

A Critical Analysis of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy and his Spiritual Evolution Theory

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Abstract: In this research work the researcher critically made a study on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and his theory of spiritual evolution. Firstly, it will study his involvements with philosophy in general; secondly, whether his philosophy originates solely from his own thought and understanding; thirdly, why he has not been critically studied by his critics or supporters. Why there is this passivity towards his philosophy. It will try to find out if he is one of those philosophers who, because of the superiority of their thoughts, enjoy that immunity and respect. It will critically investigate his philosophy on spiritual evolution and ideas on space and time. The study will also delve into his theory on the 'Lila' or 'delight' to create. The process of evolution and involution will be focused on, including its relation to matter, life and mind. Finally, a study on spiritual evolution theory compared to Science will be dealt with. The research work endeavors to unravel some of the controversial points in the philosophy of evolution. It will conclude on Sri Aurobindo's contributions to the development of philosophy of evolution.

Introduction

The theory of evolution has been a long discordant between philosophers, religious groups and Science. This tussle reached its peak in the 17th to the 19th century, especially, after Darwin came up with his theory of Natural Selection. His theory was accepted by some, but was shunned by others. The theory of evolution throughout these centuries had been explained either theologically or mechanically. But it is Sri Aurobindo who seems to have been combined these two thoughts based on his exposure to the ancient Indian texts of the Gita and the Upanishads. In the process, he includes his own experience in developing the spiritual evolution theory. His theory is the outcome of the integration of matter and spirit, through his process of involution and evolution, where the Sachchidananda or the Supreme Reality is involved in inconscient matter, the process for the world's existence.

A Critical Analysis

Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of Evolution

A critical analysis of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy on spiritual evolution, poses great difficulty to the researcher in fixing a definite critical and philosophical stand-point. This is mainly due to the lack of any critical study having been done up to now. A. C. Bhattacharya in his book, *A*

Synthesis Study on Aurobindo & Bergson, lamented, 'But, unfortunately, no critical study on Sri

Aurobindo has been done,' (Bhattacharya, 1972, p.9) Prof. A. C. Bhattacharya has made the right observation. The researcher has exhausted all possible sources of information from libraries in all universities in Thailand, including, the Sri Aurobindo Library in Pondicherry (Pudicherry), Calcutta University Library, NEHU, Central and the St. Dominic's libraries in Shillong, India. This is besides surfing websites on the subject. Under such a predicament the researcher has to make do with very limited resources at his disposal. The purpose of this critical analysis is merely to point out some of the logical inconsistencies of the theory, without aligning to any particular lines or School of Thought, to give it a balanced criticism. The justification for this critical analysis is in pursuance to Kant's proposal that criticism should be one of the methods in philosophy. It inquires into the capacity of the mind to the actual reality. It can

distinguish the a priori forms of knowledge with other knowledge derived therein from reason and intuition.

It is a fact, in the case of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo on the spiritual evolution, that many research works have been conducted, so surely it should have evoked interests and curiosity among the philosophers in the West and in the East who have known about his works. It would have been easier to discern his works and expound the meanings therein, considering that English was used in all his writings. It is unfortunate that with all these vast opportunities and ample space available to access into the thoughts of Sri Aurobindo, much is in wanting in terms of critical studies. During the past half a century or so, except for a few subdued critical remarks from such prominent Aurobindians themselves, such as A.C. Bhattacharya, Nolini Kanta Gupta, M.P. Pandit and Basanta Kumar, etc, no other serious critical work had been made. Whatever criticism we have seen has not incited much (philosophical *mark*, using Derrida's terms) beyond what Sri Aurobindo himself has theorized. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo had not shied away from criticism. In fact, he expects criticism on his philosophical interpretations on evolution and other subjects, for he says,

"It is possible to challenge the theory of evolution on the ground that it is insufficiently founded and that it is superfluous as an explanation of the process of terrestrial existence. It is open to doubts, even if evolution is granted, whether man can develop into a higher being. It is open to doubt whether the evolution is likely to go farther than what it has already or whether a supramental evolution, the appearance of a consummated truth -Consciousness..... Earthly nature, (Aurobindo, 'The Life Divine', 1939, p.826)

It is strikingly clear as seen from this excerpt from Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* that the theory of evolution as a whole is not foolproof. It encouraged and expected that the flaw that existed in the theory is still subjected to further scrutiny and criticism for coherence and general acceptance.

