



THE EVOLUTION OF SĀMKHYA AND SRI AUROBINDO

Dr. Md. Mijanul Islam

State Aided College Teacher, Department of Philosophy, Chanchal College, Malda, W.B

Abstract

Evolution is the method of change in all forms of life over generations and evolutionary biology is the method of how evolution happens. The method of evolution involves a series of natural changes that causes species populations of different organism to arise adopt to the environment and become extinct. Human evolution is the evolutionary method that led to the emergence of anatomically modern humans, beginning with the evolutionary history of primates in particular genus homo and leading to the emergence of homosapiens as a distinct species of the hominid family, the great apes. Sāmkhya system of Indian philosophy give theory of evolution, according to this philosophy, the evolution of the world has its starting point in contact between Puruṣa and Prakṛti. On the Other hand, Sri Aurobindo's notion of evolution is a philosophical model of evolution based upon philosophical thought and not an empirical exploration. He narrated that the ultimate reality is of the nature of a dynamic attitude. Reality is all endeavoring to manifest itself and through its self-manifestation is trying to come back to itself. The object of this paper is to highlight the evolution of the world that is describes in Sāmkhya and Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

Keywords: Puruṣa, Prakṛti, Saccidānanda, Supermind, Caityapuruṣa, Divine Society

Introduction

Sāmkhya philosophy, a prominent school of Indian philosophy, offers thoughtful insights into the nature of existence and the procedure of evolution. Rooted in ancient wisdom, Samkhya offers a holistic understanding of reality, surrounding the interplay between consciousness and matter. By examining the complicated concepts and principles of Samkhya, we unravel the deep philosophical implication of evolution in shaping our understanding of the world. For Sankhya Philosophy, Prakriti and Purusa are two ultimate realities. Sāmkhya philosophy believes, Prakriti is active and Purusa is inactive. For them, the evolution of the world starts with the contact between the purusa or Atma and prakriti or matter. On the Other hand, Sri Aurobindo's notion of evolution is a philosophical model of evolution based upon philosophical thought and not an empirical exploration. He narrated that the ultimate reality is of the nature of a dynamic attitude. Reality is all endeavoring to manifest itself and through its self-manifestation is trying to come back to itself. Thus, there are two procedures going on in the Universe. One is the procedure of downward movement named involution. The other is the procedure of upward movement named evolution. Evolution presupposes involution; actually, evolution is possible only because involution has already taken place. Sri Aurobindo admits partially the notion of evolution put forward by Charles Darwin and Henri Bergson, but he criticizes them for their notion of evolution as automatic mechanism. Evolution, rather, is a willed descent or the self-lowering of God or Saccidananda into matter.

Foundational Principles of Sāmkhya System

A. The Nature of Puruṣa and Prakṛti

The Sāmkhya system holds dualism between consciousness and matter by assuming two complexes, innate and liberated realities: Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Though the Prakṛti could be a single entity, the Sāmkhya states a plurality of the Puruṣas in this world. Unintelligent unmanifest, uncaused, ever-active, indiscernible and eternal Prakṛti is alone the ultimate source of the globe of objects that is implicitly and probably contained in its bosom. The Puruṣa is taken into account as a passive enjoyer (*bhoktā*) whereas the Prakṛti is the enjoyed (*bhogya*). It is a pluralistic spiritualism, atheistic realism and uncompromising dualism.

Puruṣa is a transcendental self or pure consciousness. It is absolute, freelance, free, indiscernible, and unknowable. It is higher than any expertise by mind or senses and on the far side any words or explanations. It remains as pure and non-

attributive consciousness. Puruṣa is neither created nor will it turn out. It's a command that unlike Advaita Vedānta and Purva-Mīmāṃsā, Sāṃkhya believes in plurality of the puruṣas. Prakṛti is the cause of the manifestation of the material universe - of everything except the puruṣa. Prakṛti accounts for the physical, each mind and matter-cum-energy or force. Since it is the primary principle (*tattva*) of the universe, it is known as the *Pradhāna*. As it is the unconscious and idiotic principle, it is conjointly known as the *jaṭa*. It is composed of three essential characteristics (*trigunas*). These are: Sattva – poise, fineness, lightness, illumination, and joy; Rajas – dynamism, activity, excitation, and pain; Tamas – inertia, coarseness, heaviness, obstacle, and laziness. All physical proceedings are reflected to be manifestations of the evolution of Prakṛti, or primal nature (from which all physical bodies are derived). Every sentient being or Jīva could be a fusion of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, whose soul/Puruṣa is limitless and unrestricted by its material body. *Samsāra* or bondage arises once Puruṣa does not have the discriminate information and then is misled on its own identity, confusing itself with the Ego/ahamkāra that is truly an attribute of Prakṛti. The spirit is liberated once the discriminate information of the distinction between conscious purusa and unconscious Prakṛti is understood by the Puruṣa.

