

Research Paper

THE DOCTRINE OF MIND AND SUPERMIND: AN AUROBINDONIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

: *Man is the noblest creation of God. He is distinguished from other creatures by his power of thinking and thirst for knowledge. All thinking power originates in mind. This thinking power plays an important role in shaping action. All good and bad actions are outward manifestations of mind. Man's mind is the sole cause of bondage or free from bondage i.e. moksha. The word "Mind" or "Manas" literally means, "measuring", it was used in this sense in the early Vedas and Brahmins. By the activity of mind man measures his wisdom, pleasures etc. in his life.*

This mind or manas in subtle matter is common to almost all system of Indian philosophy. Indian philosophy explains mind as an instrument of the self or consciousness. While the Western thinkers do not recognize their distinction. However almost all the system of philosophy explain the self, mind and body together in order to solve the problem of mind. All the systems of philosophy (both Indian and Western) state mind in a beautiful way. But Sri Aurobindo describes mind in a special way showing us how the mind can gradually lead to the Supermind, which is a plane above the mind.

Key Words: - Mind, Overmind, Intuitive mind, Higher mind, Supermind etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Sri Aurobindo is one of the master minds in the philosophical, spiritual and educational reality of India. He shines like a luminous star in the galaxy of intellectuals. Aurobindo Ghose, later known as Sri Aurobindo, reverentially regarded as "Rishi", was a poet, philosopher, yogi, patriot and an educational thinker. He was an outstanding personality with a divine halo around him and was unrivalled in the structure of modern Indian life. His philosophy of life emerged out of his own life education, experiences and insight. Sri Aurobindo, who was an Indian nationalist and one of India's most original philosophers, became one of the chief religious centres of India. According to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, cosmic salvation involves both an evolution and involution enlighten. On the other hand, humanity evolved from matter to the present stage of development called mind and is now in the process of moving to higher state of supermind or divinity. Human actions are outward manifestations of mind. Action, again, highlights itself in two forms: good action and bad action. Good action ends in good result, whereas the latter leads to bad result. Thoughts originate in mind. These thoughts play a very important role in shaping action. Man's mind is the sole cause of bondage or free from bondage. When the mind finds attraction towards the worldly objects of pleasure, it is bound. When it is not so, it is free from bondage which leads a man to attain moksha or salvation.

"*Mana eva manusyanam Karanam bandhamoksay, Bandhaya visayasangi Mokse nirvisayasmrtam*".¹

Indeed, the mind is restless like a pendulum of a clock but mind should be controlled and liberated from the worldly inclinations as we can realize Nirvana / Salvation or achieve Truth, Goodness and Beauty. Man is capable of gaining psychic power through the development of mental power. He who has mind is man. Therefore the history of mind is as ancient as that of man's history. We can decipher a chronological outline of philosophy of mind if we go through the history of man's philosophy. Here is to find out the foundation of that philosophy what leads mind to go beyond to a higher and wider consciousness. The speed of consciousness towards change is so thrust upon thinking man as to seem almost as challenge to the status quo and his growing awareness. Much of this growing awareness and experience comes from his wider and more liberal understanding of the potential of the mind. He also knows that mind is no longer confined to be the substance of the body but is free to explore other worlds of being and consciousness. There is no single system of the Indian philosophy, which does not deal with the concept of mind. As much the concept of mind gradually grows, so much the grade of philosophy ascends into the higher possibility. Because the mind is only one factor which initiates the philosophical thinking. They explain mind as an instrument of the self or consciousness, while the western thinkers do not recognize their distinction. However almost all the system of philosophy of Indian and Occidental explain the self, mind and body (matter) together in order to solve the problem of mind. "The philosophy of mind seeks to answer such question as: is mind distinct from matter? Can we define what is to be conscious and can we give principled reason for deciding whether other creatures are conscious; or whether machines might be made so that they are conscious? What are thinking, feeling, experience, and remembering? Is it useful to divide the functions of the mind up, separating memory from intelligence, or rationality from sentiment, or mental functions from an integrated whole?"² As much the thinkers have come to think deeply about these questions, so much the doors of mental ability opens towards the higher possibility. It was Plato who was the first in the west to make a sharp distinction between the mind and the body, holding that the mind could exist both before and after its residence in the body and could rule the body during that residence. St.

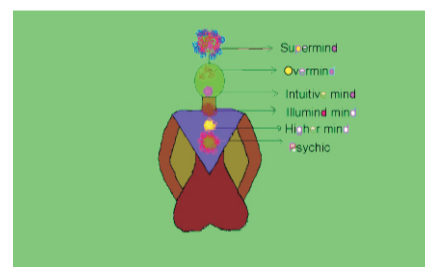
Augustine further develops this distinction in more detail. According to Descartes, "Mind is a thing which doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses and which also imagines and feels"³ Mind is called the "bundle" concept by Hume. The mind is "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perceptual flux and movement" (Treatise of Human Nature, I, IV, 6). The Western thinkers very rarely see any differences among the mind, the consciousness and the self. A. C. Ewing says, "A distinction has been made chiefly by the theologian, between mind, soul and spirit, but this distinction has been avoided by most philosophers and mind used to cover the whole of man's inner nature and not merely his intellectual side"⁴ Henri Bergson proposed that when we speak of mind we mean above everything else consciousness.⁵ According to William James, mind is a "stream of consciousness". But the Vedantin's view, in Indian philosophy, is that the mind has locus in time and space, whereas consciousness is that which is not limited either by time or space, but still is that which gives a meaning to these. Thus mind is not consciousness. It is like matter, only an appearance of consciousness.⁶