The researcher believes that before venturing any further into the vacuous and unfamiliar critical parts of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual evolution theory, it would be well worth the efforts to delve first into the realm of this indifference to criticize his philosophy. We begin with posing some questions such as: were the philosophical approaches or thoughts proposed by Sri Aurobindo too abstract without any philosophical or ontological considerations to have shunned away most philosophers into arguing, commenting or even dared to differ from his opinions? Or could it be the reason for such passivity, arising from the fact that Sri Aurobindo philosophical interpretations of the Indian ancient texts in the construction of his spiritual evolution theory, combined with his thought, were so flawless that they elicit no interests among critics to come forward? It could also be that the theory is so bland, out of date and too divinized that any arguments would only end up in the egg and chicken dilemma. The answer is not far to seek, because according to Bhattacharya, *'it does not happen with some of our master-mind that there comes a period in their life-time, by virtue of their inherent intellectual superiority, they escaped critical analysis of their contemporaries. By the tremendous influence they exert on others, they either convert or subdue all those inferior to them. Sri Aurobindo in our day is exerting a similar influence'*, (Bhattacharya, 1972, p.9).

The researcher condones that in philosophy such influence and superiority do create complacency. But complacency breeds mediocrity, and it creates mediocre philosophers. They tend to be fence-sitters. Such indifferent fence-sitters should not be entertained in the philosophical world. In fact, philosophy always provides a forum for expressing our opinion, irrespective of whose standpoint we are addressing or reacting. So Sri Aurobindo philosophy should not be an exception. A theory becomes more viable only if it has been exposed to scrutiny and study.

The apathy shown by those who have read Sri Aurobindo's philosophy can be considered a crime to the development of philosophy. They become a hindrance and create a vacuum that is difficult to fill, as experienced in the present study. A.C. Bhattacharya is not amused by this lack of any critical study on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of spiritual evolution. He came out lamenting that, *'he is spoken highly of by his disciples, never critically examined by admirers and not the least carefully studied by those who apparently differ from him'* (Bhattacharya, 1972, p.9). This only indicates that either Sri Aurobindo is the least understood philosopher, even by his followers, or, the least interest is given to by his critics. The indifference not only hurts the philosopher concerned, but also philosophy as a whole. Sri Aurobindo during his life time had foreseen this passivity and inaction of the Hindus. According to M. Rafique in his *Sri Aurobindo Ideals*, *'Hence Sri Aurobindo's foremost duty was to fight against the passivity and inaction of his age. He believed that the decadence and inertia of the people of the East was the result of the doctrine of illusoriness of the world, and the doctrine of self-negation. In the light of the modern scientific age,'* (Rafique, 1987, p.1)

Sri Aurobindo is trying to correct the wrong beliefs and wrong interpretations of the Vedas and Upanishads, which have led people to asceticism and renunciation of the world. This in turn, he believed, had led to the subjugation of the country by foreign powers. So, he aims at the reinterpretation of religious philosophy. The researcher believes this mission on his part, is what had led him to philosophy. But despite his noble intentions, if apathy and passivity reign in the people's minds, his philosophy will remain a philosophy unto himself alone. Bhattacharya again

came up with a very strong warning in his message, "*As a student of philosophy, we should study to weigh and consider with open mind. As for those disciples and admirers who have their highest regards for Sri Aurobindo and who do not want to examine his views, we have nothing to say. But those who are careless and indifferent to him and do not think it worth-while to look into his philosophy are surely betraying the interest and cause of philosophy itself*" (Bhattacharya, 1972, p. 9)

It seems to the researcher that A.C.Bhattacharya is one of those most worried and concerned about this problem. He went on even to quote Bernard Shaw's remarks, '*the worst sin towards our fellow creature is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them*' (Bernard Shaw, cit.1972.p.9).

The spiritual evolution theory that Sri Aurobindo has attempted is not an easy feat. In fact, it is an attempt to consolidate the philosophies of the West with Vedantic philosophy in the East to produce an integral philosophic system, (L. Thomas O'Neil, 1979.P1). If that is the novelty of Sri Aurobindo's evolutionary theory, the researcher thinks there is no more room for passivity or apathy. We have to heed the remarks made by Bhattacharya, Rafique, O'Neil and others. It is hoped that these remarks and warnings are not too late, but should be taken as a wakeup call, awakening to those who admired him and those who loved philosophy. We must begin venturing into the realm of his spiritual philosophy and unravel the treasures, through critical and constructive study of his ingenuity, how he has constructed his philosophy on spiritual evolution.

