

CHAPTER – 1

INTRODUCTION

The *Vedas* and The *Upaniṣads* are fundamental sources of philosophical knowledge. The concept of transcendental consciousness and the mind are the central themes of *Upaniṣads*. The concept of self and self-knowledge occupies central points of discourse in the *Upaniṣadic* text as well as in Indian philosophical system. For instance, *who am I ?* The search for self knowledge has been the major concern for the Indian philosophers. The answer to the above question is – '*aham brahmāsmi*'- I am the manifestation of *Brahman*. It is pure conscious. The *ātman* is the individual soul or the self is a part of *Brahman*. Human beings are not merely the bodily beings, rather conscious beings. The *Upaniṣadic* notion of mind addresses to the issue of the very conception of realization of one's identity (self-knowledge) as part of epistemic activities of life. The realization of the self as pure consciousness or *Brahman* is a revelation; it is because the *Brahman* is *prakāśa svarūpa*. It has no form. Thus, it can be conceptualized with the theoretical framework of transcendental mind. The *ātman* is free from the spatio-temporal order of the Universe. The *ātman-conscious* mind is immortal, eternal and infinite. It is immortal in the sense that it neither decays nor takes birth; rather it is eternal to be conceived beyond the causal order of the universe. The changes that occur in objects and facts in the world are causally determinable. The origin of things in the world and their ends make them finite. The knowledge about the world is sense-experiential whereas the knowledge

about the *Ātman* is not derived through any sense experience; rather it is immediate knowledge. Nevertheless there must be a desire to know (*jiñāsā*) ‘Who am I?’ Unless there is any inclination to know its true nature, it does not ever reveal its true nature. The revealed knowledge is ‘*tat tvamasi*’- ‘*thou art that*’. In other words, the true nature of being is referred to one’s identity with the Universal consciousness. The individual *Ātman* is associated with the body, but *Ātman* as consciousness can transcend the body.

The *Upaniṣads* maintain a harmony between *ātman*(soul), *manas*(mind) and *śarīra* (the body). The *Jīva*, the individual represents the whole of these. The *indriyas* (sense - organ) are coordinated by the mind. These are gross and subtle sense - organs. Thinking, experiencing, remembering and knowing are performed by the sense - organs. The *manas* is one of the finest-*indriyas*. The sense-organs being part of the body are not merely instruments of experiencing pleasure and lust, rather to be used as a field of spiritual realization. So the whole *sādhana* is to control and overcome the basic nature of the mind and other *indriyas*. The activities of the mind are being witnessed. The soul or the *ātman* in this connection is described as the *sākṣin* – the witness consciousness. The *ātman* is not affected by the activities of the body and the mind. The mind which is in close proximity with the soul-the *ātman*, can only be controlled and co-ordinated by the *ātman*. ‘The finite mind is capable of receiving the experiences but cannot conceptualize them without the soul which is the seat of thinking and the other creative activities’¹. The soul has the power of transforming the nature of the mind. This transformation is co-ordinated highlighting the harmony between the soul and the mind, which is explained through the metaphor of chariot in *Kathopaniṣad*. In famous metaphor of the chariot, the

soul is the owner of the chariot, the intellect the charioteer, the mind the reins, the sense - organs the horse and the body the chariot².

As per Hinduism, mind is a finer body within this gross body. The physical body is, as it were, only the outer crust of the mind. The mind being the finer part of the body, the one affects the other. And therefore, physical illness often affects the mind and mental illness or tension often affects the body. Behind the mind is the *Ātman*, the real self of men. Body and mind are material, *Ātman* is pure spirit. Mind is not the *Ātman*, but distinct from the *Ātman*.

The difference between matter and mind is only in the rate of vibration. Mind at low rate of vibration is called matter; matter at a high rate of vibration is known as mind. Both matter and mind are governed by the same laws of time, space and causation. Matter is convertible into mind, though we may not have realized that this is so. For example, if a person does not eat for two weeks, then not only his body becomes weak, his mind also becomes blank. If he fasts for a few days more, he cannot even think. Even he does not remember his name. When he takes food, his memory revives. Therefore food, which is a matter, becomes mind.