The unconscious early materiality, prakṛti, comprises twenty three elements together with intellect (*buddhi,mahat*), ego (*ahamkāra*) and mind (*manas*). The intellect, mind and ego are all seen as styles of unconscious matter. Thought procedures and mental events are aware solely to the extent they acquire illumination from Purusha. In Sāṃkhya, consciousness is compared to light-weight that illuminates the fabric configurations or 'shapes' assumed by the mind. Therefore intellect, when receiving cognitive feature structures kind, the mind and illumination from pure consciousness, creates thought structures that seem to be aware. *Ahamkāra*, the ego or the phenomenon self, allows all mental experiences to itself and therefore, personalizes the target activities of mind and intellect by assumptive possession of them. However, consciousness is itself independent of the thought structures that it illuminates together with mind within the realm of matter. Sāṃkhya avoids one among the foremost serious pitfalls of Cartesian dualism, the violation of physical conservation laws. As an effect of mind is an evolutions of matter, mental events are allowed causal efficacy and hence able to initiate bodily motions.

B. Significance of Evolution in Sāṃkhya System

The conception of evolution in Sāṃkhya revolves round the interaction of Prakṛti and Purusha. Prakṛti remains unmanifested as long as the three guṇas are in equilibrium. This equilibrium of the guṇas is disturbed once comes into proximity with consciousness or Purusha. The imbalance of the guṇas activates an evolution that indicates to the manifestation of the world from an unmanifested Prakṛti. The symbol of movement of iron in the nearness of a magnet is used to describe this method. Some evolutes of Prakṛti will cause any evolution and are labeled evolvents. For instance, intellect while itself made out of prakṛti causes the evolution of ego-sense or ahamkāra and is thus an evolvent. While, different evolutes just like the five parts do not cause any evolution. It is necessary to note that an evolvent is known as a norm that acts as the material cause for the evolution of additional norm. Therefore, in definition, while the five parts are the material cause behind all living beings, they cannot be named evolvents as living beings are not detached from the five parts in essence.

The intellect is the first evolute of Prakṛti which is known as *mahat* or the great one. It reasons the evolution of ego-sense or self-consciousness. Evolution from self-consciousness is influenced by the dominance of guṇas. Thus, dominance of sattva causes the evolution of the five organs of perception, five organs of action and the mind. Dominance of tamas triggers the evolution of five delicate elements— sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell from self-consciousness. These five delicate components themselves are evolvents and cause the creation of the five gross components: house, air, fire, water and earth. Rajas is the reason behind action inside the evolutes. Purusha is pure consciousness: absolute, eternal and subject to no modification. It is neither a product of evolution, nor the rationale behind any evolute. Evolution in Sāṃkhya is believed to be purposeful. The primary function of evolution of prakṛti is the enjoyment and the liberation of Purusha.

Sāṃkhya regards ignorance (*avidyā*) as the root cause reason behind suffering and bondage (*Samsāra*). Sāṃkhya states that the reply of this suffering is thru data (*viveka*). *Mokṣa* (salvation) explains Sāṃkhya system results from

knowing the distinction between Prakṛti (*avyakta-vyakta*) and Puruṣa (*jñā*). Puruṣa, the eternal pure consciousness, because of mental object, identifies itself with product of Prakṛti like intellect (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahamkāra*). This affects in endless transmigration and suffering. However, the understanding arises that puruṣa is distinct from prakṛti. The Self earns isolation (*kaivalya*) and freedom (*mokṣa*) at last. Other kinds of Sāṃkhya teach that Mokṣa is earned by one's own development of the upper schools of discrimination achieved by meditation and different yogic practices. Mokṣa is delineated by Sāṃkhya supporters as a state of liberation wherever *Sattvaguṇa* predominates.