On His Philosophy

We have seen that according to Rafique, Sri Aurobindo is more concerned with the passivity of the people in India with regard to religious practices. They tend to follow Shakaracharya who preaches passivity and inaction that had led people to asceticism and renunciation of the world. According to Rafique, Sri Aurobindo has rendered a great service to Indian philosophy and Religion by trying to present them in their true and original form removing all the interpolations and pollutions in the original stream(Rafique,1987, p.1).Hence, with due respect to Sri Aurobindo's standing in the world of philosophy, the researcher believes that Sri Aurobindo was apparently led into philosophy not by choice but by the circumstances of trying to purge religious interpretations of the ancient Sacred books of Gita and Upanishads. He was in the period that gave him no choice but to play the game that was presented to him. One of the games is to purge his religion; this most probably has led him to philosophy. In religion, the game is to study man and his relation to the Divine. Then his Western education and exposure to the philosophy and religion of the West, had led him further on how to integrate Eastern and Western thoughts. This only proved that he was led into philosophy by chance and through his writings which are both philosophical and religious.

In the light of the modern world, Sri Aurobindo through his own experiences knew the strength of spirituality. It is not only philosophical ideas that can resurrect the strength and beliefs of the Indian people, but philosophy and religion combined together can do the magic. So such, initially, is his ideals to reconstruct and reinterpret religious philosophy that ultimately landed him in philosophy. Of course, besides these, Sri Aurobindo being a gifted person, with intelligence above average, as seen from his works in philosophy, religion, poetry, epics and politics, which are all written in English, the language he most feel comfortable to write. And he was able to gather all the knowledge, due to his having a number of European and Indian languages at his command, plus their philosophies and political ideologies. So it is to be expected that such a person with so many backgrounds and knowledge should play a part in the advancement of philosophy.

The researcher also found that besides religion and philosophy, Sri Aurobindo was drawn into philosophy when he edits the 'ARYA', a bi-monthly magazine. It is solely on political commentaries, and is dominated by his writings emanated from his commitments, to liberate his country. So, should we conclude that Sri Aurobindo's involvement in philosophy is a freak due to circumstances, rather than any purposive commitment to philosophy? Or, was he using philosophy to realize his purposive ends. Thus, having paved the way, the researcher will leave a conclusion to the readers.

On His Spiritual Evolution

Analyzing the spiritual evolution of Sri Aurobindo, we need a theoretical understanding as a necessary prelude to all the future progress of man's existence. Why so? This is because the researcher believes that it will ultimately lead to the integral development on both the physical as well as the spiritual evolution of man. The rational scientific in conjunction with metaphysic proof can be arrived at in the process. Therefore, a critical study of his philosophy of spiritual evolution can be the answer to this controversial question

on evolution, which still plagues philosophers and religionists to the present day.

It is true that Sri Aurobindo is trying to bridge the East with the West. So he fused the materialistic and cosmic approach of the West with the spiritualistic and individualistic of the East. The question that may be posed to Sri Aurobindo at this juncture is why would he want to disturb this peace that prevails in the East and in the West, in which they had lived and prospered throughout the centuries in the past? S.K. Maitra, one of those Aurobindians, came up with some philosophical answers, '*this meeting is not a mere handshake, but that there is a real synthesis of these two thoughts in him. There is even something more, a fulfillment of what each of them aims at but has not been able to realize*' (Maitra, 1956, p. 32). We might concede the observation made by Prof. Maitra, but we must not forget that he is also an Aurobindian; it is to be expected to make this observation. So we can argue that this meeting and handshaking are not without a flaw, since the handshaking was extended from the East. Has there been any reciprocal extension of the handshaking from the West? Well, the researcher thinks the answer is *No*. There can never be any

real handshaking without the two hands being extended, and clasping one with the other. So Prof. Maitra, in trying to eulogize Sri Aurobindo efforts, was only making a mockery of the gesture of handshaking.

Again, Sri Aurobindo's spiritual evolution is more of the emergence type, where he postulates a gradual self-manifestation of the psychic entity or the spirit through several forms of existence, first in the world of matter, which took place within the succession of births and rebirths. His spiritual evolution philosophy is based on the Vedantic and teachings from the Hindu texts of the Gita and Upanishads which emphasized that the reality is but the Supreme Consciousness. He even went further and said that the measure of reality of anything is determined by the Consciousness present in it. It is conceived as the Atman or Self, which can be traced back through evolution to the highest consciousness, and which he called the Sachchidananda, another name for Brahman. He claimed that the aspects of Divinity are being kept in the mind from the beginning, that *Brahman is also Matter*, (Upanishads). This contradicts the more prominent medieval Western picture of the world known as the Ptolemaic system, where science embraces and Ptolemy epicycles it. Then new discoveries paved the way for a more scientific idea about the universe.

