

# A Comparative Analysis of Metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo and Ramanuja

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**Abstract:** Sri Aurobindo provided a novel interpretation of Vedanta. He is an important philosopher of modern times in India. To analyze his own Vedanta metaphysics, this paper does a critical evaluation of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics. It also does a comparative analysis of Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics with that of the Visistadvaita Vedanta metaphysics of Ramanuja. In Vedanta philosophy, concepts of Brahman, soul and world and their logical relationship with one another differ logically among the different Vedantic schools. Sri Aurobindo's position differs from Advaita and Visistadvaita doctrines. It is also known as Purna Advaita. The paper first analyzes concept of God, concept of Soul and the world as defined by Ramanuja. It then looks into the doctrines of God, Soul and the world in Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics. In the third part, there is a comparative assessment of both the doctrines.

**Keywords:** Sri Aurobindo, Ramanuja, Visistadvaita, Vedanta, Dvaita, Brahman, Sachchidananda.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo is an important modern Indian thinker. He wrote extensively on philosophy and yoga. His philosophy is sometimes known as Integral philosophy as it covers all aspects of life. His metaphysics is reconciliatory in nature as it tries to synthesize divergent views about Brahman, Soul, the world and their relationship with one another. He takes the world and soul as manifestations of Brahman. Soul and world are not different from the Brahman, yet both have real existence.

Ramanujacharya is an important Vedantic philosopher of 11<sup>th</sup> century. He propounded the Visistadvaita view which primarily opposed to the Advaita of Sankara. He believes that Brahman is eternally different from the soul and the world. Both soul and the world are real. However, they are dependant on Brahman for their existence. Soul and world forms the body of Brahman. Ramanuja's view is primarily against the view of Advaita that the world is Mithya or unreal and only Brahman is the truth.

In the paper, I shall go through the detail analysis of metaphysical position of both philosophers and their comparative analysis. This will help to assess the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo with a dvaita perspective of Ramanuja.

## II. VISHISTADVAITA

This school is one of the most influential schools after Advaita school of Vedanta. Traditionally Ramanujacharya is considered to be the founder of school. Before Ramanujacharya, there were several other teachers who contributed to the philosophy of Visistadvaita. In Visistadvaita, there is unity of soul, world and the Brahman. But there is plurality also. The non-dualism is with qualification hence it is called Visistadvaita[1]. One of the earliest teachers is Yamanucharya. In Visistadvaita philosophy we shall cover the Visistadvaita as explained by all its influential teachers but primarily Ramanuja's philosophy.

### A. Yamunacharya - Concept of Soul

According to Yamunacharya, Self is an entity independent in itself. When said "I know", "I" is conceived as a subject. We say my body or my house where objects like body and house are different from subject "I". Since self does not have a shape like objects, people confuse it with the body.

Consciousness belongs to the soul and not to the body. It is not a sum total of material elements. If it is a chemical reaction of material elements then the particles of consciousness should be there. But there are no such particles. Consciousness also does not belong to senses. Otherwise an object perceived by a sense will not be perceived by another sense. The sense of "I" or ego is not a quality extraneously imposed on self, but it is the very nature of the self. The ego, notion of "I" is regarded false when the ahankara is taken as a body or related to one's birth, social rank or any such boastful thing or pride. The notion "I" is the most perfect notion when referred to the self.

Different states of consciousness are being states of the self. When self is connected to some objects, some or the other state of the consciousness manifests. Knowledge is a different state of consciousness. If the souls are all pervading then we should have acquired all the knowledge at once. However it is not the case. The self has consciousness as its essential characteristic.

### **B. Yamunacharya - Concept of God and World**

Yamunacharya considers the world as an effect and it is created by an intelligent person. This is God, who has direct knowledge of material and dharma (merit) - adharma (demerit). By his desire the world moves. He does not have a body but carries out His functions through manas. On one side there are multiple self-consciousness souls and on the other side the omniscient and all powerful Ishvara and the external world[2]. All the three are real. He rejects the monistic doctrine of Advaita. The upanishadic texts that "All is one Brahman" do not imply that everything else like the world is unreal. Just by saying the ocean exists does not imply that ripples do not exist. It only implies that the whole world draws its power from Him. Also the experience of the world is false then the experience of one Brahman also becomes false. The Brahman according to Advaita is accepted as Sat, Chit and Ananda and these are not qualities of Brahman, but represents the one identical Brahman. However bliss and intelligence are different as per our own experience. So the monistic conception of having these three indicating one Brahman is wrong.

The world according to Yamunacharya is regarded as sparks coming out of Ishvara. According to S. N. Dasgupta, Yamunacharya kept the duality of the world and Ishvara unresolved. His conception of world and Ishvara is same as accepted in the system like Nyaya[3].

### **C. Ramanuja's Concept of God**

Brahman is a qualified complex whole. He is transcendent and immanent God. He holds all the souls and the world of matter in his body. The difference between the limited soul and perfect infinite Brahman is due to the Avidya. It is removed or realised as false as soon as the soul realises that it is a part of Brahman's Body or forming the Body of Brahman.

Brahman is identical with individual souls and the material world. It is also different from souls and the world. Souls and the world are identical as they form the Body of Brahman. The difference is like the difference between the whole and its parts forming the whole. Identity and difference both have equal precedence. The parts of individual souls and the material world cannot independently exist. Their existence is dependent upon Brahman[4]. Brahman has internal differences (svagatabheda) and is a synthetic whole[5].

Ramanuja rejects the view that only cause is true and effect unreal. Just because effects are not eternal does not make them unreal. It is just that effects are destructible in nature. The effect exists from the transformation of its cause to its destruction in definite time. Hence it cannot be said that our perception of that time is false. Just like a jug which is made of clay is not different from clay, but in the shape of a jug it has special usage and function. When the jug is destroyed, its shape and function is destroyed. But its substance clay is not destroyed. Similarly Brahman and the world are identical as the Brahman is the real cause of the world. The substance of a cause remains the same in all its effects and states. One Brahman transformed itself in the world and many souls. All are one with Him yet they have real existence as His parts[6].

Brahman has two avastha or position. Karanavastha is when Brahman with its parts souls and the world exists in finer form. Karyavastha is when Brahman exists with its body, the world and souls in ordinary manifested form. This two fold division of matter and souls are parts of the Brahman. For man, soul and body have differences. Effects of the body do not affect the soul. Similarly defects of the world and souls do not affect the nature of Brahman. Although Brahman has a body He is still partless.

Existence and nature of God can be known only through testimony of scriptures. God entered both into Purusha and Prakriti. He is actively involved in world creation. Either it is good for the souls or for His own playful activities. The body is held fast and it is prevented from falling away by different souls. Brahman may be regarded as the material cause of the world through its body as souls and prakriti. The soul is an efficient cause of pleasure and pain of its own due to the karma or deeds. Similarly Brahman is also the efficient cause of the world. Brahman is unchangeable when looked apart from the body. The God and changeless Brahman are one and identical[7]. Emancipation can be achieved through the grace of God. Virtues and vices are nothing but different attitudes of God. Those are not subjective characteristics of an individual person.

Ramanuja took objections to certain Advaita theories on the concept of Brahman. Ishvara through His power shakti transformed Himself into the world, its conditions and limitations. Ishvara is beyond all impurities. Ramanuja holds that if Brahman or Ishvara through his power i.e. Shakti transforms the world then He necessarily subjects to all the defects of the phenomenal world. If Brahman is being transformed into the world, all the defects and limitations should also be part of Brahman[8]. There cannot be one part of Brahman with all impurities and another part transcends all these impurities. Ramanuja further holds that all the transformations take place within the body of Ishvara and not in his essence. Ishvara is free from the impurities in essence. The three quality prakriti forms the body of Ishvara in its fine essence.

Prakriti is the body as well as prakara (mode) of Ishvara. Pralaya is when Ishvara holds the transformation of Prakriti. Prakriti's transformation in tanmatra, ahamkara is not due to collocation of three qualities but it is passing of prakriti through different stages. Prakriti continues to acquire new qualities as moved by Ishvara. The present condition of the world is also a particular state of prakriti.