In the *Upaniṣad* Uddālaka is found teaching his son Śvetaketu by experiment how food is converted into mind:

“That, my dear, which is the subtlest part of curds rise, when they are churned, and becomes butter. In the same way, my dear, that which is the subtlest part of the food that is eaten rises and becomes mind. The subtlest part of water that is drunk rises and

becomes *prāṇa*. Thus the mind consists of food, *prāṇa* consists of water, and speech consists of fire.”

The son Śvetaketu said, “Please tell me again”.

Uddālaka said, “My dear, a person consists of sixteen parts. Do not eat (any food) for fifteen days, but drink as much water as you like. Since the *prāṇa* consists of water, it will not be cut off if you drink water”.

Śvetaketu did not eat (any food) for fifteen days. Then he came to his father and said: “What shall I say”?

His father said: “*The Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma verses,*”

He replied, “I cannot remember the *Vedas*.”

His father said to him, “My dear, of your sixteen parts only one part is left; and therefore with that one part you do not remember the *Vedas*. Now go and eat and you will understand my word”.

Śvetaketu ate and then he showed that he knew it whatever his father asked him.

Then his father said to him – “My dear of your sixteen parts only one part was left, and that, when strengthened by food, blazed up. You now remember the *Vedas* with it. Therefore, my dear, the mind consists of food, the *prāṇa* consists of water, and speech consists of fire”. After that he understood what his father said³. If someone doubts this, then he is invited to fast for fifteen days living only on water and see what happens to their mind!

Man is not the mind but the self or *Ātman*. The *Ātman* is free, infinite and eternal. It is pure consciousness. In man the free agent is not the mind but the self. Mind is, as it were, an instrument in the self, through which the self apprehends and responds to the external world. This instrument with which the self comes in contact with the external world is itself constantly changing. When the changing instrument is made motionless, it can reflect the *Ātman*. Though the mind is not a free agent, its powers are simply incalculable. If man has smashed the invisible atom and released its power, if man has realized the unseen *Ātman* and become illumined, it is possible through the power of the mind. In fact the mind is omnipresent. Each mind is a part of the universal mind. Each mind is connected with every other mind. Therefore each mind, wherever it may be, can be in communication with the whole world.

The *Upaniṣad* teaches: “God shining all these shine. Through his radiance all these become manifest in various ways”⁴. To understand the Hindu view of the mind this teaching of the *Upaniṣad* is to be remembered. The source of all light is *Brahman*, the supreme spirit, pure consciousness. What is known as *Ātman*, the knowing self of the living being, is identical with *Brahman*, pure consciousness. It is the radiance of this pure consciousness which manifests all things at all times.

The mind, composed of subtle matter is the *antaḥkāraṇa* of the knowing self. There is no consciousness inherent in the mind. The mind receives the radiance of consciousness from the knowing self and illuminates all things. Though having no light of its own the mind appears to be luminous. Again it seems to cognize, the mind is not the cognizer, but only an instrument of cognition. From our own experience we can know that mind is distinct from the organs and the body. We can think, feel, will, imagine, remember

without our ten organs, which prove that there is a distinct inner instrument, i.e. mind for which all these functions are possible.

In order to prove whether the mind is a distinct inner instrument the *Upaniṣad* gives the following argument:

People say “I was absent-minded, I did not see it, I was absent-minded, I did not hear it.”

It is through the mind that one sees and hears. Desire, doubt, faith, shame, intelligence, fear – all these are but the mind. Therefore, the mind exists⁵. The mind has the power of looking back into itself. With the help of the mind we can analyse the mind, and see what is going on in the mind.

The dichotomy between Mind and Matter, Mind and Self, has been the subject of many a controversy down the ages and philosophers have been divided among themselves on the relative importance of Mind and Matter, Mind and self, giving rise to a number of schools of thought. For the physicalists, ‘matter’ is the most basic, and ‘mind’ and ‘consciousness’ are the latter evolutes, others who take ‘consciousness’ as the most fundamental and ‘matter’ as the derived evolutes, are antitheticalists. Again the dualists plead either in favour of body-mind dualism or matter-spirit dualism. These schools discuss the origin and nature of ‘mind’ by way of expounding their views about evolution.