In comparison with modern philosopher like Whitehead's philosophy of evolution with that of Sri Aurobindo, we find Whitehead's theory is *naturalistic* which appeals more to the general masses, whereas that of Sri Aurobindo is spiritualistic and so has few followers. We also find Western philosophers like Herbert Spencer in his *Development of Hypothesis* (1852) and his *Principle of Psychology* (1855); he interprets the scientific evolution of the universe. Then, Darwin and Lamarck read their papers in the *Linnaean Society* in 1858; Darwin published his famous work on the '*Origin of Species*' in 1859. All these philosophers had subjected themselves to all kinds of criticisms and admirations. But Sri Aurobindo has never presented his philosophical theory on evolution at any forum. So whatever prominence his theory has achieved was in the obscurity, and taken as God's truth by those who admired him as a person. Hence, critical study on his philosophy should be encouraged for those who want to know more about his philosophy.

On Space and Time

Sri Aurobindo's concept of space and time is full of intrigue and confusion. The concept is full of doubts and invites arguments. A.C. Bhattacharya, who has done a lot of research on Sri Aurobindo's works, argued that, '*Sri Aurobindo's concept of time and space brings about confusion difficult to overcome*', (Bhattacharya). Sometimes, we find him say that '*Time and space are the one conscious being viewing itself in extension-subjectively as 'time' and objectively as 'space,' and that 'these two are.....merely two aspects of the universal force of consciousness,*' (Aurobindo,1939,p.202-03) Criticizing this notion on time and space by Sri Aurobindo, Bhattacharya argued, '*This clearly indicates that space and time are dependent on*

Sachchidananda and the two modes of the process of creation. Contrary to this, he observes that, at other places we find Sri Aurobindo saying that the creative principles viz, Supermind is, the vast extension of Brahman that contains and develops' (Bhattacharya, 1972, p.148-49).

The researcher agrees with Bhattacharya. He thinks that Sri Aurobindo seems to contradict what he has already said earlier that Supermind is nothing but Sachchidananda, an extension in time and space. But this only subjected Supermind to the limitations of time and space, instead of subjecting the latter to the former which is generally accepted. So Sri Aurobindo is wrong in postulating space and time as the extension of Sachchidananda.

So, in the process of evolution, based on space and time, from that very rudimentary life to the present form of human, there is a deep chasm (literal meaning) that divides and a long period of time and space must have elapsed before man came into the scene. Sri Aurobindo seemed to have missed this point. Therefore this time and space, although for Sri Aurobindo is the Sachchidananda, for the rest of the philosophical world, as A.C. Bhattacharya has concluded, is *'the concept of space and time seems to be distinct from reality in which case Supermind becomes a victim of the former'*. (Bhattacharya 1972.p. 258).

On the 'Lila' and 'Delight'

Sri Aurobindo in his conception of an inalienable underlying delight of existence speaks of the 'Lila' as the creative secret, and through it, creation ceases. Here Sri Aurobindo seems to have got completely carried away by the spiritual aspects of evolution. He begins with the process of involution of the spirit into matter, and then evolution begins and the spirit reverts back to itself. The idea about 'Lila', very clearly indicates that he has adopted it from the Upanishads which says, *'For who could live or breathe if there were not that delight of existence as the ether in which we dwell? From Delight all these beings are born, by Delight they exist and grow, to Delight they return.* (Taittiriya Upanishad, II.7; III. 6). We find this idea about the Delight in chapter XII, in his book, *The Life Divine*, thus Sri Aurobindo postulates the idea of 'Lila' having borrowed it from the book of Upanishads, as the creative reason for existence. Then he questioned the existence of suffering, grief and pain on the basis of that *delight* of the creator to create. He asked, *'whence was created that moral evil which entails the punishment of pain and suffering? Why does it exist? He answered his own question, 'infinite delight loses itself in the appearance of an insensible Matter, and emerges in the appearance of a discordant rhythm of varied pain, pleasure and neutral feeling, love, hatred and indifference.'* (Aurobindo, 1939, p.110)