The existence of Ishvara cannot be proved through inference but only through verbal authority of sacred texts. Ishvara is all pervading in all space and all time. Ishvara is not just a nimitta karana of the world. All pervading does not imply that He is one with the world or He is the only truth and everything else is false. It means absence of any limits in His good qualities. There is nothing else then His body. By His body, He pervades the whole world. Ishvara is also updadan karana along with nimitta karana of the world.

#### **D. Ramanuja's Concept of Soul**

Soul at emancipation expands and pervades the whole world. Soul exists in one part of the body and spreads its knowledge over all the parts of the body. It is a mode of Supreme. Ishvara controls all the movement. Soul can do and desire according to the free will provided by Ishvara. Ishvara favours those who are attached to him and makes this attachment stronger. Those who are farther away from Ishvara go even farther from him. Ishvara exists in us as the inner controller and this inner controller is the soul. Both freedom of will and knowledge is given to us by Ishvara. Ishvara grants good and evil fruits according to our karma. Yet the souls have freedom of will. Self is called jnana or consciousness because it is self-revealing as consciousness.

The souls are held in Ishvara. Souls are the body of Ishvara. Self is pure but when comes in touch with matter, it becomes associated with ignorance and world desire. Avidya (ignorance) means want of knowledge. When souls' association cut away from the matter (acit) the ignorance is removed and emancipation is attained. According to Ramanuja, Ishvara grants emancipation to a person from worldly bonds. But this can happen when the person follows sastras under guidance of the teacher, follows all his duties and worships the Lord. He needs to surrender to the Lord. He emphasised on Bhakti here. Bhakti according to him is continuously thinking of Him. All the obligatory duties should be performed and all the highest ethical virtues to be practised. Without the devotion, pure knowledge cannot give emancipation. Bhakti here is not feeling but knowledge of a special kind in which all things are ignored which are not done for the dearest.

Ramanuja thinks of emancipation when avidya is removed and the person has natural intuition of the Supreme Soul and his relations with Him. The release souls post emancipation have continued existence[9].

According to Venkatanatha, performance of karma makes man fit to inquire into true knowledge. True knowledge makes the person fit for devotion. Bhakti is a feeling of joy and not mere knowledge. Emancipation is Sayujya (sameness of quality) with Ishvara. In Sayujya, the human soul can participate with Ishvara in omniscience and bliss but not in controlling the world. In Sayujya, man remains in an eternal and infinite blissful servitude of Ishvara[10]. Man considers himself as a servant of Ishvara. This emancipation is different from advaita emancipation where the soul thinks itself as Brahman. In the latter, the infinite joy is not present which is available in Sayujya.

**E. Refutations of Advaita metaphysics**

Ramanuja rejects Sankara's concept of Reality. According to Sankara, Brahman is absolutely unqualified. The argument or assumptions to prove the unqualified Brahman are of qualified character. The experience cannot be without any qualified nature. Without giving any qualified nature it cannot be proved unqualified hence the attempt is futile. All the three sources of knowledge viz. Perception, inference and verbal authority of scriptures give knowledge which cannot be without any characteristics. Self and knowledge are different. Self and Ego "I" are not different. Knowledge implies a knower[11]. If the sources of knowledge are relative, Nirguna Brahman of Advaita cannot be known[12].

**F. Refutations of Avidya of Advaita**

Avidya is the cause because of which one Brahman appears as many. It is neither a being nor non-being. In both cases the illusion, world appearance remains inexplicable. According to Ramanuja, avidya is impossible because it needs asraya or support. It needs to lean on something. It cannot lean on Jiva because Jiva is the product of avidya. It cannot be Brahman since It is self Luminous and opposed to Avidya. Avidya becomes illusory as soon as the real knowledge dawns. Brahman is pure intuition hence it cannot be the object of knowledge of any other concept like Avidya. If Brahman is hidden by Avidya then Its very nature of self illumination is destroyed. The self illumination is not produced hence hiding it implies it is destroyed. Due to the defects of Avidya, the Brahman assumes different forms. Is the defect here real or unreal? If it is real then monism fails. If it is unreal then what is the cause of the defect? If the cause of this defect is some other unreal defect without any real basis then it is similar to nihilism[13]. If the defect is the essence of the Brahman then it will remain even after emancipation. So the cessation of world appearance will never take place.

Avidya is also taken as existent and non-existent (sad-asad-vilakshana) which is logical untenable. A thing must either be existent or non-existent. Also Ajnana (nescience) is not a positive entity. Statements like "I am ignorant" or "I dont know" imply non-existence of knowledge prior to its apprehension (prag-bhava). Ignorance cannot refer to a specific object, otherwise that object would be known and there will be no ignorance. Since it does not refer to any specific object then how is it perceived? Ajnana(ignorance) is nothing but absence of rise of knowledge. Ignorance has no independent existence or it is not a positive entity.

Avidya cannot hide Brahman as Brahman is self-luminous and pure intelligence. Hiding Brahman implies destroying it. If Ajnana hides Brahman then it cannot be removed by true knowledge. As it hides Brahman implies it can hide knowledge also. Brahman is partless hence it cannot be said that AJnana hides Brahman partially. Hence "I am ignorant" or "I do not know" do not imply that ajnana has real existence. It is a state of nothing but lack or want of knowledge.

**G. Ramanuja's Theory of Illusion**

Knowledge is real according to Ramanuja. Illusion is perception in which a thing appears different than what it is. This illusory perception cannot be without cause. If the illusion is without cause such perception would be inexpressible but all the illusory experiences are very much expressible and it appears as real. It has to be admitted that in illusion one thing appears as another like silver appears in shell. On the annirvachaniya of Sankara, how the appearance of silver happens in shells? It is not perception because perception happens after the production of silver in shells. It cannot be sense defects because those are subjective and do not impact the nature of reality. How the silver appears in the shell? If it is because of similarity between shell and silver, is this similarity real or unreal? Since it appears in a shell hence it is not real. And it refers to actual silver hence it cannot be unreal. Hence this theory of anirvachaniya does not hold.

Ramanuja believes in Anyathakhyati. He says that similarity between shell and silver is due to the existence of Tejas in shell. As all objects are made from intermingling of fire, earth and water. The silver that appears in the shell is real because of Tejas. Illusion occurs because of the non-apprehension of the difference due to defects of other elements present in the shell which could have shown the difference. So the illusory perception of silver in shell has real objective basis[14].

**III. SRI AUROBINDO'S METAPHYSICS**

Sri Aurobindo's metaphysical concepts are synthetic and he presents a reconciliatory view of it. With Advaita Vedanta, it was the Brahman which is real but the reality of the world is apparent only. Advaita Vedanta gives higher reality to Brahman or the Absolute. Other schools of Vedanta rejected this view and accorded equal reality to Brahman and the

world. While there are other schools of Indian thought (like Nyaya) who are realist and give real status only to the matter. Sri Aurobindo reconciles these various thoughts and provides a lucid explanation as to how Brahman, or the Absolute and the cosmos are real simultaneously without degrading either. There are schools of thought who believe that only Spirit is true and Matter is false, while others believe in vice-versa.

According to him, to assert the possibility of divine life on earth, we must reconcile between Spirit and Matter. It is baseless if we don't accept the Brahman as a material cause of the universe. For materialists it is easy to explain a monism of Matter only and Spirit is just an outcome of the matter. They deny the reality of Spirit or anything beyond the realm of material word. On the other hand there are ascetics who believe only in reality of Spirit and deny any reality to Matter. For these ascetics believing in the body is the work of ignorants and the real world lies in some eternal heaven, brahmaloka or Nirvana. The main motive of this birth should be making oneself free from the eternal bondage of life. These are ascetic ideas. Sri Aurobindo suggests that both materialistic and ascetic thoughts are important and they have served for the Absolute hence both should get its due weightage.

### A. Concept of God

In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, the Brahman is the Absolute. Brahman is an omnipresent reality. It is silent and active at the same time, not opposing each other. It is the limitation of our mind and word that we see it as two contrary points. The words like Zero or Nihil is just to name something which is beyond the grasp of the human mind. In Taittiriya Upanishad, it says Being appeared out of Non-Being. The Non-Being is nothing but Being only. It is something beyond our positive conception. It is beyond Time hence when it is said the Being came out of Non-Being we try to reduce it within Time. Being has absolute freedom and that includes freedom of not expressing itself through Being also. One must admit all things as the Brahman. Bisecting it as Being and Non-Being or Truth and Falsehood is not tenable. If there is perpetual Maya or Illusion then it must be in the sphere of the Brahman. With this theory, Sri Aurobindo tries to explain the relationship between the Brahman, the Cosmos and the Individual Soul. There is only one Lord or the Absolute and many are its representations and becomings. Non-Being or Comos are nothing but different states of Reality or the Brahman.