Cārvāka substantiates the physicalist’s model by the analogy that, just as red colour appears as an emergent phenomenon when beetle leaves, beetle nuts and lime are put together whereas redness is not the property of any of the constituents, ‘consciousness’, though not the original property of any of the fundamental elements, appears as an

emergent property when the fundamental elements come into particular configuration. To him 'mind' is a function of the 'body' and consciousness is the emergent property of 'matter'. The concept of consciousness is rejected on account of the fact that it is not available through sense-perception. Hume denies the existence of self precisely on this ground: When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception⁶.

The physicalists and the atomists argue that perception is the only valid means of knowledge. Anything non-sensuous is constructed as non-existent and unreal. Similarly, causal explanation is the only valid mode of explanation. Every phenomenon is explained in terms of the casual antecedents. Given the antecedent the effect follows and given the consequent, the antecedent can be inferred retrospectively. So there is no room for choice. The present is the result of the past and the future is the result of the present.

However, the essence of mechanical explanation, is to regard the future and the past as the calculable functions of the present and thus to claim that all is given. On this hypothesis, past, present and future would be open at a glance to a super human intellect capable of making the calculation⁷. According to the mechanist's view the "free will" of an individual is considered as a myth. The mind is said to be a function of matter. Mental functions are understood as the neural events in the nervous system.

According to the Sāṃkhya school of Indian Philosophy, the mental entity, rendered as the internal sense-organ is the '*Manas*', and aspect of the '*antaḥkaraṇa*' the internal

instrumental organ of knowledge and action. ‘*Antaḥkaraṇa*’ is the three-fold inner organ -*Buddhi*, *ahamkāra* and *Manas*. The faculty of determinate or decisive expression which helps in the perception of right or wrong, determines what is to be done and what not, is *buddhi*. The function of *ahamkāra* is the continuity of the feeling of ‘I’ the ego-ness-I am the person who studied in the college; ‘I am the person who was an under-graduate student in the Raiganj University College,’ ‘I am the person who is now recollecting those memorable events of my life.’ The feeling of ‘I-ness’ or *abhimāna* in all these events is the work of *ahamkāra*. Certainly, desire and doubt (*saṃkalpa-vikalpa*) are the function of *manas*. To Sāṃkhya *manas* is the internal organ of perception (*antarindriya*) through which we directly know, for instance, pleasure and pain and other mental states. Again the internal sense-organ *manas* acts as an auxiliary to both the five organs of knowledge (*Jñānendriya*) viz., *cakṣu* (the visual organ), *śrotra* (the auditory organ), *ghrāṇa* (the gustatory organ), *rasanā* (the olfactory organ), *tvak* (the tactual organ), and the five organs of action (*karmendriya*) viz. *Vāk* (the organs of speech or larynx), *pāṇi* (*the hand*), *pada* (feet), *pāyu* (the excretory organ), *upastha* (the male or female reproductive organ). Along with all these organs the *manas* is also material in nature. They also agree in considering *manas* as unconscious. To the Indian thinkers consciousness is an attribute of, or identical with, the *ātman*. Like the eyes, the ears and the nose etc. *manas* also is an instrument, unconscious, but very subtle, and through its instrumentality the *ātman* obtains the knowledge of objects.

In this context the self is referred to as *Puruṣa*. It is absolutely a distinct non-material entity which is in essence pure, enlightened and consciousness as such. The *manas* is considered as an evolutes of *Prakṛti*, the hypothesized ultimate material principle of

creation besides the conscious principle of creation, the *Puruṣa*. *Prakṛti* is believed to be constituted of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, the three constituting elements or substances. *Prakṛti* undergoes a process of evolution and gradually evolves this diverse material universe. In this process evolves *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra* and *manas*, and each of the evolutes is also composite of the three elements, any one predominating the other two. Again the body is also formed from the evolutes of *Prakṛti*. The body is regarded just as a medium through which the self i.e. *Puruṣa* enjoys the material *Prakṛti*. Here *manas* cannot be equated with the body.

