

## Examining the Concept of Existence from Aurobindo's Point of View

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### Abstract

Despite being the most evolved being among all other creations, human being hasn't yet emerged as the best living being present on this planet earth. If we look at the process of evolution, nature of human has undergone various changes; from the archaeological evidence related to pre-humans, including Neanderthal, Cro-Magnon and of Neolithic age etc., to the modern evolution of human who is much more rational. However, this rationality has taken a distressing form in human beings as he has become more individualistic, and self-entered. Today, most of the people try to rule over something or other. These individualistic limitations have uplifted his egoistic nature which has lead world in the direction of disharmony. The researcher examining the concept of existence from Arvindo's point of view and will provide a new insight about concept of existence.

Keywords: Evolution, involution, consciousness, integration, self, dichotomy.

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### Introduction

There is no doubt that the values or principles that we have acquired since our childhood are possible because we have experience various things with our senses. Highlighting on this ordinary experience, Sri Aurobindo enlightened us on the evolution of mental phenomena while extending our sense-faculties. It may seem effortless to speak of knowing this whole process from involution to evolution, at the same time, it is difficult to reframe the self again; this time not as a self-centric but as integrated from where this whole diversification took place. While rediscovering the truth of our existence, initially, we might face many dilemmas, obstructions but as soon as our sense of ego is destroyed, self in itself will be purified. The struggle of human mind primarily, according to Sri Aurobindo lies in differentiating various experiences by the method of rationality and pure reason. The nature of human beings is such that, it gets easily engaged in logical

arguments, the question of why-this and why-not this always subsist in our minds. However, the subtle reasoning if properly functioned would help us in reaching the goal of examining the concept of existence. Aurobindo in his book 'The Divine life' explained us the 'tree for life' which means enjoying the present moment and getting completely involved in it. But the problem arises when we try to compare the present with the past memory and things which undermines the goodness and beauty of today.

The philosophy of Aurobindo is really profound which is a dire need in this modern time where people are so inclined towards matter that they have forgotten themselves and nature around them. It is necessary for all of us to understand the meaning of 'evolution' properly so that it could lead us to the process of knowing the supreme bliss of existence.

Sri Aurobindo, one of the modern contemporary Indian philosophers who made an enormous contribution in fostering the new vision of reality by his profound writings. If we look at Sri Aurobindo's teachings, his beliefs were mainly inspired by Upanishadic and Vedic principles. Now, the ascetics feel that there is only one side of reality which is spiritual and they completely deny matter, on the other side the materialist emphasises on matter, and rejects any super-natural entity, be it God or spirit. By examining these contrasting philosophies immensely, Aurobindo tries to give an integral vision of reality. By 'integral', he intends to propose an idea of combining both matter and spirit. To elucidate well on this process of integration, Aurobindo discussed about eight principles such as *Existence, Consciousness-force, Bliss, Super-mind, Mind, Psyche, Life and Matter*. He has focussed on establishing a connection between mind and super-mind by uncovering the veil of ignorance and integrating the lower hemisphere with the highest hemisphere. Every ascent involves a corresponding descent with it. If reality is One as asserted by the philosophy of Vedāntins then every matter is conscious in nature.

Sometimes, we cannot directly perceive the consciousness in an object, it does not imply its absence, just like we cannot see the air around us, still it is present everywhere. This dualism approach of separating matter from spirituality, first and then integrating them together has been well expounded in Śāṅkarāharya and Sāṅkhya philosophy. Adi-Śāṅkara believed this world is neither real nor unreal, it is non-real. He gives basic example (of rope and snake) from our practical life, where we try to superimpose one thing on another (adhyāsa) and lead us towards darkness. Fortunately, when a light enters into a place, this superimposition is replaced by the real knowledge. According to Śāṅkara, the snake was not unreal as for the time,

it makes us frightened. It is only when the light enters, we are able to see the reality. He described the snake situation as non-real.

The philosophy of Sāṅkhya, on the other hand separates pure existence from energy and lands upon the dualism of spirit and nature, i.e. Shiva (Puruṣa) is the spirit, then shakti (Prakṛiti) is the nature. In the text "The Philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo by Haridas he quotes 'In separating existence from energy, both the Sāṅkhya and Śāṅkara-Vedānta visualized the ultimate spiritual ideal of life as liberation from being-in-the-world, blissful abiding-in-the-Self, and wise indifference to the social, economic, and political affairs of life' From the ultimate stand-point of Vedānta philosophy, Brahman alone is the truth, which is described as neti-neti in Upanishads (Swami 1957, Swami,1988). According to Śāṅkara, when a person attains the truth by self-realization, he would see the body as burden, and try to get liberated from it. Similarly, the authority and aim of Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad are embodied in the soul-elevating abhyāroha-mantra (अभ्यारोह मंत्र)-(Swami, 2011) 'From evil lead me to good. From darkness lead me to light. From death lead me to immortality.' Therefore, this world should not be understood nothing more than the play of Ram-Leela where we all are performing/ doing certain actions. And our aim should be to liberate from this world, and to be free from this materialistic world. This liberation is compared to Sat-Chit-Ānanda i.e. Sat stands for truth, Chit for Consciousness and Ānanda for supreme bliss. Despite being one, the difference between things is only because of nāma and rūpa (name and form). As soon as we realize supreme being Brahman, this world looks nothing more than māyā. But if Śāṅkara assume this world as māyā and the only aim of life is transcending or liberating from this world, then does it mean this scientific or technological evolution is of no use? Let me come direct to the views of Aurobindo on dichotomy of world consisting of involution and evolution of the spirit in human existence.