The Brahman is self conscious Existence, supreme Intelligence and Force and a self-existent Bliss. It is integral and unifies many states of Consciousness[15]. It is also known as Sachidananda(Sat-Chit-Ananda).

It is pure existence or Sat. Reality for certain other schools of thoughts is becoming and logically it seems like that only. All we see around is nothing but movements and changes. Everything is moving in time and space. Suppose we keep an object on a table. It looks stable to us and not moving. But since earth is revolving around the Sun and our galaxy is moving around, it is still in movement. So mentioning the Absolute as being is difficult. However, behind these all movements and changes we have an eternal supreme intuition through which we can know that all these becomings are nothing but mode of our being. There are two facts of pure existence, being and becoming. Both are opposite in nature and it is difficult to assert both aspects in one Absolute. It is an important task to find a relationship between the two apparent opposite aspects in one Absolute. The Absolute is however beyond stability and movement. "But it takes its eternal poise in the one and the stable and whirls round it infinitely, inconceivably, securely in the moving and multitudinous.". The becoming is like the ecstatic dance of Siva. Sri Aurobindo explains that Consciousness here is not the ordinary consciousness we call in the waking state. There is something in us when we are asleep, our waking state is just a small percentage of that inner Consciousness.

The Absolute is conscious Force or Chit. Chit is the energy which creates the world. If the Absolute is Being, the question is how movement arises out of it? If Brahman starts the movement out of compulsion of its own nature then it cannot be the Absolute. The Force is inherent in Existence. It can manifest itself in Time or remain at rest in the Being. The Force that builds worlds is a Conscious Force, the Existence which manifests itself through it is a Conscious Being. Sri Aurobindo explains this through oneness of Siva and Kali or Brahman and Shakti.

The next question arises why Brahman, which is perfect, absolute, infinite and with conscious force inherent in it, should create the world? According to Sri Aurobindo, the only reason is delight. However, if it is for delight then why is there pain and evil in the world? Sri Aurobindo propounds that the question of pain is an issue with an extra cosmic transcendental God. Such extra cosmic God is aloof from the pain of the world. This extra cosmic God would be an immoral God. Indian philosophy does not accept creator God as much as the becoming God[16]. However, when the Absolute is the base material of the world, It is very much involved in all the pain. Hence the question of pain doesn't

arise when the material cause of the world is God. The Absolute is all Good and all Love, so there should not be evil in it. But the idea of love and compassion comes into picture because of dualistic thinking. Since the Absolute is one without second, such ethical concepts cannot be applied. In the process of transforming from lower to higher forms, phenomena of pain intervenes. This is the root cause because pain is not fundamental to the nature of being[17].

The Supreme Truth manifests itself in three terms of self-existence, self-awareness and self-delight. Self-existence reveals itself in three forms: Atman(self), conscious being (spirit) and Divine Being (God). The Indian terms for these three are Atman, Purusha and Ishwara. These are more plastic in terms of its application. Atman is self and Purusha is a conscious being. Self is the Absolute. Purusha is the many beings.

Similarly Power of Consciousness manifests in three aspects of Maya, Prakriti, Shakti. Maya is creative self force and creative of all things. Prakriti is a dynamically executive force. It is both creative and dynamically executive of all divine workings. Through the triple power and triple aspects one can relate the Absolute Brahman with the relative world. There is no magic in creation of the world through Power of Maya, but there is greater logic than we can comprehend as the Infinite can comprehend vast data than we can with our finite minds. What we find as irrational with our limited data, vision might be perfectly rational with much vaster vision and data. Applying our limited mind to a particular aspect and considering it as a whole is akin to the Jain story of blind men and elephants where each man considers his particular aspect as a description of elephant.

Sri Aurobindo says here that Consciousness and Will need not act in harmony with the conclusions of our limited mind. What seems to us illogical can be perfectly logical for infinite beings. The problem is verbal and conceptual and not real. Our mind thinks the Absolute as indeterminable however the world that emanates from it is very much determinable. This indeterminability is not incapacity but a freedom from all determinations. The whole issue is verbal and not conceptual.

There are multiple individuals with different self yet they are alike in essential nature. We cannot say that One is plural, plurality is not real because many souls are interdependent on one another, they depend upon One and exist by its Oneness. The One soul dwells as individual as many souls. There is infinite differentiation because Self and Spirit in things and beings are the same everywhere. There has to be something to hold her desperate movement and creations together. One and Many are the aspects of the Infinite. Sri Aurobindo has salient points on Maya. Maya is Consciousness and Force of self-existence. Ishwara is Brahman the Reality, Self, Spirit and revealed as possessor, enjoyer of his own self-existence, creator of the universe and one with the universe. God is Divine Being who is the master and creator of the universe. He is omnipotent, omniscient and controller of all energies. He is inhabitant of all souls and minds, consciousness in all conscient and inconscient things. However, He is not the personal God of popular religions. Personal Gods are limited by qualities. They are representations of Ishwara. Ishwara is the Absolute Brahman revealed as possessor and enjoyer of his own self existence[18].

## B. Concept of Soul

Brahman appears as the self in all existences. Duality of nature and self is apparent. It is created so that Nature can work out fully on its own with support from Spirit. Many souls are Divine as One. They are eternal. The soul is immortal portion of Divinity[19]. Many souls are dependent upon Ishwara. The soul is one with God at the same time different from Him. Soul is at difference and in unity at the same time with the other souls. In its being it is pure and infinite self-existence. In becoming, it is a free play of immortal life not impacted by death of material nature. It is a pure and unlimited consciousness in its energy. It is pure and inalienable delight. By accepting phenomenal reality, it is not away from the infinite truth. Intellect cannot comprehend the Absolute. Divine soul always has the conscious self of itself as a manifestation of the Absolute. The soul is aware of its Conscious-Force, Self-existence and Delight. The Absolute is the very foundation of the soul in unity and difference. The constant presence of the Absolute is the basis of the soul's infinite freedom and delight. The divine soul lives in one and many. These are two terms of eternal existence of Sachchidananda.

The soul is aware of the three aspects of the one Existence.

- 1) The self in us is becoming of all existences
- 2) Seeing all existences in the self
- 3) Seeing the self in all existences.

Self becoming all existences is the basis of our oneness with all. The self containing all the existences is the basis of our oneness in difference. The self inhabiting all is the basis of our individuality in the universal[20]. In its relation with the supreme Self, the God, divine soul will have the sense of oneness of the transcendent and universal Divine. Presence of separatist egoism and of effective division in consciousness is the reason for our mortality and our fall from Divine.

There are fourfold principles of divine Being creative of the Universe. These are Existence, Bliss, Conscious-Force and Supermind. Supermind is behind the actions of mind, mind is subordinate of Supermind. Conscious-Force is operative behind the actual phenomenon of things. It expresses itself through its own subordinate term which is Life. Existence expresses itself through its subordinate term Matter. The principle of divine Bliss is omnipresent in the cosmos. It is veiled. The subordinate term for divine Bliss is soul.

There are two souls in individual. There is a surface soul. It is also called desire soul. Another is the inner soul. It is also known as psychic being or caitya purusha. Such duality is also there for other principles like Conscious-Force, Existence and Supermind.

Surface or desire soul works in our vital cravings, emotions, aesthetic faculty, mental seeking for power, knowledge and happiness. Inner soul is a subliminal psychic entity. It is the pure power of light, love, joy and refined essence of being. The subliminal soul is open to the universal delight. On the surface desire soul, there is no true soul-life. It is psychic deformation and wrong touch of things. The psychic entity is hidden behind the veil of ignorant mind, life and body. It is the flame of eternal Godhead. It is the individual purush. It stands behind the mental, vital and subtle-physical being. It supports mind, life and body. This inner soul is imperishable. Through psychic transformation, this inner soul should be brought forward to the surface. Along with psychic transformation, spiritual transformation from above is needed to possess the self in its universality and transcendence. Finally the supramental transformation uplifts it to the summit of ascending endeavor i.e. Supermind[21]. This can be achieved through the power of Supermind.