What ‘Sāṃkhya’ achieves through ‘knowledge’, Yoga achieves through control of the mental status by actions. In Yoga philosophy mind indeed is the ‘king’ among the sense-organs. In this philosophy the term ‘*Citta*’ is used to denote the mind and *buddhi*. The ‘*Vṛttis*’ are the disturbance that the mind is subjected to the ideas, thoughts and other forces of the mind. *Vṛtti* literally means whirlpool and ‘*nirodha*’ signifies restraint or control.

There are varieties of Yoga and the one that is well known is Patañjali’s *Rāja Yoga*. This school maintains that the inner power of the mind can never be enhanced by any external means but by their own exercise. The *Rāja Yoga* also means that one who practices this *Yoga* becomes a ‘king’ of faculties or their master.

According to Yoga philosophy *tapas*, *svādhyāya* and *Īśvarapraṇidhāna* are the essential pre requisites before proceeding to Yoga practices. The *tapas* of the mind consists in ‘calmness of thinking, coolness, quietness, self-control and purity of subject matter’

(XVII 14-16). *Svādhyāya* is the study of the relevant books and a full appreciation of everything as divine gift is *Īśvara praṇidhāna*.

Yoga refers to an important characteristic of mind. It sometimes tends towards good and sometimes towards bad. It is like a river, which flows both ways towards ill as well as towards good. Again the individual has an innate power ‘*śakti*’ stored up in the *citta* and one has to use it in such a way to lead on to the path of *śreyas*- good. This is the ultimate spiritual goal⁸. Yoga brings harmony of the body, mind and the spirit. Yoga to be precise is the way of life aimed at self realization with a meditative mind.

According to the Nyāya - Vaiśeṣikas *manas* or mind is a sense like the senses of taste, smell, etc. It is an internal sense having its locus in the heart (*hṛdayān -tarvarti*)⁹.

Mind is not perceptible but its presence is inferred. Mind is material in nature and serves as an instrument for external as well as internal sensations but the self is the ultimate substrate of knowing¹⁰. For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas, mind is an eternal substance which is different from the physical substance. Unlike the external senses, mind is non-physical (*abhautika*), i.e. it is not constituted by any of the physical elements of earth, water etc. Like the external senses, mind is not possessed of any specific attribute of the physical elements, nor was it limited to the perception of any particular class of objects. As an internal sense it is concerned in all knowledge in different ways. It is atomic and exists in contact with the soul (*aṅvātmasamyogi*). The mind as a sense cannot be perceived, but is known by inference (*na pratyakṣamapi tvanumānagamyam*)¹¹.

Just as external perception depends on the external senses, so internal perception depends on an internal sense, called *manas*. Again the mind is also a condition of external

perception. The external senses can perceive objects only when they are in contact with the mind. To perceive an object the mind must attend to it through the senses. We do not perceive things in a state of absent-mindedness, even though our senses are in physical contact with them¹². So the mind also is a condition of such subjective states and processes. Again it is also said that though memory, inference are not cases of perception, they are also dependent on the function of the mind as a sense¹³. Because it may be said that in the memory and inference the mind gives us knowledge of objects, not by its contacts with them, but through some other knowledge, as a past experience and the understanding of a universal relation (*vyāpti*).

According to most of the Vedāntins, particularly Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra are of the opinion that *manas* is not an *indriya* or sense-organ and it is the locus of the properties like fear (*bhaya*), respect (*śraddha*), intellect (*dhī*) etc. Again it is not an independent reality. It is not regarded as an invisible, infinitesimal substance (as in the Nyāya system), but is considered to be medium dimension¹⁴. The Advaitins have admitted two types of mind – one related to desire and another unrelated to the same. When an individual possesses a mind, it is connected with desire etc. but through *sādhanā* mind get refined reducing the burden of desire which can alone grasp the Ultimate Reality.

Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra has clearly pointed out that no perceptual or inferential experience is possible without the assumption of the shape of an object through the inner-organ (*antaḥ-karaṇa*) i.e. another name of mind. Our inner organ assumes the shape of an object which is called mental mode (*antaḥ-karaṇa-vṛtti*) which is inevitable in any type of experience.