The self-questioning and the self-answering of Sri Aurobindo on the delight of joy and suffering has added more to the quagmire of the whole purpose of the Delight in creation. M.P.Pandit questioned on the Delight as the root of creation, he asked, *'If that is the nature of*

creation, how come that we don't feel that 'delight, we don't feel that 'bliss' in us! He went on to state that, what we see around us only struggle and suffering, pain and evil, from where have appeared these opposite things? Some, who want to absolve the creator from responsibility for these reverse Elements says it is the work of Satan, the evil If God is supreme, if God is omnipotent, why should he allow this devil to do havoc" (Pandit, 1989. p.5). It is therefore, questionable, why Sri Aurobindo has to bring such statements over the existence of good and evil? The researcher thinks that it is nothing but the deontological ethics of Sri Aurobindo himself to have used such a controversial statement in the philosophical argument over the delights of creation. Sri Aurobindo, having contradicted his own statement, tries to argue unconvincingly again. He said, 'still the ethical difficulty may be brought back in modified form; All-delight being necessary, all-good and all-love, how can evil and suffering exist in Sachchidananda, since he is not mechanical existence, but free conscious being, free to condemn and reject evil and suffering?' (Aurobindo, 1939.p.95) Sri Aurobindo, we see here, tries to defend the delight and the existence of both delight and suffering. He said, 'we have to recognize that the issue so stated is also a false issue, because it applies the terms of partial statements as if they were applicable to the whole. For the ideas of good and of love which we bring into the concept of All-delight, spring from the dualistic and divisional conception of things,' (ibid.p.95).

Delight of existence seems to be the core theory of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy on spiritual evolution. He even tries to justify the existence of good and evil, using the metaphor of a tiger and its prey, to support his idea on 'Lila', "We do not blame the tiger because it slays and devours its prey anymore than we blame the storm because it destroys or the fire because it tortures and kills; neither does the consciousness force in the storm, the fire or the tiger blame or condemn itself? (ibid.96). The researcher thinks a metaphor serves the purpose of a metaphor, but not when it concerns the existence of good and evil, the outcomes from the delight and the joy to create. It is imperative that it will be difficult to comprehend Sri Aurobindo's arguments, because when confronted with the fact of the delight for creation and the existence of good and evil, he simply said, 'we have no answer to that question'. (ibid.p.96).The adamancy with which Sri Aurobindo tries to end the argument proved futile for a critic to understand his philosophy.

Therefore, at the end, we have to posit a question to Sri Aurobindo, what about the human will? Are we bound by the Divine will? Sri Aurobindo cites examples on the pleasure and pain from a human experience, and compares it with the divine experience, which is absurd. We have to remember that it is difficult to reconcile the freedom of the absolute with the freedom of the human will. We have to remember that human is not the immediate outcome of the Absolute, since it has taken millions of years for humans to come to the present form. Sri Aurobindo conceded this. He said, 'In Life also the Consciousness-force begins with infinitesimal forms of vegetable life and infinitesimal animalcules; It creates the living cells as a unit, creates other kinds of minute biological apparatus like the seed or the genes..... various operations, various living organism,' (Aurobindo, 1939, p.830).

We may make a comparison between the philosophies on evolution of Sri Aurobindo with that of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Both philosophers are strong believers in the theory of

evolution. One is an ascetic and the other is a Catholic Priest. Both deal with evolution from a religious perspective. But differences exist between the two philosophers of evolution. Teilhard de Chardin called a spade a spade, whereas Sri Aurobindo, hides behind jargons, some of which were coined by him. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his *Phenomenon of Man*, we find him extolling the growth of sexual dualism, the development from a single cell to man, without mincing words he explains the chasm more accurately, he said,

“At the early stages that we are now considering the phenomenon appears in the main as means of accelerating and intensifying the double effects (multiplication and diversification) obtained by sexual reproduction such as is still prevalent in many of the organisms and even with individual cells of our own body. By the first conjugation of two elements, however, they may as yet have been differentiated into male and female, the door was thrown open to those modes of generation whereby a single individual can pulverize itself into myriad of germs” (Chardin, 1959, p.106)

Sri Aurobindo would have shunned such a direct reference to any thing about sex, although it is part and parcel of procreation and multiplication of the human race. In his Ashram which he sets up in Pondicherry, in India, he invited his devotees to populate it including married couples, on condition that they abstain from any sexual activities. In his book *The Life Divine*, he tries to avoid such references to sex. He wrote,

“The Ananda descending cannot be held if there is too much sex impurity creating an intoxicant or degrading mixture; the Power recedes, if there is ambition, vanity or other aggressive form of lower self, the Light if there is the attachment to obscurity or to any form of ignorance, the Presence if the chamber of the heart has not been made pure” (Aurobindo, 1939, p.915)

The reason for this orthodoxy on the part of Sri Aurobindo in using the language with so much impug and caution, only exposed his ascetic, vedantic life he had lived in the later part of his life. He is known to appear in public only once or twice in a year. But as a philosopher he is expected to live above the narrow and confined life of an ascetic. This could be the reason why critics shied away from getting involved with his philosophy.