### **Aurobindo's view on dichotomy and evolution**

'According to the integral view of Aurobindo, there is no ultimate dichotomy or discontinuity between the Self and the body-mind structure. The body-mind complex is indeed a product of energy (prakṛiti), but energy is in ultimate analysis the energy of the Self or the Spirit itself (Ibid,pp10).' Aurobindo believed that there is no such dualism as everything is in continuation i.e. from a matter to a physical being. It is a continuous movement i.e. from descent to ascend or else moving from lower sphere to highest sphere. Sat-Chit-Ānanda, which I also referred earlier, is the pure

bliss from which everything has been manifested. 'Delight is the existence, Delight is the secret of creation, Delight is the root of the birth, Delight is the cause of remaining in existence, Delight is the end of birth and that into which creation ceases. "From Ānanda, reveals the Upanishad "all existences are born, by Ānanda they remain in being and increase, to Ānanda they depart (Ghosh, 1950). This evolution process which begins from Brahman, ends into Brahman. Earlier, as we see in Shankara's view, that although he considered Brahman to be supreme but if we considered worldly affairs, there lies duality.. On the other side, Sri Aurobindo app is practical he asserts, Brahman is the One besides which there is nothing else--"a featureless oneness beyond all relation." It is one because it is infinite; there is nothing else by which it could be limited. And since nothing can limit it, it is absolutely, infinitely and eternally one--a oneness in contradistinction to multiplicity, the absolute first principle (Wilson,1962). Even in multiplicity or diversity, consciousness is present in every matter. Though, it is more clearly understood by the human soul. Aurobindo explains this evolution through triple process; widening, heightening and integration. Widening as already explained how the world extended into diversity and forms. Heightening, the growth of the individual and the last but the most important is the integration by which brings harmony, joy and peace in the world.

Earlier scientists work according to the causal-effect relation, that everything is determined(fixed) in this material world and differences are real but with the formation of quantum physics, it starts affirming that there is no real difference at any level between two electrons. When observed closely, electrons behaviour differently and this gives a new thought that it is only possible when there is some level of consciousness in them. Without consciousness, they cannot interact with other. This shows everything that is evolved out from consciousness. However, human beings are more privileged when it comes to uplifting the way towards spiritual growth. According to Aurobindo, the mind which belongs to lower sphere creates problem as it cannot see beyond sensory faculties. This faculties limits the potentiality of human from realizing the whole. As mind is involved more in reasoning, it only treats everything as a part separated from each other. It is only "when he becomes conscient in the super conscience, the heights and depths of his being will be illumined by another light of knowledge than the flickering lamp of the reason can now cast into a few corners; for then the master of the field will enlighten this whole wonderful field of his being, as the sun illumines the whole system it has created out of its glories. Then only he can

know the reality even of his own mind and life and body.” We assume oneness has fallen away in this diversity. The problem lies in our self-discovery to see that everything is united in this oneness. This oneness is nothing but the widening of Brahman in multiple forms. If a man discovers this truth, he will get liberated from his egoistic and destructive nature. According to Aurobindo the factors which limit human being in unifying with the divine principle are his never-ending desires, outside factors which majorly cause deterioration in the realization of consciousness (or, we can say authentic being)

### **Integration**

In the above para, we see how the mind limits and divides the knowledge which differentiates between knower and known. However, super-mind according to Aurobindo belongs to highest hemisphere which helps in the transition of being to attain bliss i.e. sat-chit-ānanda. The supermind tries to get unitary picture of the world. Super-mind act as a truth-consciousness. Sri Aurobindo believed that this unification or integration is possible only by outgrowing the limitations of human personality. Mind only divides and rule our true nature of self. ‘An integral vision of reality implies two things: first, immediate contact with the inmost nature of existence in its manifold richness of content; second, an integration of such different provinces of experience as common sense, science, art, morality, religion, and the like, in the light of one's immediate insight into the heart (Choudhary 1953,72). Thus, Aurobindo feels that this contact and unity with different things around us is not possible by applying logical conceptual scheme. There might be certain criticisms and conceptual problems in these concepts as with the changing time, different situations, different living conditions, human beings always try to find conflict with the existing concepts. But what can really help them is integral spiritual realization, enjoying the multiplicity and richness of world. Even though, the universal principle is constantly manifesting in its diverse form but it is not limited by any form. The nature of Brahman is ineffable. When religious philosophers and theologians claims that there are different names of God, but we all lead to one destination. It simply means we are all dissolved in Oneness. Though, empirically we are following different Gods, practicing different culture and norms, but all these are relatively true. The integral knowledge is not a new knowledge; it is already inherent within each of us. The problem is we do not realize or meditate on our pure self. This is the reason why all such conflicts/ discord arises.

### Conclusion

Conclusively, we can say that Aurobindo had a different sight to look at the problems existing in our nation. If we view it from present-day human civilization, integralism proves to be effective in practicality. In Aurobindo teachings, the most important view is he never neglected material things nor he is against progression. Rather he teaches us a new synthesis of materialism and spirituality. To make use of a matter in such a way that no harm to another took place. These values are much needed for the future of humanity. This process requires an individual human effort. If we realize the evolution of manifold experience and deepest knowledge of self, then only we can appreciate the secret bliss of human existence.

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