The body-mind relationship also goes back to the Āyurveda which is the five thousand years old Indian systems of medical science. Āyurveda upholds the concept that man is a miniature universe in the sense that whatever is present in the universe is reflected in man-‘*Yatpinde tat brahmande*’. It further holds that the universe with all its constituents had emerged from a common ground and hence shares a common origin.

All the four Vedas – *R̥g, Yajur, Sama, Atharva* – contain several references to the digestive system, metabolism, anatomy and descriptions of diseases along with concept of *Tridoṣa* or three *doṣas*. The *doṣas* according to the *Vedas* are subtle elements in the human body responsible for all its functions. According to the dictates of Āyurveda, illness occurs due to an imbalance in the equilibrium between the three *doṣas* – *Vāyu, pitta* and *kapha*. Roughly translated, *Vāyu* is wind; *pitta* can be represented by bile and *kapha* by phlegm. We are all made up of unique proportions of *Vāyu, pitta* and *kapha*. These ratios of *doṣas* vary in each individual, and because of this, Āyurveda sees each person as a special combination that accounts for our diversity.

Just as the body is governed by the three *doṣas*, the mind is also governed by three attributes (*guṇa*) mental *doṣas*. They are called *sattva, rajās* and *tamas*. *Sattva* is responsible for righteous and kind thoughts and feelings. *Rajās* is for arrogance, desire, love and passion. *Tamas* is for sleep, stupidity, ignorance. All food, behavior, thoughts and medicine will increase, decrease or neutralize the mental and physical *doṣas*.

Āyurveda implies that whatever affects the body has its effects on the mind. So the performance of the body is closely associated to the mind and soul of the individual. It can be said that if the body should be free from disease, the mind should be happy.

According to Āyurveda, all psychological problems are nothing more than the wrong use of mind. Practicing the right use of mind not only solves the psychological problems, but also directs us to our higher potential of self realization.

Āyurveda is largely indebted for its philosophical ideas on the Sāmkhya and the Vaiśeṣika systems, but it admits *manas* or mind - organ as a separate sense (*indriya*). Āyurveda differs from the ordinary senses by reason of the fact that it has many functions which are not possessed by any of the othersenses (*cakṣur – ādibhyo'dhika-dharma yogitayā*)¹⁵.

In Āyurveda, *manas* is described as transcending the senses (*atīndriya*). Cakrapāni, in explaining the *atīndriya* character of *manas*, says that it is called *atīndriya* because it is not a cause of external objects like the other senses. The mind is treated as the sixth sense - organ with a control over the other five sense-organs taking a place higher than them (*sarvendriyaparam*). Besides controlling and co-ordinating the sense impressions from the external worlds, the mind functions as a motor organ enabling activities through speech and other actions. Thus mind is both a sensory as well as a motor organ¹⁶.

The *Caraka-Samhitā* however states that the *manas* is atomic. Both *ātman* and *manas* are substances (*dravya*) and *manas* is instigated by the *ātman*. The *manas* is not conscious (*acetana*) in nature and *ātman* on the other hand is without any action (*niṣkriya*). *Manas* acts as the intermediary for the relation between the self and the body. The bodily states influence the *manas* and the various conditions of *manas* (states of peace, content etc.) helps in maintaining the body health. One's behavior is regulated by the activity of *manas*. A complete relation of *manas*, *ātman* and the body is what gives a human being

living. But here also the 'I' stands for the conscious self who stands in relation with the body via the *manas*, the individual being referred to as *puruṣa*. Here is the compendium state of *manas*, *ātman* and *śarīra* (the body)¹⁷.

Āyurveda explains that psychological problems are nothing more than the wrong use of mind. Practicing the right use of mind not only solves the psychological problems, but also directs us to our higher potential of self realization. So the concept of mind in Āyurveda is more practical and realistic in the areas of health and healing and hence touching the day to day life of people.

Indian philosophy had long been inculcated by men like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo who have not only preached the ideal of the Vedāntas but also translated that ideal into reality.