On His Involution and Evolution

The theory of spiritual evolution of Sri Aurobindo was built on the basis that the Spirit through the process of involution, descends into the incoscient Matter. The incoscient Matter became alive and Life came into being, then from Life, Mind was developed. We have to remember that Sri Aurobindo considers matter as spiritual, (*Annam brahmeti vyajana*) or 'Matter

is also Brahman'. Also, according to his theory of evolution, Mind will develop into Supermind. Then the process of Evolution or the ascent process begins when the Spirit reverts back to itself or the 'home coming' as Prof. Maitra calls it. The process of evolution ends when the 'Supermind descends into Mind with a veil between them or the rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity (ibid.p.404). It was at this stage that humanity is transcended into a divine being or a Superman. It may remain in this world or revert back to the Supreme Ananda or Sachchidananda, as he called the Supreme Reality. It may be noted that the descent of the spirit into matter, as Sri Aurobindo called it, is the descent into ignorance. Sri Aurobindo said, 'First, then, the fundamental opposition presented to the Spirit is that it is the culmination of the principle of Ignorance.' (ibid. p.243)

In this excerpt, Sri Aurobindo speaks about the manifestation of the Brahman or the Supermind, who he said descends into ignorance, but limits itself through a succession of creation. This is what he calls the accomplishment of the descent, a downward movement, he called the involution. A critic who has his two feet firmly on the ground, will think this is a fairy tales, rather than a theory of evolution which should be factual. Basan Kumar Lall, although himself an Aurobindian, reacts to this and said, '*this world, created for joy and Maya. Sri Aurobindo tries to determine the process by Sachchidananda turns himself into the phenomenal world. He is also aware that it is not quite reasonable to suppose that Sachchidananda does all these more or less, like a magician simply by moving his magic-wand. He perceives the rule of law – a definite pattern or process in creation,*' (Lall, 1973.p.172-73).

The most curious aspect of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical explanations about the involution and the evolution process of his spiritual evolution is the aspect of ignorance. Is it necessary to conceive the entire cosmic and the world as ignorance? He postulates that the principle of the spirit descends on matter. But at the same time in his *Life Divine*, he repeatedly stresses that matter is seeped in ignorance and as inconscience. There is a dispute here, how can matter which is in the ignorant stage accommodate the Divine manifestation? The Supermind has all the attributes of being the Truth-consciousness, the creative principle, which Sri Aurobindo called the 'Creatrix' (ibid.p.281). The Divine life should be possible only in a region with pure existence, not in the ignorance and nescience of matter. Secondly, this idea of a creatrix as advocated by Sri Aurobindo runs counter to the physical science theory, which does not support the emergence of any principle higher than human mind. Hence, it should be conditioned by mental natures. Because, as Werriars said, '*Until the so called Supermind actually manifests itself on earth, we are not sure of its existence*' (I.E. Werriars, 1990. p. 113). And to conceive evolution

as a gradual progression from ignorance to knowledge is to put the creative power as the source of ignorance itself, otherwise where from does this ignorance originate? Sachchidananda has no need of the world. He created these life forms for the joy and delight of creating. There is no other reason for creation other than that delight. This was attested to by Sri Aurobindo himself. He said, '*why should Brahman, perfect, absolute, infinite, needing nothing, desiring nothing, at all throw out force of consciousness to create in itself these worlds of form* (Aurobindo, 1939, p.91)?

At another instance Sri Aurobindo seems to contradict himself, when he justifies the existence of ignorance, by saying that, '*ignorance is seeking and preparing to transform itself by the progressive illumination of its darkness into the knowledge that is already conceived in it, but the end is the liberation of the spirit into its true consciousness and an evolution in Knowledge*' (ibid.p.703) This problem of statement and contradiction is the main puzzling point for the entire Indian philosophy. It tends to affect the monistic character of the Reality, who is portrayed as one form at one time and another form at other time. Sri Aurobindo seems to have followed this trend all along while trying to extrapolate his spiritual evolution theory.