### C. Concept of World

Sri Aurobindo's concept of the world and its status with respect to Brahman is unique. As mentioned earlier, he gives it an equal status while maintaining the non-dual position. If the world is a dream or illusion then it must be willed by the Absolute and hence it is also real. The dream is made up of Reality because the Brahman is material and base for the world. To understand the concept of the world it is important to go through the explanation of Maya, cosmic Illusion and its relationship with the world and the Absolute.

### D. The Cosmic Illusion

Human mind takes facts as real. Whatever is perceived by senses are taken up as real and the rest are discarded as unreal. It starts from there and eventually questions whatever earlier was considered as facts. Physical sciences help in this. It corrects many empirical errors of the limitations that arise out of senses. It pushes the mind to bring more facts. But it relies mainly on the test of objectivity or positive reason.

Man has a life mind which is not satisfied with the actuals. It is an instrument of desire. It deals with the possibilities and always extends beyond what it has. To satisfy further demands, it constantly looks for the newer possibilities and opportunities beyond the objective facts. It seeks for the subjective, imaginative, purely emotive satisfaction and pleasure. If this vital mind is not there then there remains no difference between animal life and human life. This mind questions everything and breaks the hitherto accepted truths. It later on builds them again and so on. Then comes a point where it questions the whole life whether it is real or unreal. The thinking mind discovers that all are mere mental representation or constructions.

From this position the great world negating religions and philosophies come into the picture. Cosmic Illusion is envisaged as a dream that takes place in infinite. The mayavadis keep showing the dream experience. Just like a dream, it is real to the dreamer but when a person wakes up it becomes unreal with respect to the waking state reality. Similarly the waking state reality is real as long as the person remains in this state. But when he transcends this state, the waking state also becomes unreal.

Sri Aurobindo explains the dreams as below. Dreams lose their reality when passing from one conscious state to another state. However each state can have its own reality. While passing from one state to another, the reality of the previous

state fades. However this does not prove that the current state is real and the previous state is unreal. Each state is real in that state. Another reason given for the unreality of dreams is, there is no coherence or connection among dreams. Each sleep will have a new dream without any continuity with the previous night's dreams. While in a waking state or life, there is coherence and continuity. Each day starts from where we left yesterday in the waking state. In the dream state there is no control on the circumstances within the dream, but in the waking state it is there to some extent. Our bodies perish but the soul proceeds from birth to birth in waking state. During sleep, the surface conscient mind is at rest but not the inner consciousness. It keeps entering new inner activities. This is in parts transmitted to the surface consciousness through subconscious parts. Dreamless sleep is when the subconscious sinks back into complete inconscience. The dream is built by the subconscious, its construction may not have any significance to the surface consciousness. In dreamless sleep, we go to the dense layer of subconscious from where we cannot get the content of dream to the surface consciousness. However the dream activity remains active. If we become deeply conscious within ourselves, we can come to know of this dream activities. If man starts living more inward life then dream can assume a reality and significance. Waking state is unaware of the connection with the subliminal being. Our intuition, inspiration ideas etc. come from this subliminal self. Dream state and sleep state have an equal status of Reality as the waking state. Even though all three can be classified as illusory. As the Reality is Self or One Existence (Adwaita), the three are different order of the One Reality. This is an important emphasis put up by Sri Aurobindo.

If the dream experiences are put in this way then it cannot be called unreal or illusory. It is a transcript of reality, a system of symbol-images which themselves point to some reality. If we see a tree then it is not illusory but there is something real as we have sense and reason to verify. But theory of illusion says that truth is only Brahman and since it is indeterminable, a pure identity, there is nothing to symbolise and nothing to imagine. So dream analogy fails to explain the unreality of the waking state.

Hallucinations are also not helping the illusion theory either. There are visual hallucinations where things do not exist but our mind creates it. For e.g. a Mirage. This is akhyati theory of error. Then there are mental hallucinations where things exist but we take it something else because of the mental errors. For e.g. taking up a rope as a snake. In hallucinations, the object exists but not at the place of hallucinations. Water and snakes have existence but not at the place of hallucinations. This is anyathakhyati position. The analogy of hallucinations is not helping the theory of illusion. In illusion theory, the images are not reflecting the reality which exists elsewhere. The illusions are something which does not exist at all. It could be true if both water and snake rope do not exist at all. Mental errors or illusions are miscombinations of already existing data we have in the mind. It is a result of ignorance. Cosmic illusion has no basis of actuality, it is a proper illusion. Mental hallucination can be true only if Brahman without name, forms, relations and the world with name, forms, relations are equal reality and imposed one on the other. If both are real then they must be separate aspects of the same Reality or co-ordinate aspects of the same Reality. It is not the original cosmic creative illusion.

Any error of confusion is not because of the creative cosmic illusion but miscombination or misappropriation of data, wrong perception of realities created by ignorance. (this is to be further elaborated with Concept of Maya and Avidya). Even the mother pearl illusion of silver does not justify the creative cosmic illusion which is imposed upon the sole Reality.

The Bimb-Pratibimb Vada where there are two moons, one real and another identical and illusion of the real. This also does not stand because the world is not just an identical reflection of Brahman. There are much more complex operations involved in the works of Cosmic Illusion. There is immense diversity in the illusory appearances of the world. The creation of Maya is original out of the one Real substance. It is not that it is a magic of Unreal. It is working of a Consciousness and Force of being of the omnipotent Real. It is self creation operated by eternal self-knowledge.

Since Mind plays an important role in perception of the world, there are questions around the mind. Is it the instrument of an original Illusion? Or is it itself the primal miscreating Force and Creation?. Is mental ignorance a deviation of truth from the original Truth-Consciousness?

Mind is not the original creator. It is an intermediary between conscious and in-conscience. It receives actual or possible images from outside but also adds subjective imaginations into it. It does not create such errors. But it is unlike Maya whose creations are original. Subjective imaginations are created out of nothing. It puts them in perfect harmony. Mind is instrument of cosmic Ignorance but not of the cosmic illusions. But the Original Force from which it is derived, the mind



can create images etc. without errors. The nature of our character is not that it points to a cosmic illusion as a solution to the problem. It is not necessary to impose the power of Cosmic Maya on the Brahman eternally. As Brahman is eternal so is Maya. The problem lies in knowledge and ignorance. It is in the mixture of knowledge and ignorance in cognition. It is not necessary to impose power of illusion on the Brahman[22].

The question arises on the relations between Reality and cosmic illusion. There are three elements in mental cognition. These are the percipient, perception and percept or the thing to be perceived. All or any of these can be affirmed or denied reality. It needs to be shown how it matters and to what the reality should be assigned. From the materialistic point of view the percept has reality. Consciousness is nothing but an operation of matter. But matter itself is a derivative and phenomena of Energy. Body and Mind are a combination of matter. Since matter is part of energy, this view cannot stand. Energy without consciousness is like unreality. If it works on the void then it is true. The Buddhist concept of percipient, percept and perception is the construction of karma, and gave such a conclusion. But behind this void eternal non-existence, there should be an invisible original consciousness.

Brahman is real then only its power can be the true creator of realities. But there is no reality as pure as Brahman hence there is no true creative power. There is no eternal becoming because it is logically incompatible. Brahman is the only Reality, there cannot be anything else. Also experience of the supreme Truth nullifies and negates the existence of Becoming. Creation of Maya is not real. But the Maya creation has some kind of existence so they should be real in some way. Universe does not stand on void, but is imposed on Brahman. Maya is existent and non-existent, real-unreal at the same time. It is paradoxical to say so. So what is the solution? The solution that the Brahman is percipient of illusion is not true. Because in that case the perception should be permanent and real. Brahman perceives the world then it must be real but they are just forms at the best. Also if the world is real then there will be dual consciousness. One for Real and another for the unrealities. Our spiritual Being is made of the same substance of Brahman. Brahman is a percipient of its creation from above and from within through Maya. This dual consciousness could be a plausible explanation of the reality of percipient, unreality of percept and perception that is half real creator of percepts.