Swami Vivekananda explains: The mind manifests itself in the five conditions” “Scattering, darkening, gathering one-pointed and concentrated”¹⁸. The ordinary conditions of the mind are ‘darkened’ and ‘scattered’. In the darkened state a man feels dull and passive. In the scattered state he feels restless. Though practicing the disciplines of *yoga* the same mind can be ‘gathered’ and made ‘one pointed’. The whole purpose of mind-control is to make the mind one-pointed. When such a mind is applied to sphere of activity, in that case it shines. Though the practice and development of one - pointed, the mind reaches the fifth or highest condition, called ‘concentrated’. In this condition super conscious is attained.

A strong will is necessary to control the mind. Sri Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gīta*¹⁹ in addition to strong will, faith in oneself is also necessary to control the mind. The mind will have to

be controlled by the mind itself. Mind cannot be controlled by artificial means. Deliberate, patient, intelligent, systematic hard work and suitable discipline is needed.

To Swami Vivekananda, the control of the mind depends on its purity. Perfect morality is necessary for control of the mind. The man who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do, he is free²⁰. We are unable to control our mind because it is impure. The impurities of the mind are the urges, impulses, and emotions like envy, hatred, anger, fear, jealousy, lust, greed, conceit, temptation etc. So we should practice disciplines for the purification of the mind. The impurities of the mind can be gradually removed by providing the mind with pure food. When the food is pure, the mind becomes pure, when the mind becomes pure, memory becomes firm. And when a man is in possession of firm memory, all the bonds which tie him down to the world are loosed²¹.

According to the commentary of Śankarācārya, the word ‘food’ means anything that is taken in by the senses, such as, sounds, sights, smells etc. and ‘the mind becomes pure’ means that it becomes free from aversion, attachment or delusion, which makes it difficult to control mind. According to the *Gītā*, *rājasika* and *tāmasika* food cause attachment, aversion and delusion. *Sāttvika* food helps a person to reduce attachment, aversion and delusion. Therefore our object should be to bring about a preponderance of *sattva* in our inner nature, and then to transcend *sattva* by purifying it.

The most effective way of controlling the mind is meditation and meditation by mind control. These who do not believe in God can control the mind by transcending the *guṇas* through self-effect. Mind-control is most important because it leads to the highest blessing the illumined state of being.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can be called idealistic, in a broad sense. It is idealistic firstly because it conceives reality as spiritual; it is idealistic also because it fixes up an ideal for mankind towards which all our efforts have to be directed. But his idealism cannot properly be called 'Monism' of an abstract type or 'Theism' of a personality variety. The best name that can be given to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is the one given to it by Haridas Choudhary. He says, "The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo may aptly be described as integral non-dualism (*Pūrṇa-advaita*), or integral idealism (*Pūrṇa-vijñana*) or just integralism (*Pūrṇavāda*)²². But this non-dualism of Aurobindo is totally different from the Advaita theory of Śankara.

Sri Aurobindo is also one of the greatest metaphysicians of the world. As a metaphysician, he sees no contradiction between materialism and spiritualism, and relativism and absolutism. He evolves a grand synthesis of all apparently contradicting metaphysical systems. Sri Aurobindo is aware that Materialism and Spiritualism are the two prevalent and rival theories which have attempted to explain the world in their own ways. He says, "The affirmation of a Divine Life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognize not only eternal spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of the mutable robe, but accept matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of his mansions"²³.

According to Sri Aurobindo, in the universe there are not only material bodies but also mental beings so that *prima facie* there is not one reality called matter. He finds that mind has a great role to play in the universe, especially in the evolutionary scheme of things. "As soon as we begin to investigate the operations of the mind and super mind," says Sri

Aurobindo, “in themselves and without prejudgement that is determined from the beginning to see in them only a subordinate term of matter, we come into contact with a mass of phenomena which escape entirely from the rigid hold, the limiting dogmatism of the materialist formula²⁴.” These phenomena are those of mind and supermind to satisfy our reason in explaining the universe because it cannot explain the very basis of our reasoning about the Universe. The Universe is itself intelligible only to the mind and therefore any doctrine that denies mind must be an incomplete and inconsistent doctrine.

