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SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION ON REALITY

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Abstract: Sri Aurobindo believes that Reality does not differ from Brahman. Reality is not static but dynamic in nature. Brahman's ultimate reality encompasses both Force (Shakti) and Consciousness (Cit). In opposition to monism, he argues that Reality in its diversity, Consciousness, and Brahman are One.

Keywords: Reality, Consciousness, Brahman

Introduction:

Aurobindo is one of the world's best metaphysicians, with his own stem. He is a Vedantic Advaitin who is also an integralist like Hegel in the West. He mixes the West's scientific mindset with the East's spiritual vision. As a metaphysician, he finds no conflict between materialism and spiritualism, or relativism and absolutism. He develops a great synthesis of all seemingly opposing metaphysical systems. Here we discuss his vision on Reality.

Research Question:

How does Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical vision reconcile the apparent dualities of Matter and Spirit, Being and Becoming, Consciousness and Force, within the framework of Vedantic philosophy?

Methodology:

This study uses a qualitative, interpretive approach. It analyses primary texts by Sri Aurobindo, especially *The Life Divine*, through close reading and hermeneutic interpretation. The research compares Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics with classical Advaita Vedanta (Sankara).

Key concepts such as Brahman, Consciousness-Force, and Sat-Chit-Ananda are critically examined to understand how Sri Aurobindo reconciles unity and diversity. The study relies on textual analysis, thematic coding, and comparative philosophy to highlight Sri Aurobindo's unique synthesis of Eastern and Western thought.

No empirical data is used; the work remains philosophical and conceptual.

The Infinite Reality:

Reality is infinite because there is no limit to what is ultimately real. That is, there is no finite way to describe reality. Hence our finite mind cannot capture the essence of reality. It is in this sense that Sri Aurobindo talks about the ultimate reality being beyond all our finite and limited mind and language. The Infinite Reality is the reality that is Truth-Consciousness-Bliss in nature. The Infinite Reality includes all forms of existence, both material and nonmaterial, in its totality. Reality excludes nothing since it represents what is real and true. Therefore, there is no reason for dualists to divide reality into Matter and Spirit. The Infinite Reality has manifested itself in two ways: matter and spirit. Truth is found in the harmony and reconciliation of Matter and Spirit, not in their schism. Sri Aurobindo writes:

The real monism, the true Advaita, is that which admits all things as the one Brahman and does not seek to bisect Its existence into two incompatible entities, an eternal truth and an eternal Falsehood, Brahman and not-Brahman, Self and not-Self, a real Self and an unreal and yet perpetual Maya.¹



That is, Reality, which is eternally non-dual (Advaita), knows no division within itself and hence does not harbour any discord within its existence.

For Sri Aurobindo, Reality is the principle that unifies all and brings all beings under the single most all-inclusive category of Being. It is the one Brahman, one God, and the one Absolute Spirit. The Infinite Reality is the all affirming Existence and is the true ground of all that passes as real including the so-called appearances. The apparently negative existence is also the manifestation of the Infinite Existence, Sri Aurobindo writes:

*Thus, after reconciling Spirit and Matter in the cosmic consciousness. we perceive the reconciliation, in the transcendental consciousness, of the final assertion of all and its negations. We discover that all affirmations are assertions of status or activity in the Unknowable; all the corresponding negations are assertions of Its freedom both from and in that status or activity.*²

That is, even the negations are assertions of freedom of the Spirit in all its unlimited existential manifestations. Existence can have no limit because even the so-called non-existent or non-being has some form of Being. The Absolute Non-Being is another name for the Absolute Being because ultimately Being and Non-Being merges into one another.

Sri Aurobindo denies the Buddhist idea that the ultimate reality is a Void or Nihil (sunya), believing that such a perspective ignores the basic essence of reality by defining it only in negative terms. The Being is a positive reality and it includes everything and so it cannot be described as emptiness.³ The Non-Being is in essence the Being, since, *"when we examine closely the Nihil of certain philosophies, we begin to perceive that it is a zero which is All or an indefinable Infinite which appears to the mind a blank because mind grasps only finite constructions, but is in fact the only true Existence"*.⁴ Therefore, saying that everything is a Void at the ultimate level of existence is incorrect.

