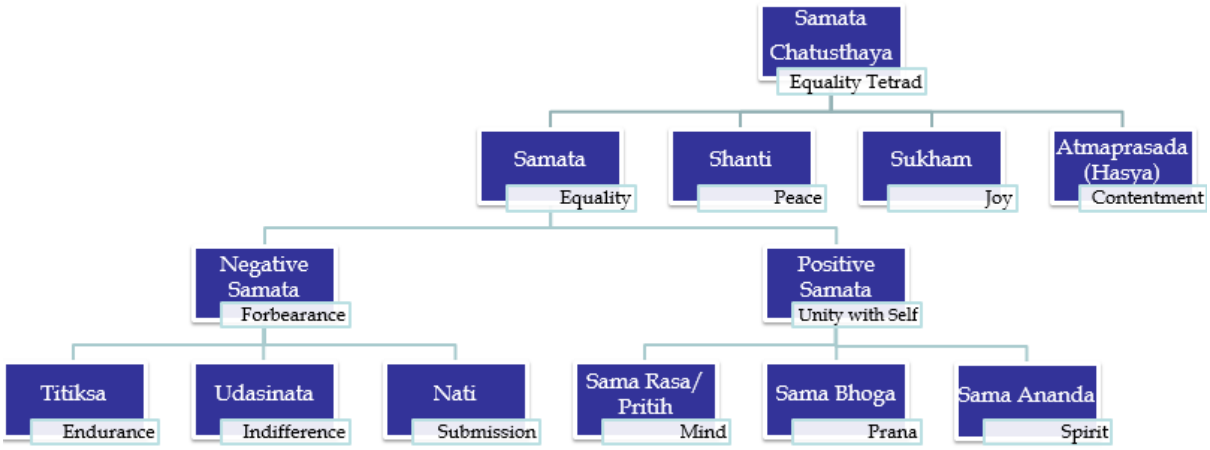
There has been a lot of talk on equality in social and political literature, and so it becomes important to start with what spiritual equality is not, before we can appreciate what it is. Uniformity in nature is not equality; though the Divine is equally present in every portion of his creation, it does not mean everyone must be equal in quality, character, capability and contribution. The soul is a spark of the Divine; every individual soul represents a singularly unique aspect of the divine truth and is destined to manifest that aspect in material existence. In course of the evolutionary journey, one has to discover one's own Swabhava - inner nature, spiritual temperament, and essential character. The discovery of the Swabhava has to align and synchronize with the right law for the outward life of action – Swadharma; Swadharma is a soul-calling, not an outer-nature impulsion. All souls are equal in their uniqueness of Swabhava and Swadharma, and a corresponding full range of diversity in the nature is the very fabric of the divine play in the creation. Harbouring ill-will towards others of a different nature, and imposing one's own dharma on others, are in fact violations of spiritual equality.

A fixed formula of action is not equality. The motive of action has to be one, obedience to the command from above, but the action itself will be appropriate to the time-spirit. The center of the originating action is one, but the nature of the action has to be as diverse as the diversity of nature. The response has to be 'equal' to the situational demand and the truth of the moment, not 'equal to itself' in all situations and moments. Equality is thus not mechanical repetitiveness but a constant innovativeness and dynamism. But whatever be the soul's choice of action, there must be no preference or predisposition towards a particular outcome, but an equal acceptance of whatever transpires as per the divine will.

Passivity or neutrality is not equality. Sattvic neutrality may bring a temporary balance but it still subject to the dualities of the Gunas. The station of spiritual equality is at higher level of reality corresponding to a higher plane of consciousness which is immune to the see-saw movements. Spiritual equality requires true soul-individuality, and is the basis of universal and impersonal action. The impersonal action is not aloof or devoid of the personal touch, but is impartial and unbiased in its action, sans preferential attachment.

Figure 6

The Tetrad of Equality (Samata Chatusthaya)



Spiritual Power

There is some truth to the adage 'Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely' as applied to the ego-driven unregenerate nature. Equally true is the fact that for the Divine's work in the world, the individual needs to wield spiritual power commensurate with the soul

purpose and timing of action through the nature instrumentation. The former is however an un-divine use of power and eventually doomed to failure even if allowed momentary or temporary success in the mysterious scheme of the evolution.

Soul-Power shows up in four broad qualitative Swabhava-forms of inner nature that historically aligned with four corresponding Swadharma-forms of outer occupation or action. In ancient times this was reflected in a typal classification system in social organization, though the Time-Spirit today requires every individual to cultivate all four soul-qualities for a more versatile and plastic attunement to universal demand, even as the saliency and sequence of soul-power development will vary person to person, within and across lives.
"*The fundamental truth is not this outward thing, but a force of our inner being in movement, the truth of the fourfold active power of the spiritual nature. Each Jiva possesses in his spiritual nature these four sides, is a soul of knowledge, a soul of strength and of power, a soul of mutuality and interchange, a soul of works and service, but one side or other predominates in the action and expressive spirit and tinges the dealings of the soul with its embodied nature; it leads and gives its stamp to the other powers and uses them for the principal strain of action, tendency, experience.*" (SA, EotG, p. 523)

As the troubled and confused melee of the Gunas is transcended, the individual's Swabhava becomes increasingly adaptable to the Divine Will. His self-identity moves for attachment to specific qualities to a unique and free instrument obedient to the Spirit only. His Swadharma accordingly becomes free from fixed grooves of operation, social label and designation and is able to respond to the need of the Time-Spirit from him.
"*And in the end to arrive at the divinest figure and most dynamic soul-power of this fourfold activity is a wide doorway to a swiftest and largest reality of the most high spiritual perfection….The Spirit takes up the individual into the universal Swabhava, perfects and unifies the fourfold soul of nature in us and does its self-determined works according to the divine will and the accomplished power of the godhead in the creature.*"
(SA, EotG, p. 524)

The Shakti Chatusthaya or the Tetrad of Power details the specific sub-qualities that need to honed under each soul-quality, the general force that have to developed in each of the four parts of the Adhara, the alignment of soul-powers within the Powers of the Divine Mother, and central role of faith in the Soul-Power building journey through the Sadhana of the Synthetic Method and Self-Perfection.

Figure 7

The Tetrad of Power (Shakti Chatusthaya)

Viryam, Shakti, Daiva Prakriti (Chandibhava), Shraddha

- **Viryam** – Chaturvarnya* in guna: Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra
  - Brahmana – Dhairyam, Jnanalipsa, Jnanaprakasha, Brahmavarchasya
  - Kshatriya – Abhaya, Sahasa, Yasholipsa, Atmaslagha
  - Vaishya – Vyaya, Kaushala, Dana, Bhogalipsa
  - Shudra – Kama, Prema, Dasyalipsa, Atmasamarpana
- **Shakti** – general force in four parts: body, prana, chitta, buddhi
  - Body – Laghuta, Balam, Mahattwa, Dharana Samarthyam
  - Prana – Purnata, Prasannata, Samata, Bhoga Samarthyam
  - Chitta – Snigdhata, Tejas, Kalyana Shraddha, Prema Samarthyam
  - Buddhi – Vishuddata, Prakasha, Vichitra Bodha, Jnana Samarthyam
- **Daiva Prakriti** – Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi, Mahasaraswati
- **Shraddha** – faith in God (directing power) and Shakti (executive power)

Integral Self-Perfection requires patience, perseverance and commitment of the highest order. The arduousness of this Tapasya is softened and mitigated by the psychic connection with the Divine Mother, the real Executrix of the Sadhana in and through the individual Adhara. Not everyone is up for it, but those who have chosen the Infinite will be chosen by the Infinite.

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