Sri Aurobindo's Notion of Evolution

Sri Aurobindo admits partially the theory of evolution set forth by Charles Darwin and Henri Bergson, but he criticizes them for their notion of evolution as automatic mechanism. Evolution, rather, is a willed descent or the self-lowering of God or Saccidānanda into matter. There are twofold movements in evolution, i.e., an upward movement of the material towards the divine (Ascent) and a downward movement of the divine into the material (Descent). Such a movement continues till the involved Supreme Being is fully evolved. One is the route of downward movement named involution. The other is the route of upward movement named evolution. Evolution presupposes involution; actually, evolution is possible only because involution has already taken place. To admit such a position Sri Aurobindo had to make the Supreme Being subject to change and evolution. Certainly the centrality of his philosophy is the theory of an involving and evolving Absolute. Evolution is the improvement of consciousness in Matter with a growing perfection of form until the form can reveal the spirit. Evolution is two-fold, namely, physical and spiritual. The latter refers to soul-evolution and the emphasis is on the growth of the soul through the ascending process, while physical evolution is kept up through heredity. The core of evolution is the self-evolution of consciousness and the emphasis is on spiritual evolution because that alone brings about the perfection of man and the divinization theory will tell us, according to him, that man is mainly a transitional being and not a final product. The new consciousness he acquires transforms his nature and raises him to the status of the Divine.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Evolutionary advance is a triple process; it involves processes of widening, heightening and integration. In simple language it means that at first it involves an extension of scope and the incorporation of co-existence forms, and then it involves a development and growth towards higher form. However, in this method nothing is to be completely rejected, everything finally has to be integrated. The method of widening, therefore, means providing greater scope for the operation of every new element or principle. The second method of heightening means ascent from one step or grade to another higher grade. But the most important character of the evolutionary process is integration.

The Main Features of Evolution

The most important characteristic of the evolutionary process as outlined by Sri Aurobindo is that it is firstly spiritualistic. It is neither materialistic nor vitalistic. Though matter is at the base of the evolutionary process, it is not the original or the ultimate cause of the manifestation of cosmos. The spirit that is hidden behind material existence is the sole cause of creation. Evolution implies the unfoldment of consciousness or Divine or Spirit that is hidden in Matter, Life and Mind, it moves from Mind to Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind and finally culminating in Saccidānanda Existence-Conscious Force - Bliss. Thus the evolutionary process aims at the transition of the Spirit from its original state of darkness of ignorance towards true knowledge. It aims at the spiritualization of Matter, Life and Mind and supramentalisation of not only the mental being but the total consciousness. This includes the ascent from nonbeing to the true Being and from mortality to Immortality.

Secondly this notion of evolution is based upon the doctrines of involution and evolution. Evolution is just the inverse process of involution. Involution Implies the descent and plunging of Consciousness in the dark chamber of Ignorance and Inconscience and here it means Saccidānanda involving itself in the lower forms of existence. Evolution implies the appearance of Consciousness from the lower forms into the higher forms of being. The Conscious Force of Saccidānanda gradually emerges or evolves from material, vital and mental existence and reaches the stage of



Saccidānanda until it is fully manifested. The involution of the spirit or the Divine in lower forms of existence precedes the evolution of consciousness towards the Supreme Reality. There can be no evolution without involution.

Thirdly the evolutionary process is based on the triple principles of widening, ascent and integration. The widening principle implies the growing complexity of the lower principle. It is the essential condition for the evolution of higher forms of existence. Matter must be sufficiently developed to manifest Life. This implies that the forms of matter hence evolved become more and more organized in subtlety and complexity so that it shall form the indispensable physical foundation for establishing a more astute and complicated consciousness. Besides the method of evolution is based upon the ascent or heightening of consciousness from its lower grade to its higher grade. Matter through various gradations ascends up to the level of Saccidānanda. It has already been pointed out that evolution is in essence a process of heightening of consciousness. The consciousness now present in the manifest being has to be raised into the greater intensity of what, is still unmanifest from matter into life, from life into mind, from mind into the spirit. This is the method of our growth from a low mental condition into a spiritual and supramental manifestation. Man is still a half-animal being and he has to develop into a divine being and a divine living, he has to realize a new spiritual height, wideness, depth, subtlety, intensity of his consciousness and acquire the substance, the force, the sensibility, the elevation, the expansion, plasticity and integral capacity of a larger divine existence.

The most important feature of this evolutionary process is integration. When the lower principle ascends to the higher level of consciousness all the previous lower principles are transformed. The higher principle that emerges transforms the lower realities and both the higher and the lower principles are integrated. For example, when life emerges from matter, it transforms matter and with the emergence of Life, Matter does not cease to evolve. Both Matter and Life again are together transformed into the higher norm of Mind. When Mind emerges both Matter and life become more sensitive and powerful then Supermind emerges the lower triple of matter, life and mind get transformed.

We have considered above that evolution is spiritualistic but it simultaneously aims at integral transformation of man. Thus evolution is not confined to the realization of the spirit. He does not say that man must realize the spirit or divinity and withdraw from the worldly life, because even when the soul realizes the divine the body and life will work within ignorance, remain unveiled and untransformed. For complete transformation would result in transformation of even the body, its divinisation and freedom from the mechanical necessity of nature. Thus while Kant and Shankara make drastic difference between Matter and Spirit, Sri Aurobindo does not bring about any such distinction. According to him Matter is the lowest form of the Spirit and destined to realize its divine status through a procedure of continuous and steady transformation.