The Infinite Reality is taken to be the "Pure Existent"⁵ because it includes everything that is real. It includes both the known and the unknown; it is both Being and Becoming. It is both the phenomenon and the noumenon. The Brahman is Sat, Cit, and Ananda in the all-inclusive sense. "We have, therefore, two fundamental facts of pure existence and of world-existence, a fact of Being, a fact of Becoming. To deny one or the other is easy; to recognize the facts of consciousness and find out their relation is the true and fruitful wisdom"⁶. The Brahman encompasses both cosmic and supra cosmic reality. The Pure Existent, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the foundation of all reality, both in eternity and beyond. It is the Absolute Existence beyond change and temporal succession and is also beyond the unity and multiplicity of things in the universe.

Reality as Consciousness-Force

Sri Aurobindo considered the ultimate reality, the Brahman, to be a Conscious Force⁷ because the Brahman is a dynamic Existence that acts as a foundation of all existence. If Reality would have been static, then it would be difficult to explain the change in the universe. The world we see is a dynamic series of activities in Time, and hence Reality, which is the foundation of this cosmos, cannot be static. The foundation of all existence is activity. In that sense, the supreme Reality, Brahman, cannot be without dynamism. As a result, the Brahman is known as the embodiment of Force.

Sri Aurobindo acknowledges that the universe exists and is caused by the Brahman because there is no other way for the world to exist other than via the creative energy of the Brahman. Unlike Sankara, who is a mayavadin, Sri Aurobindo accepts Brahman as the true cause of the world. As a result, he accepts the causal dynamism of the Brahman. He argues that the Brahman's ultimate reality includes both Force (Shakti) and Consciousness (Cit), explaining how the universe came into being from the Brahman, the Sachchidananda. Sri Aurobindo writes: *".... that which has thrown itself out into forms is a triune Existence Consciousness-Bliss, Sachchidananda, whose consciousness is in its nature a creative or rather a self-expressive Force capable of infinite variation in phenomenon and form of its self-conscious being and endlessly enjoying the delight of that variation. It follows that all things that exist are what they are as terms of existence, terms of that conscious force, terms of that delight of being."*⁸



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That is, all existence is a manifestation of the supreme Existence, hence there is no distinction between the Brahman, the Conscious Force, and its creation, the universe. The world is Brahman in its material manifestation.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Brahman is the supreme manifestation of Consciousness and hence the source of all forms of consciousness in the universe. As the supreme conscious Being, it gives rise to all forms of consciousness, from the most primitive forms found in the plant and animal worlds to human consciousness and beyond. Consciousness is the true essence of Brahman as it is the nature of the supreme intelligence that accounts for the universe. The world with its infinite variety is the embodiment of consciousness insofar as the Brahman is involved in the world. That is, the Brahman has willfully immersed itself in the universe for its own pleasure. The universe is the arena of the Brahman's conscious action, and hence the universe and the Brahman are inextricably linked. In fact, everything is Brahman since everything in the universe is a manifestation of the Brahman.

Sri Aurobindo takes the Infinite Consciousness as the One and Infinite Reality which includes all objects which are real parts of the Infinite Reality. Nothing in this vast Reality is real independently; everything is contained within it. The Brahman encompasses all. From the lower level of entities to the higher level of conscious beings, there is a continuous process of integration culminating in the higher-order reality of the Brahman. From the temporal to the non-temporal, from the transient to the eternal, and from the sub-rational to the supra-rational, there is a process of integration and unification that abolishes all dualities and opposites.

Conclusion:

Sri Aurobindo denies Sankara's pure monism because he believes that Advaitic monism does not do justice to the world. Advaitic monism regards the world as illusory because, since the Brahman is the only reality, the world cannot be real in the same ultimate sense. Sri Aurobindo disagrees with Sankara on the status of the world since, according to him, the world is real in the sense that it is a manifestation of the Brahman in Space and Time. From Sri Aurobindo's point of view, the world is a form of the Brahman and is real in the sense in which Brahman is also real.

Sri Aurobindo recognizes that monism alone cannot solve the issue of the world's existence since it reduces all reality to a single reality by rejecting the phenomenal world's multiplicity. The monistic principle denies the world's diversity. As a result, he chooses an integrated approach to Reality, emphasizing the importance of preserving both Reality's unity and diversity in a greater synthesis. This synthetic whole can be taken as the total Reality comprising all the phenomena from the lower Matter to the highest Consciousness. The Lower Matter is as much a part of Reality as higher forms of consciousness, and hence Reality does not exclude any element of it.

References:

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2. Ibid., p 34.
3. Ibid., p 32-34.
4. Ibid., p 32.
5. Ibid., p 78-86.
6. Ibid., p 85.
7. Ibid., p 87-97.
8. Ibid., p 99.