Therefore the mind, the consciousness and the self are in Indian thought, obviously distinct from each other. Sri Aurobindo on whose thought having the same view like other systems of Indian philosophy, states that the self cannot be spoken of as mind. The mind is secondary. This is the self of man, since it is the essentiality of a mental being, will do through the mind.⁷ The self is the enjoyer who uses the mind as an instrument. Brihadaranyaka says, "By the mind, indeed, one sees, by the mind hears", or "the mind is indeed endless" (1.5. 3. & 3. 1. 9). Sankhya philosophy proposed that the mind serves the purposes of purusa. Sridhar, the Nyayayika, said that, mind is not consciousness, because it is an instrument of consciousness, like a jar.⁸ But in case of consciousness the Aurobindonian perspective is something different than that of other Indian concepts. All consciousness is not mind itself, but mind has a power of consciousness. Mind is hidden in the explicit of body. According to Sri Aurobindo, Mind in its essence is consciousness, which measures, limits, cuts out forms of thing from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer.⁹ Mind, as we know it, has a power of consciousness quite distinct from Super-mind, no longer a power developed from it, connected with it and dependent upon it, but practically divorced from its luminous origin, is marked by several characteristics which we conceive to be the very signs of its nature.¹⁰

According to Sri Aurobindo the mind has the ability to go beyond its earthly human mentality and to contact directly to the Truth Consciousness (chit) independent of other sense organs. Chit means the heart is centre of man's thoughts. Mind is that which does or acts. We can have pure experience that is the experience of objects without the aid of the five senses. The sense mind has so far depended upon the five senses is really only a dominant habit of the sense-mind. He assures us, in "The Life Divine" that it is possible for the sense-mind to get out of this habit and to perceive sensuous objects directly without the aid of the sense- organs and the senses.¹¹ But all other systems of philosophy (perhaps about all the Western and Indian) state that there comes knowledge when mind can contact between sense organs and objects outside. Here Sri Aurobindo knocks at the noble door of the ability of mind to bring down the transcendental light into the earthly possibility. He says it is this character of mind that will reveal itself under the touch of

Supermind and makes human mentality an adjunct and a minor instrumentation of the supramental knowledge. It will even be possible that the mind is no longer limited by the intellect to become capable of sort of mental gnosis, a luminous reproduction of the Truth in a diminished working extending the power of the light not only to its own but to lower levels of consciousness in their climb towards self transcendence.¹² Mind is an instrument of the ignorance trying to know -- Supermind is the Knower possessing knowledge. It is one with it and also it is one with the known. So it sees all things in the light of His own Truth, in the light of their true self which is He. Supermind is a principle of "active Will and Knowledge" superior to mind. Supermind cannot be reasoning mind because, according to Sri Aurobindo, the consciousness in reasoning mind is not sufficient to explain existence in the universe. Mind is the faculty which analyzes ideas and objects, thereby ignoring the unity within multiplicity. Supermind is this faculty of knowledge, for it retains the true nature of Sachchidananda without distorting it. However, mind is an expression out of Supermind and identical with it in essence, which means the potentiality of Supermind lies concealed unmanifest in mind.¹³ The mind knows only the present and lives in an isolated movement of it while trying to remember and retain the past and forecast the future. The Supermind has the vision of the three times; it sees them as an indivisible movement and sees each containing the others. It is aware of all tendencies, energies and forces as the diverse play of unit and knows their relation to each other in the single movement of the one Spirit. Sri Aurobindo defines the Supermind as the Divine's own knowledge of himself and his own native power of acting. In so far as it is Knowledge the Supermind is also God's self-awareness and world-awareness. The Supermind is Knowledge Will par excellence.

For explaining Supermind, Overmind and other minds a picture is given below:



CONCLUSION:

Sri Aurobindo brought down the Supramental consciousness into our earthly consciousness. The Bhagavat Gita could reach up to the levels of Overmind, whereas Sri Aurobindo reached Supermind, the level higher than Overmind. In Sri Aurobindo's own word, Krishna is not the Supramental light. The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of Overmind Godhead preparing though not itself actually the descent of Super mind and Ananda.¹⁴ The Overmind is a delegate of the Supermind. But the Supermind is the consciousness of the Supreme Infinite itself, the bridge between the Absolute and the finite mind. The integrality of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together. It maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close interpretation and a free and full consciousness of each other. But in Overmind this

integrality is no longer there, its dynamic movement is not directly determined by it. Sri Aurobindo assures us that there are gradations between the two levels of consciousness- a transition from Supermind to our reasoning mind. Involving (descending) from Supermind is the Overmind, Intuitive mind, Illumined mind, Higher mind, and then ordinary mind. Supermind always sees the integral truth as itself. The mind sees the world from its own relative standpoint of individual separateness. Overmind, on the other hand, although aware of the integral truth of Supermind, proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending unity.

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