If the dual consciousness is not true then

(1) Maya is a subjective power of Brahman consciousness

(2) Maya is a Brahman's cosmic imagination.

If Maya is taken as a power of Brahman's cosmic imagination then it is real but its forms or creation is unreal. Also imagination cannot be the sole power of the Eternal hence this solution is untenable. Another solution is subjective unreal reality. This is also not possible as there is nothing as subject or object in Brahman. The objective alone is real. However there is nothing objective externally to Brahman as there is nothing else than Brahman. In fact applying this concept is like the imposition of our mind on the Brahman. Subjective consciousness creating a world of imagination or world of fiction is an attribute of the human mind.

We may have to distinguish between the Brahman being and Brahman consciousness. Where consciousness imposes its experience on the pure Brahman Being without penetrating it. This happens when our consciousness out of ignorance separates itself from the work of nature. It knows that outside things are unreal but has to be taken as real. This dualism however negates the sole and indivisible pure existence of the Brahman. So this solution is also not tenable. Dual consciousness cannot be explained through the dual power of Knowledge and Ignorance. It is valid for us in the universe. But applying to Brahman is akin to applying our mind's limitation on Brahman. Dual consciousness is not an Ignorance but self awareness. It is a kind of voluntary will to erect an universe. This implies that Brahman has a need to create a world or a will to see itself as many. However we consider Brahman with sole eternity of pure existence hence this need or will are impossible and incomprehensible. If there is a will in Brahman then it has to be to create realities of the Real. The need or will explanation is not enough to explain the mystery behind the Maya.

The explanation of Maya, the world created by it, its relation to Brahman are important questions to be answered. If there is no real universe, there exists a cosmic illusion then we are bound to inquire how Maya and its creations, the universe, came into existence. If we assume that the Brahman is not a percipient of Maya and her works, then Maya is not a power of Super consciousness, it is immersed in its own pure being. In that case Maya cannot exist as an illusion or it has independent existence. Hence there are dual entities. The dual entity would be a Real eternal Super conscious of itself and

an illusive power that creates the world or universe. Again all things are created by Maya then all of philosophy is also illusion. We have two elements in front of us. A true and static, immutable Reality and an illusory Dynamism i.e. Maya. Both are contradictory to each other.

If Brahman is not percipient, the percipient must be the individual being. This percipient is created by the illusion and it must be unreal. The world is an illusion and unreal. The perceiving consciousness is also unreal. This deprives us of our temporal existence. There is no meaning of salvation from Maya. All are unreal in that case. We may say that Brahman is free from Maya but it enters into Maya as an individual percipient or self of all. Brahman can get out of the Maya or withdraw from it for an individual. Here again a duality is imposed upon Brahman. The individual being and reality belongs to the cosmic illusion. But Brahman is not bound by the Maya and does not need to escape her. So the bondage is unreal and salvation from bondage is also unreal. It can be real only if Maya and her works are real.

Another explanation is that the Brahman withdraws from the reflection of itself in Maya in salvation. Brahman is eternally free hence cannot be bound by reflection. A reflection in a mirror or mere image in the mirror of Maya cannot suffer real bondage. If it is said that a conscious reflection that enters into reflection then whose consciousness it is? It cannot be of Brahman because Brahman is One existence. So again Sri Aurobindo draws the conclusion that there is dual consciousness. One Super-consciousness and another consciousness subject to the illusion. This gives some reality with qualification to our being. If there is some reality to our being then why can't there be a reality to the universe?

One more solution is to put that the percept and percipient individual are unreal. Maya by imposing itself on Brahman acquires certain reality. This reality lends itself to individuals and endure the illusion as long as it is bound. For whom this experience is valid? And from whom it withdraws and acquires freedom and salvation? Illusory unreal self cannot put reality on itself and suffer from bondage and then release from it through real action. The real self must be subjected to Maya in some way. It is either a Brahman consciousness project itself on Maya or Brahman puts forth its reality itself into Maya. It is Brahman who withdraws from Maya in salvation. Question still remains that from where Maya came if it is not already in Brahman, an action of eternal consciousness? Again we have to conclude that there is dual consciousness, one subject to Maya, involved in illusion and another eternally free from it. If our existence is unreal then there cannot be any solution to our existence. There has to be some reality to the individual being even though partial or with some sort of qualification. Still there is no answer to what is the reality of universal and fundamentally baseless Maya? The answer is inexplicable, ineffable i.e. anivachaniya[23].

There can be answers if the idea of absolute unreal is removed and qualified reality is admitted. Sri Aurobindo takes the clue from the deep sleep, dream and waking state of Upanishad or the four fold state. In a dream and deep sleep state we create illusory objects. The self is Brahman and all is Brahman. In pure consciousness it is free from the illusion or anything else, absorbed in self-existence. It is the status of a free Superconscious. Then there is the status of sleep self. It is a massed consciousness and origin of cosmic existence. It is a seed state from which cosmos emerges. Then there is the dream state which is the continent of subjective supraphysical experience. Waking state is the support for all physical existence. These are the fields of Maya. The waking state here is not a true waking state. True waking state is withdrawal from the subjective and objective consciousness, withdrawal from the massed consciousness into the Superconsciousness. Since all conscious and unconsciousness are Maya. Here it can be said that Maya is real because it is self's experience of the self. It believes and accepts them. These are creations out of its conscious being. But these are unreal just like deep sleep, dream state or eventually transient waking state. In this explanation there is no inherent will to create a world of illusion. There is one Being in the state of super consciousness (turiya) and consciousness (deep sleep, dream and waking state) with its own nature of self experience. The lower states are not real. It is one Self sees itself as many. The multiple existences are subjective. The reality is of subjective self experience and there is no objective universe. The exact explanation is not available to the Upanishads however using dream and sleep states, it has been indicated about the idea of illusion. Otherwise everywhere it is mentioned that all things are Brahman, all beings are Reality, the self, a Brahman.

From dream and sleep analogy, it can be said that from the trance superconscious state a massed consciousness comes, out of which subjective status of beings and objective come into existence. Sri Aurobindo suggests that through dream and sleep we can reach the superconscious. Through dream and sleep one can reach from objective to subjective experience to the massed consciousness. From massed consciousness one can reach to the highest state of self-being, the final realisation. But this is to be done through spiritual awakening. Here the perception of Maya is not required. But if this passage is directly from the waking mind to super-conscious then the mind can be seized in the passage by a sense of

unreality created by the cosmic Force. Here there can be the justification of the illusionist idea. But still this consequence or explanation is not conclusive or final.

The discussion on the illusion does not solve the problem. For that the One eternal static immutable is imposed upon by a dynamic, motion, mutability. We need to conceive that these two are eternal Reality. Through illusion, one of these is got rid of so as not to violate the conception of single Reality. This again brings the self-contradictory nature of the One. If the immutable static One can bring out dynamic, motion, infinite multiplicity then there is no reason that the Brahman cannot create this multiplicity as Real. It should be an experience of reality rather than illusion. Sri Aurobindo says this is more harmonic and justified.

Sankara gives an explanation of Maya through the distinction of transcendent and pragmatic order of Reality. One is Absolute, eternal and other is phenomenal, temporal. In the pragmatic order of reality the Brahman is subjected to the Maya. In the temporal field our experience of all beings, Brahman who has become all beings, is valid. It is an intermediary step through Maya to be liberated from the Maya.

There are three possibilities.

1. Universe may be a true reality
2. It is partly real and partly unreal
3. It is wholly unreal reality

If the Universe is real then there is no place for illusion. If it is partly real and partly unreal then the issue is with the ignorance through which we see it ourselves. Issue lies with how we see it. We are mixing knowledge and ignorance. If it is unreal reality to a transcendental consciousness, all this is untruth once we step out of the field of Maya then the temporal reality becomes untruth, an illusion for all the time. Maya cosmos are real and unreal, real to ignorance, unreal to true knowledge. If there is any reality given to the self universe then that is true real within its limit. The reality of manifestation may be restricted then the manifested. The universe is a rhythm of Brahman except in the super-conscious state where it is not wholly real. That cannot make it or it is not enough reason to make it unreal.