Sri Aurobindo argues for the reality of the mind which lies beyond the realm of matter. He provides a new world-picture in which mind is taken to be prior to matter in the sense that mind is already involved in matter. That mind is higher than matter is proved by the fact that mind has consciousness in it which is not in matter except in the latent form. If mind would not have been already in matter, then it would not have been possible to explain how life and mind would come into existence. If matter would have been ontologically closed within the physical laws, then under no circumstances can we show how mind comes into existence in a purely material universe²⁵.

The main objective of Sri Aurobindo’s is to provide an ontology that makes room for the existence of both material universe and the conscious beings like the human beings. He conceives reality as supremely spiritual and yet he manages to assign to matter a place in it. He admits, “Since, then, we admit both the claim of the Pure Spirit to manifest in us its absolute freedom and the claim of Universal Matter to be the mould and condition of our manifestation, we have to find a Truth that can entirely reconcile these antagonists and can give to both their due portion in life and their due justification in thought”²⁶. According to him, Reality is essentially one, but creation depends upon the two-fold

principles of unity and multiplicity. According to Sri Aurobindo, as for the ancient Upanishadic Rishis, the realm of the mind is finite, limited and surrounded by the Nescience. Mind is therefore steeped in the depth of Ignorance regarding the ultimate nature of Reality. The Brahman is vaguely recognized by the mind. As Sri Aurobindo observed: “Mind is not sufficient to explain the existence of the Universe. Infinite consciousness must first translate itself into infinite faculty of Knowledge or, as we call it from our point of view, omniscience. But Mind is not a faculty of knowledge nor an instrument of omniscience...Even when it finds, it does not possess; it only keeps a certain fund of the current coin of Truth – not Truth itself – in the bank of memory to draw upon according to its needs. For Mind is that which does not know which tries to know and which never knows except in a glass darkly. It is the power which interprets truth of Universal existence for the practical uses of certain order of things”²⁷.

Thus the mind is limited in its cognitive capacity and therefore cannot get hold of the Truth that lies far beyond its conceptual powers.

To Aurobindo, Truth is the knowledge aspect of the metaphysical reality of the Brahman. Truth - Consciousness is the Consciousness that constitutes Reality itself. In this sense Truth does not stand apart from Reality; in this metaphysical system Truth and Being are one. Sri Aurobindo Writes:

The Truth-Consciousness is everywhere present in the universe as an ordering self-knowledge by which the one manifests the harmonies of its infinite operational multiplicity²⁸.

The Truth-Consciousness cannot, however, be grasped through the reason or the finite mind because the latter is limited in its cognitive powers. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo proposes a higher faculty called the Supermind which can have direct access to the Truth-consciousness. This he calls²⁹ the knowledge by identity which means that in this case the Knower and the Known become identical.

According to Sri Aurobindo Supermind is *The Real idea* and the *Supreme Truth-consciousness*. The difference between mind and Supermind consists in the difference between their manners of apprehending reality. The transition of mind to Supermind is not sudden. Mind, after all, belongs to the lower hemisphere and it has to ascend to the higher sphere. Therefore, there must be some inter- mediatory steps through which this transition will be brought about. Through the following intermediary steps the order of ascent from mind to Supermind: (Mind), *Higher Mind*, Illumined Mind, Intuition, over mind.

To Aurobindo, mind and its higher form Super mind dominate the world process. Here it is important to say that the mental and the spiritual planes of existence are ontologically prior to the physical universe. The physical universe is only a manifestation of the super mental Consciousness-Force. Sri Aurobindo writes:

“Mind in its turn, when it emerges, becomes dominant; it uses Life and Matter as means of its expression, a field for its own growth and sovereignty, and it begins to work as if it were a true reality and the creator even as it is the witness of existence. But Mind also is a limited and derivative power; it is an outcome of Overmind or it is here a luminous shadow thrown by the divine Supermind³⁰.”

Mind is described as of diverse nature to different philosophers. Some think it is eternal, some non-eternal, some sense - organ, some non – sense – organ, some atomic and some non – atomic. Whatever may be its nature, mind is the pillar of each and every human action. Hence mind is to be admitted as a substance which is inevitable in ordinary life and epistemology.

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