We conclude that the concept of Delight and the joy for creation and the concept of Ignorance in Sri Aurobindo theory of spiritual evolution are untenable even from the standpoint of logic, which he had always avoided. We know that a particular fruit tree which will bring out sweet fruit, will always bring out sweet fruit, not otherwise. The species remains what they are; they do not change. What more for the Originator of all things, how he can beget opposites when he himself is all Truth?

On Matter, Life and Mind

We have seen in the process of involution and evolution, Matter is transformed into life by the descent of the spirit into it. Then Matter is transformed to Life, and from Life to Mind. Sri Aurobindo is supposed to have brilliantly developed the divine evolution based on the ancient sacred books of India. There is a lack of consistency in his efforts to do so.

So we can argue against his philosophy in the development of his spiritual evolution theory. In the first place as already mentioned, it sounds more of a fairy tale. And on further analysis, the theory, although metaphysically sound, is scientifically difficult to prove. Yes science may accept that there is some form of life in matter, such as the presence of Atoms. But Atoms are still present in all the Matter we find today. Why does that transformed life in Matter still remain to this day? J.K. Sinha argued that, according to, '*Lyod Morgan, the cofounder of the doctrine of emergent evolution. It is based on the fact that organization takes place, and the outcome of such organization new things appear with new properties and powers – making new*

laws necessary, not abrogating others; protons and electrons gets into new relations and combinations and produce atoms; atoms are organized into compounds; cells emerge out of the organization of the protoplasmic matter; organism emerge out of the nervous system: Thus matter, life and mind emerge out of the previous elements. They are different states in evolution of the cosmos. Life is a higher stage than matter; mind is higher than life. Matter, Life and Mind are different levels of existence. (Sinha, Cit, 1922. p.155)

Consequently, if questions were raised on matter, life and mind and their emergence, Sri Aurobindo would simply answer that it is the Delight of existence of the Sachchidananda. This we have already argued that there is no consistency in the theory due to the presence of the two opposites. Hence, the emergence of matter, life and mind also invites criticism on the soundness of Sri Aurobindo's theory. Lyod Morgan, and Sinha, would argue against Sri Aurobindo, that the necessity for God as a *nisus* or urge is not a necessity for emergent to emerge. So for Lyod and Sinha, the whole course of emergent evolution is directed, and is forward looking. Whereas in Sri Aurobindo besides the involvement of the Delight to create, we found in his book, '*The Future of Man*', he stated that the being has to make an effort through the integral Yoga for the individual to emerge into a new being. Morgan would have argued that, '*new things emerge out of old things- with new properties of powers,*' (Morgan).

In Relation to Science

In dealing with science, Sri Aurobindo has no problem but his problem with science is that it does not accept Change. He speaks of science, '*this rule of dealing with objectivised or discovered actualities and proceeding from them for creation is the reason of the enormous success of physical science*' (Aurobindo, 1939, p.434)

Although Sri Aurobindo has no problem with Science, it seems to the researcher that Science has a problem with Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical construction of his philosophy of spiritual evolution. Firstly, in order that his philosophy of spiritual evolution is to be universally accepted, he need not necessarily be confined to ontological arguments, only must be scientifically viable. In the words of N. M. Wioldiers, '*the idea of evolution had itself to undergo an evolutionary process, before it can present itself to us with a requisite clarity and in a proper guise*', (Wioldiers). And as a challenge to Sri Aurobindo, Wioldiers continues, he said, '*with the passage of time, the theory of evolution has been stripped of all philosophical speculations annexed to it and restore the purely scientific terrain where it belongs,*' (Wioldiers, in his Introduction to Teilhard de Chardin's *Phenomenon of Man*, 1968, p.59). Wioldiers arguments implied that evolution is the domain of Science. Hence philosophy should keep its hands off evolution. In this argument Teilhard de Chardin will agree with Wioldiers. It is because, according to Wioldiers, the process of mutation is biological; hence, it is a scientific process.