When Mind withdraws from this and reaches to the super-conscious, it feels that all these are unreal. But the Mind is an instrument of Ignorance. It cannot bridge the gap between ignorance and supreme Truth and Knowledge. It cannot establish a connection between cosmic and transcendent Reality. There is no point if the phenomenal universe has no connection with Brahman. It would be wrong to say if supreme Brahman has no regard to the phenomenal universe. The cosmic can exist through the dependence on the Supreme Reality. If there is no significance to the temporal manifestation of Brahman with the eternal Brahman then there is no meaning to our temporal existence at all.

The universe is accorded unreal because it is temporary and not eternal. Pot is made from the earth. When the pot is destroyed, it goes back to the earth. But that does not take away the reality of pot because the substance out of which pot is made i.e. earth is real. So pot and earth relation is not of original reality and phenomenal unreality but of original reality and dependent and manifested reality. Pot form always exists as a potential in the substance earth. So long as earth exists, pot can be manifested at any time. Similar is the case with Brahman and the manifestations of Brahman. The power of manifestation is inherent in Brahman and it acts continuously in Time-eternity. For intellectual purpose the real is only eternal if the reality is dependent upon the temporal existence. With that we consider only that as true which is timeless. But this is an ideative distinction. Time is not cancelled out of Brahman. It has a relation of dependence[24].

Similarly, the pragmatic truth is unreal and is not justified. Pragmatic truth is connected with spiritual truth. We make the distinction that only quiescent and eternal is the true status of Brahman, there is nothing dynamic in Brahman. However when temporal cosmos reality exists, there must be a power inherent in the Absolute. There is no reason to suppose that this power creates only illusion. The power must be the Force of omnipotent and omniscience Consciousness, the creation of Real must be real. Since the Existence is One, these creations are self manifestations. These are not forms created out of void or nothing. Since the concept of Reality is immutable, static, non-active and realised through consciousness which itself has fallen into a state of silence immobile, reality to the universe is denied. The static immobile Reality creates a dynamic universe that is considered as a derogation. But there is no reason for not to conceive Reality as static and dynamic at once. It is perfectly rational to suppose that Reality has eternal status of being and external force of being.

Both exist simultaneously. Status of being is necessary to the dynamis of being, even though every primal reality needs status of being. Reality behind all these movements is stable hence we consider the movements as temporary. But the movements have stability of repetitions. The actions of the force of being are constant. Energy of the being is real and forms made by it are forms of being, hence they are real. So both status and dynamis of being are eternal and real. Both are true of Reality. Mobile and immobile Brahman are the same Reality.

Sankara tries to give this mystery some solution. He puts forward an explanation that ends it without resolving. In phenomenal existence, the eternal Real manifests itself in Self and Ishwara. Ishwara creates the temporal world. Self is the individual being. When an individual beings realises the transcendent Reality beyond Self and Ishwara, phenomenal reality ceases to exist. Ishwara which created the universe with Maya no longer exists. However the world continues to exist without beginning or end. Ishwara and the world are real within the phenomena of Time, within the limits of reason. Sri Aurobindo suggests that there is a missing link in all these explanations. Ishwara and the world are real. These are the truths of the manifestations of the Transcendence. If an individual has the capacity to reach to transcendence and liberation has this much importance, it must be because he too is a reality of Transcendence. It is an ignorance of the self and the world that has to overcome and not any illusion. We need to pass beyond the intellect. The intellectual reason creates the opposites and contradictory concepts of the Brahman, Ishwara, Self, individual beings, supreme consciousness or super-consciousness and Maya. In the Brahman consciousness all these converge into single Reality. If Brahman only exists, all these are Brahman only. Till we do not surpass the intellect we cannot realise the Truth. Sankara stood between this Transcendence and intellect and did not go beyond. He declared it as anirvachaniya or inexplicable and a mystery.

The Reality must be seen from the supra rational awareness. It should be viewed from the view point of Super conscience that maintains it. The mystery must have a divine sense for the Divine. The universe and its changing movements are progressive self expressions, manifestation, an evolving self-development of Brahman in Time. Reality has no need for manifestation and it has no need of creating illusion or Maya creation. The creations are not binding the freedom of Brahman. It is an expression of a force, a will to create. All is Brahman hence the manifestation and phenomenon must be the same Brahman. Imposing unreality on the phenomenal existence is unnecessary. Sri Aurobindo says that our individual sense of separative-ness and the conception of finite as self existent in infinite is unreal. It is required and necessary for the surface operations. Once we reach to the infinite consciousness, this finite still exists but as a manifestation of Infinite. When at this level, the manifestations disappear, it is only temporary withdrawal of manifestations. The forms are temporary manifestations only at the surface level. However they are eternal in their essential power of manifestations. All is Brahman then these manifestations cannot be unreal and there is no need of Maya. It cannot be the fundamental character of things. The theory of Maya in the sense Reality, the bondage and release are also only appearance. If all experiences of cosmic existence are illusion and unreal, what is the guarantee that the experience of the Truth, the static, immutable Brahman is also not an illusion? Sri Aurobindo opines that self experience of the Transcendence is a proof that these experiences are not unreal[25]. If the intellect can reject the reality of the universe it can also reject the final Real as illusion. Buddhists took the same step that if the external world is a construction of consciousness, then the self is also construction of consciousness. They therefore denied reality to the self. Uncompromising theory of Illusion doesn't solve the problem, it cuts the problem. Everything becomes an illusion including the Good. Sri Aurobindo suggests that some reality should be given to the phenomenal experiences for the being within the illusion. If it is not given any reality then "I am That", "I am He" becomes statements of illusions. Cosmic existence must be given some reality and through that the relations of the world, Ishwar, beings should be established with source of all these manifestation i.e. Absolute Brahman. Theory of illusion is not a solution but an escape from the world problem. The discussion of theory of illusion belongs to the domain of Reason, but the final Truth is not known by it. It is known through spiritual experience. Still the theory gives us a great philosophy that awakens us towards the Real.

The supreme experience does integrations of all the spiritual experiences, giving their due reality to each of the experiences. Brahman, by knowing That, everything is known. But under illusionism, knowing Brahman makes all the other everything unreal[26]. All philosophy is contributing something because it views the manifestations from the standpoint of being. It gives an aspect of truth. Later on all these different experiences fall away and only a single truth remains. The cosmic illusion is required to be discussed because it presents the view and experiences of things powerful. At the end it reaches the breaking point or cessation of it. It left with the problem of knowledge and ignorance.

To the final question, what is Reality? Our senses which are in contact with the phenomena have limited access to Reality. We perceive earth as flat but scientists in their inquiry find it round. However for all practical purposes we consider the earth as flat. Scientists discover the reality behind what we perceive through sense. All the principles of science mainly revolve around this phenomenal Reality. We need to distinguish between the essential Real and phenomenal reality built around our sense or dependent upon it. Till now all the principles of classical physics worked for us and have been still working even though modern quantum physics has given a totally different view of the matter. For all the practical technology, we proceed with the principles as discovered by classical physics. Similarly a psychologist can probe further of the mind's Reality. He can find a different level of consciousness. Through the true enquiry the eternal Truth appears and reality as shown by the mind slowly appears as unreal. But it is the reason that does this. Reason deals with parts and consider the part as a whole, it handles the finite in a finite way. Its primary work is to divide anything in segmentation and handle them independently. When we come to the spiritual experiences, the reason continues with its habit of dividing into segments. What higher spiritual experience which is whole in itself, reason considers it the true Reality and the phenomenal Reality as unreal. The phenomenal Reality is nothing but extension of the whole[27]. This greater spiritual consciousness saw in things reality because it maintains them in Time continuously. These are based on the realities of Spirit. When viewed from the higher-spiritual consciousness the phenomenal world will not become unreal or real unreal, but it sees as a partial manifestation of the Divine. It would put another reality on the finite, it will reveal finite as a power, movement process of the Infinite. An original and ultimate consciousness would be a consciousness of the Infinite. It would see everything in a unitarian view. For reason, the essential truth must be devoid of any contradictions with respect to Brahman. It considers the world unreal because there are contradictions. But ultimate consciousness to the larger reason based on infinite, these are not contradictions. These are rather complementaries. There is nothing contradictory in the Infinite One and the movements forms of the One. To understand this one must pass beyond the finite reason.