The Goals of Evolution

In keeping with Sri Aurobindo, man's destiny lies in understanding the important purpose of nature and in making an attempt to understand it in his social life. Man is the kid of nature. Only Mother Nature can impart him what he can do and the way he can mate. Except for that, man should perceive the Mother, not solely in her surface look nor even in her look as energy, however additionally in her inmost essence of the Conscious - Force as Saccidānanda. Here the theories of Darwin, Lamarck, Spencer, Alexander, Whitehead, Bergson, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Croce have stopped in need of the full biological process of truth. All these serve the helpful purpose of action of one or additional aspects of the operating of nature. Sri Aurobindo by his yogic technique of direct and integral in-distinguishability with nature has been ready to unravel the mystery of her aims and strategies.

The philosophy of evolution has assumed a special standing within the integral philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. This principle predicts an altogether new conception of contemporary times. The Absolute or Saccidānanda is that the primary principle concerned in this evolution. Evolution is not a straightforward 'nisus'. It is the dual side of evolution and involution. These are two processes or movements, the downward and the upward. The upward method is termed as the Evolution and the downward the Involution. The future tree is the gift within the gifted seed. The method of evolution is linear and horizontal. Saccidānanda, within the delight of involution, plunges into the realm of content so as



to form the planet. Evolution is the soul of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. His theory of Evolution is the pivot of the sphere where his whole philosophy moves. Evolution leads to the movement of the involution or creation. It is because of the descent of the spirit into the matter, life and mind ascend to the upper regions of the spirit. Evolution may be a style of home-sickness of the spirit. The spirit has descended into very cheap particle of matter. So, matter pursues to evolve into one thing higher. Similarly, there is a descent of the spirit into life, and consequently, life should ascend to one thing more than itself. The very best principle to date that evolved is mind. However, evolution cannot stop with mind, for mind is not its last word. It should move up and is available to ensuing stage. However, once it takes up a momentum, there will be radical amendment within the nature of the planet. For, with the arrival of the supermind, the method of evolution becomes a process through information. Evolution may be an acutely aware movement.

The ultimate goal of Man's evolution is the divine life on earth. It is not svarga or paradise on the far side. It rather leads towards the belief of man's integral unity with the planet and therefore the supreme spirit in a continual divine life to be lived on earth. In keeping with him, this world with all its things and beings is the play of self-revelation of the divine. It is the Saccidānanda, the formless, who has assumed a type and condescended to manifest himself through two essential appearances, the universe and therefore the individual. Superconsciousness descended step by step into material nature.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is clear that though in one point there is similarity between them, that is, the matter can be evolved. To Sāṃkhya Prakṛti is nothing but a matter. From Prakṛti we are getting *mahat*, *buddhi*, *ahāṅkara*, etc. Sri Aurobindo also told that Prakṛti is matter of matter and matter can be evaluated. But he will take matter as the form of Brahman (*sat-cit-ānanda*). Sat part unmanifested Brahman, remains in Prakṛti (matter). But Sāṃkhya will not tell this. This is the difference. That is why the evolutes are different. Also, he says even matter can grow Consciousness (*caitanya*). In this regard, in 'Sāvitri' Sri Aurobindo shows that Sāvitri is the Divine Mother who is prakṛti. Sāvitri is a dead body; Satyavan is dead body that means matter. And through yogic power matter has been transformed into a life. Even if you try to bring consciousness in a matter it may come. This concept is different from Sāṃkhya system which is new in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

References

Acharya, K.D. (1968). *A Guide to Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Bharati, Suddhananda, (1948). *Sri Aurobindo: The Divine Master*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Boodin, J. E. (1925). *Cosmic Evolution*. Macmillan and Co. Ltd., New York.

Carlton, Eric. (1977). *Ideology and Social Order*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Chatterjee S, Datta D. (2007). *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*. Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.

Ghosh, Raghunath. (2008). *Humanity, Truth and Freedom*, Northern Book Centre, New Delhi.



Hulin M. (1986). *Samkhya Philosophy: A Critical Evaluation of its Origins and Development*. Routledge, London.

Purani, A.B. (1970). *Sri Aurobindo's Sāvitrī - An Approach and Study*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

Rafique, M. (1987). *Sri Aurobindo's Ideal of Human Life*, Aashish Publishing House, New Delhi.

Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. (1973). *Our Heritage*, Vision Books, Delhi.

----. (1970). *The Life Divine* (Vol.19), Birth Centenary Library, Popular Edition, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

----. (1985). *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

----. (1964). *The Life of Sri Aurobindo: A Source Book*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

----. (1961). *The Teaching of Sri Aurobindo*, Dipti Publications, Pondicherry.

Hulin M. (1986) *Samkhya Philosophy: A Critical Evaluation of its Origins and Development*. Routledge, London.