Sri Aurobindo in his integral philosophy tries to interpret evolution from a scientific conclusion. It is a fact that Sri Aurobindo based his philosophical interpretation of his spiritual evolution theory on metaphysics. A question arose, why has he the need to involve science, which has a fixed principle? For instance he said, '*When science discovers that Matter resolves itself into forms of Energy, it has hold of a universal and fundamental truth; and when philosophy discovers that Matter only exists as substantial appearance to the consciousness....one reality is Spirit or pure conscious Being, it has hold of greater and complete a still more fundamental truth,*' (*ibid.* p.234)

Now, what is the purpose for him making this comparison with science, when in fact he had already erred that philosophy offered a more fundamental truth than science? It is true that even science cannot explain everything concerning evolution. It does not mean that philosophy had been able to unravel the whole truth about evolution. But at least science within a span of one century had changed the face of the world, things that could not be imagined a century ago. Most of all, it has made it possible for man to explore space and visit some of the distant planets. In Philosophy, or for that matter Metaphysics, we have to admit that despite our existence of more than two million years, we have not progressed beyond the spiritual evolution theory advocated by Sri Aurobindo.

Science and Philosophy are opposite poles. The question of comparing them is redundant; a contrast would have served a better purpose in the interest of understanding evolution in a more perspective manner. If philosophy works out at common parlance with science, I think we would have made much headway in formulating a more viable theory of evolution. For instance, Sri Aurobindo admitted that life cannot emerge from matter, unless some form of life is already there. Science, on the other hand, interprets that life emanates through a gradual chemical process. These are viewed in the new light shed by discoveries made possible by modern science. They both agreed that matter is the medium for life existence in this planet. We can take this as a hypothesis. So when a hypothesis has been agreed on and arrived at, we have only to look for a transition that could build up a process from there. Of course, it is easier to suggest than to really make it work. But alternatives have to be found to settle this outstanding issue on evolution between philosophy and science.

Although we have shown our disagreements with Sri Aurobindo's comparing Philosophy to Science, for the next decade until that expectation of philosophy working hand in hand with science, the possibility of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual evolution may not be unreasonable to accept for now. But for the present, let us take it as an intuitional exercise, so as not to jeopardize the interests of philosophy through any comparison or any hasty conclusions.

On Religion

Sri Aurobindo leans very heavily on religion in explaining his spiritual evolution theory. It may be true that throughout the history of evolution, it had been associated with religion. The esoteric, an aspect of religion, can reveal the mystery of higher existence. But within each human person, a higher plane of existence and a superior world of consciousness do exist. But the question that the researcher would like to pose to Sri Aurobindo is why he is trying to interpret evolution from a religious perspective, when it is the domain of Philosophy. Sri Aurobindo also speaks about the progress of evolution from the present stage to the next stage which is the supermind or supermanhood. He said this can be done only through the austerity of Yoga practice. Sri Aurobindo seems to have gone one step in the wrong direction including Yoga in the process of evolution.

If Sri Aurobindo is speaking purely from the point of Yoga, as Yoga stands for, I think we have no objection, since Yoga can comprehensively gain control over many hidden dimensions of mind and body existence. But if Yoga is part of the religious rituals in the evolution process, then we have many things to discuss. We have to remember that through history, religion has been a stumbling block for philosophy. It burnt a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned Galileo and it persecuted many more who stood in its way. This conflicting idea from religion has even curtailed to a great extent the development of science. But in spite of these facts, Sri Aurobindo dared to say, '*Scientific and Philosophical truth has to be devised in order that religion error might survive,*' (ibid.p.164-66). Religion, we have seen has been dogmatic towards science and philosophy, now Sri Aurobindo is asking them to prop it up. What hypocrisy one can witness beyond these words.

As evidences indicate, it is not religion that took the lead in explaining evolution more accurately. The scientific interpretation of evolution involved Astronomy, Biology, comparative Anatomy and Embryology and Paleontology, but still remained inconclusive. Then, what about Sri Aurobindo's reliance on religion to explain evolution? I think this should be left to Sri Aurobindo's prerogatives. We know, if the universe is to be understood, the nature of the creator must be no less, be understood also. But so far, many religionists and philosophers have tried but without success. So far, everything is left to faith rather than to knowledge.

Conclusion

Finally, in this analysis, we concede that Sri Aurobindo's view points on all the issues raised in relation to his Spiritual evolution theory offers very little room for any strong criticism. There are points which we have raised which are more scientific and from the point of Nature itself, but because of his metaphysical stand point, we cannot prevail over him. On the pertinent question of why there is a lack of interest in the critical study of his philosophy, the answer is the insufficiency of his metaphysical foundation in building his spiritual philosophy. Then on the

metaphysical problem as pointed out, considering the achieved course of progress of the spiritual theory, we can conclude that it offered more plausible reasons for evolution to take place, than all the previous theories. Therefore, Evolution if it has to take place, there is no convincing process other than what has been explained through the Spiritual Evolution process offered by Sri Aurobindo.

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