The Absolute cannot be limited by the forms or the formless. It cannot be exhausted by the manifestations of the forms. It cannot be limited by the multiplicity. Just like earth cannot be limited by the pot made from the earth, sea cannot be limited by the sea waves we see. The finite reason sees such parts and makes impressions that those parts are whole and have independent existence from the whole. These impressions are unreal, not the whole or parts. The infinite or the finite is not illusion. Finite depends upon the infinite. The impressions of the mind and senses, finite and infinite do not exist or depend upon them. They depend upon the Absolute for their existence[28]. The Absolute is indefinable through reason, it has to be approached through experience. It can be approached through negations of the existence, Nihil, or through the existence, through Absolute light, knowledge, through love for beauty etc. There are multiple ways to experience. It is not necessary to deny the existence. Only small self-ego impressions should be denied. Through the sublimation of an individual's spiritual individualities, one can approach the Absolute. Again for reason, this seems paradoxical because the Absolute can be approached through negations and also through affirmation. Sri Aurobindo repeatedly puts emphasis on the reality of existence. If there is no connection between being and manifestations then it can be said that manifestations are unreal. Also if we say that whatever exists are forms of the Being and substance of the Being, the unreal must be made out of non-existence or void. If Self and Spirit are real, then expressions put out by them, the body cannot be unreal or a mere shadow of something. There are Timeless things or processes in Time. But processes in Time cannot exist if they do not have their connection with Timeless eternity. So Timeless eternity and time eternity both are two aspects of Eternal and Absolute. They both have reality in a different order of reality. All these are real but unreality is also a fact. The mind creates parts which are partly or wholly unreal. If there is some sort of unreality then it has to be ascribed to the Real or Absolute.

Sri Aurobindo suggests that there is power of Ignorance. This is not pure ignorance otherwise removal of it can help to conceive the unreality of the world and manifestations. Our ignorance is made of both truth and falsehood. So what it constructs has on one side partial unreality and on the other side an expression of Being, of Truth. We need to make distinctions of unreality. Mind has a pragmatic standard of reality. It insists on the standard of fact. Only factuals and actuals are true and all other unreal. This unreality is of pragmatic nature. These unrealities are not unreal in themselves but they are not actualised. There is another unreality which is caused by erroneous conception and perception of Real. These are the problems of cosmic ignorance. Our limited separative awareness sees the parts of manifestations as separate entities. Our illusions arise from these limited separative awareness.

So the further question is how illimitable consciousness and force of integral being enter into limitation and separateness? How is it possible? If possible then what is its justification in the Real and its significance? It is not a mystery of original Illusion but of the origin of Ignorance. It is a mystery of Knowledge and Ignorance's relation to the original consciousness or Super Conscience. The seven existences are one and the same. The keyword for creation is original inconscience developing into life into a divided and limited self consciousness. Because of this the inconscient seems real, our self consciousness becomes temporary and fragile[29]. There are two sides, ignorance of Nature and the light of the Spirit. Behind them there is one Reality. So reconciliation between the two is possible. There are saints who through intuition got to reconcile these two but these intuitions lack proper knowledge. Ignorance has its roots in Mind. But Mind is also a cosmic principle like One and is Brahman. So it has the tendency of universalising and unifying. Mind also limits, divides and particularises. When disconnected from the higher principles, the mind becomes ignorant.

### E. Ignorance

Let us analyze ignorance as it plays a role in world view. What is ignorance and how the power of knowledge lies behind this ignorance? Certain philosophers said this insoluble mystery and we can only say that it exists. We should try to get out of ignorance. We need to get into that which is beyond knowledge and ignorance. One can say that knowledge and ignorance are the power of Brahman. Still we need an explanation of ignorance. If the question is evaded then there is no guarantee that the remedies will be correct and system built upon that will stand the test of truth and time. One needs to get into the operation of ignorance through mental operations. Fact is our mind is within the realm of ignorance hence the origin is beyond our reach. So for the first origin, we need to remain with the general agnosticism. However man should try to reach till the farthest point and then try to transcend it from there.

The meaning of ignorance as per the Vedas is it is an unconsciousness of the Truth and Right. Knowledge is the consciousness of Truth. Ignorance opposes the work of knowledge. Ignorance is a non perceiving principle of our consciousness. It is a limited or false knowledge. This knowledge is based on the division of undivided beings. So it was regarded as undivine Maya which created the false images and objects. This idea of Vedic mystics implies that ignorance is a dividing mental knowledge, it works with the parts or fragments as taking them independently whole and does not go beyond the parts. While knowledge works with the multitude of things, it looks at the parts keeping the fundamental unity behind them in sight. Knowledge tends towards the unification of things. In this conception, ignorance is a kind of limited knowledge. Because it is open for falsehood and errors, it turns into wrong conception of things and becomes opposed to knowledge.

In the upanishads, these terms came as Vidya and Avidya. The distinction here is starker than the Vedic concept. Vidya is the supreme knowledge of the one Absolute. Avidya is all about the fragments or knowledge of the divisions of the One into Many, disconnected from the One. Sri Aurobindo suggests that this conception exaggerated the idea of dissociation of Avidya and the One. Also upanishads say that one who takes ignorance and lives within it will move around like blind man guided by blind men. And the same is said about the knowledge too. Who follows only after knowledge will also move around like blind men. Only those who can move beyond the knowledge and ignorance can reach to the immortality. Knowledge of the One is knowledge and knowledge of the Many is ignorance. Both are opposing terms but pure ignorance is unreal because the one cannot be divided into many. The object matter of Avidya can have no true existence. But these are extreme conceptions and it is opposed by Sri Aurobindo.

The dialectical intellect is not sufficient to judge or to know the essential spiritual truths. Intellect uses the words and its conceptions to understand anything, but it bound itself into the chains of words. It cannot go beyond these chains. Dialectic intellect should be used to arrange our ideas etc., but it cannot be allowed to govern our conceptions. Knowledge, illusion, Ignorance are all results of our consciousness. We must look deeper into the consciousness to know the truth. It through that only we can know the relation between knowledge and ignorance or Ignorance and Reality.

The mind is an important instrument for us. Consciousness seems identical with Mind. But apart from Mind, there is life and body. There is a spiritual entity in us. If Mind is to be considered all then ignorance or illusion may be conceived as the source of our existence. But Brahman must have created or supported creating the mind. Further if cosmic existence is reflection of Brahman in Mind, it must be indeterminable just like Brahman. If it is reflection like in the pond with ripples, still it is a broken image of Brahman. Those will not be false images or illusions. There is a possibility that the world is real but the Mind's picture of it is erroneous or imperfect. This implies a knowledge independent of our mental

thought. If an ignorant mind exists then Maya or Avidya is the original power of Brahman. Mind exists as a part of Maya. Maya or Avidya has the power to create names and forms. However Brahman is One so this dividing is not required. Brahman must be capable of manifold or double action of consciousness. One is consciousness of Reality and another is consciousness of illusion. Dialectically this seems impossible but this is suprarational paradox. It presents itself as an eternal fact. There is no need for an illusive Maya in this case. Brahman the infinite is capable of manifesting itself in illimitable aspects and processes. So Inconscience and Ignorance should also be accepted as manifestations of the aspect or power of an involved consciousness. But the mind also has power to view the truth or Vidya. It may start with Avidya or ignorance but its goal is towards knowledge only. Lower and higher depths of consciousness are eventually one. There is unity behind the multiplicity. Multiplicity is also real. Sri Aurobindo suggests that unity is pursuing us everywhere. Contradictions of our intellect are nothing but aspects of One Reality. The dualities we see are manifold aspects of One Truth of being. Like pleasure and pain, both unite into the Delight of consciousness. Pain is incapacity of the recipient to bear the touch of delight, a perverse reactions of consciousness to Ananda[30]. We have seen that pain can become pleasurable and pleasure can become pain. Both are opposite but are different aspects of Ananda. Similarly Ignorance is a power of One Knowledge, Will and an aspect of Divine. It is the capacity of Divine to hold back.

Thus Ignorance and knowledge are two coexistence powers. Ignorance is creative of world existence, knowledge is the destroyer of it. Both are present in the universe. Ignorance is dependent upon knowledge. To know we have to dissolve the constructs of ignorance. There are three steps. On the first step, there is all knowledge, complete knowledge and there is consciousness behind all this. On the other hand there is a complete nescience, an effective, dynamic, creating Inconscient[31]. In between these two, there is a compromise or working of Consciousness. It is an incomplete emergence of knowledge between Consciousness and Nescience. This is called Ignorance. If knowledge and ignorance are two independent powers then they would cease only at the Absolute. Knowledge and Ignorance then could be a double principle. However knowledge and ignorance are light and shadow of the same Consciousness. Ignorance's beginning is a limitation of knowledge. Ignorance is seeking and transforming into knowledge. Knowledge is already concealed in Ignorance. For this it is important to understand the relation of surface Consciousness and what lies beneath it. That way we can know the scope of Ignorance.

#### **F. Role of Memory in Ignorance**

In the process to understand the ignorance we need to check the memory. Memory is a process of Mind. It is a utility. It constitutes our personality and holds our foundation of our psychological being. It holds it in the succession of time from past experience and present consciousness or self awareness. It has a sense of persistent continuity. Very nature of mind is Ignorance. It is not a complete Nescience but limited knowledge. It has memories of the past, inference of the future, and realisation of the present. If the Real is time transcending eternal then the mind is more ignorant. Through memory, a person uses the past as much in part as is required in present. Ignorance is this Time experience. It is utilisation of knowledge to make useful for the Time experience or present time[32]. We do not know which we haven't picked up.

Anyone perceives the ego when she sees the self is not changing over time. During this time even the body would have changed. There would be changes over the Time. But during all these changes the "I am" remains. The changes of time occur on the surface of unchanging "I am". Those who remain on the surface consciousness think that these changing Time modifying experiences are real. They easily subscribe to the Buddhist Nihilism. Or there are others who consider only the self as true and everything else as not self and reject it as illusion or an illusive experience. There are changes in Time and Space. The space changes are not obvious. It is reflected only when the self perceives it. These are subjective experiences. These changes are known under the term causality. Here any change at a given moment is an effect of the previous moment. The current circumstances are the cause of the antecedent events[33]. Memory helps here to effectively consolidate all the stream of experiences. It is not the only memory that constitutes the ego sense but it has an important role. Memory offers the past data to intelligence that would be used for analysis. During any becoming, through partial detachment we can be aware of changing events and unchanging self behind it. There is a self which is immutable and the self that changes with Time. However both selves are not different. It is one consciousness that throws itself in a succession of changing movement of itself. In this it is not changed but the changes are perceived by the experiencing consciousness. The succession of experiences brings back memories. We cannot keep the past all the time in our consciousness. It is always there behind. Through memory we recover that. It is not the only factor by which Inconscience develops into full self consciousness and ignorance gets developed into knowledge of itself in its becoming[34]. It is an

instrument of mind to link the previous experiences. There is ego sense through which mental beings become aware of themselves. It seems that it is formed by memory. But ego is always there behind the linking of streams. It is already there as a point of reference. Ego is a preparatory device for gaining knowledge. Knowledge thus gained is imperfect. The knowledge is in ignorance. It is only for the individual's being and becoming and considers the rest of the world as not self. It has no direct consciousness of the large existence and nature. Also the true relations between being and becoming has not been worked out by knowledge or Ignorance. On the surface level the Ignorance works mainly to gain deeper knowledge. We need to go deeper in the inner self to gain inner knowledge[35].

### G. Ways of acquiring knowledge

There are four methods to acquire knowledge[36]

- 1) Knowledge by identity
- 2) Knowledge by intimate direct knowledge
- 3) Knowledge by separative direct contact
- 4) Wholly separative knowledge by indirect contact

Knowledge by identity is illustrated by the surface mind by direct awareness of our own essential existence. In the process the self gets absorbed in the thought itself like love, anger, passion etc. However there is dual movement, a part of us becomes thought and other part remains in direct contact with the thought. All our knowledge of internal movements are in separative and intimate ways.

The knowledge by external things is mainly through a separative way where mind is detached from the observations. Knowledge of the self is more through the intimate way. The external things cognitions are done with a separative basis of knowledge. Our consciousness is not in touch with other consciousness or things. We get to know through sense (ear, eyes etc.) datum. This is not direct touch with the object as through senses we get the images of the object. If there are any deficiency in the image thus created by senses, it is filled up by the reason[37]. Our world knowledge is made up of the sense datum, an intuition interpretation of it by a perceptive mind, life mind and sense-mind. It is also processed by reason. This knowledge is not perfect because of the limitations of sense. We use scientific instruments to further remove these imperfections. Knowledge has power but since our knowledge is imperfect, we cannot use the power to the fullest.

Our state of surface is a state of knowledge but it is covered with ignorance. It is limited knowledge. Because of the ego we have these limitations. This is not the whole condition. From these self limitations of ignorance, we need to move towards Integral self-knowledge. From self-ignorance Being needs to break ego-consciousness. From the knowledge by indirect contact, it needs to move towards knowledge by identity. Also there are distortions in our limited self knowledge by our vital being. It is akin to self-deception. It presents fictitious images to ourselves using mind as a tool[38]. It justifies our desires and nourishes ego. Knowledge by identity is the awareness of self. It is the awareness about the Timeless eternity of Self. When the being knows that it is one with the other consciousness, knowledge arises is knowledge by identity. Knowledge by identity belongs to the higher hemisphere of existence. Outer being is limited by Inconscient. Going deeper inside the inner being, we draw away from this limitation by the Inconscient[39].

Ego is the center around which our nature revolves. It holds our outer nature. Our existence in becoming in Time is another limiting ignorance. We believe only in the present as the past has already gone and the future is yet to come. But the past is involved and active in us and the future is ready to evolve. Man is ignorant of his superconscious Self, subliminal Self and subconscious self. He is also ignorant of the world which acts upon him. He considers the world as something different from him as not-self. Man considers the superconscious Self as God, external to him. Same happens with the subliminal self. It is the ego sense that divides all these. Eventually it is one only. The world is manifestations of the Superconscious. We are part of the Matter, Life, Mind and Spirit. It is ego that binds us to the Ignorance[40]. Also there is ignorance in our existence in space too. We are aware only of the small space that we are in. But space is also an extension of the One Being. Sri Aurobindo says there is no difference between us and the world but due to ego we are ignorant of this unity. We are ignorant of our timeless and spaceless existence. We are ignorant of the world outside and our subliminal self. Ignorance is a limited separative awareness that is striving to become an integral consciousness and an integral knowledge[41].



## H. Origin of Ignorance

How is ignorance created? The Absolute Being cannot be subjected to Ignorance. Then why it exists is a question to be answered. Ignorance divides but how it kept its existence along with indivisible. Integral oneness does not allow us to posit that ignorance is due to Mind and Mind is a product of Maya which is Asat, different from Brahman. Maya can be nothing but a power of Brahman. It is not correct to say that jivatman and supreme are different. Even if it looks apparent, the unity in difference contradicts the whole experience. Why does the undivided One become multiple?

Also if we say that Maya is unknowable and its work starts even before the world so it is not possible for us to know. This is also an escape and accepting too early that we cannot know Maya, accepting our limitations. It cannot be that it started from the Absolute Nothingness as nothing can exist in Nothing-ness even potentially, so not even illusion can exist in nothingness. We have different theories of the origin. All of them have profited us even though erroneous. Errors have helped us to open doors to the truth as it destroys existing errors and constructs new hypotheses. But continuing this way does not fulfill the aim of philosophy that is to know unknowable. Unknowable implies it is beyond our mental knowledge. This is unknowable by knowing which everything can be known. So the starting point of ignorance should start from there. The starting point is Sacidananda's manifest nature in absolute existence, consciousness and bliss. Ignorance is a dynamic phenomena of Force of consciousness hence it should be considered. The power of energy applied to the objects and then it arrives at all knowledge, actions and creations. What is the status of this Force, energy within Existence? As in Existence there is passivity. We can see that there are actions done without our will but behind it there is energy. In Nature also there is energy behind the stable things. Beyond this we can reach immobility where there are no mental or physical activities. In this state there is an absence of Force. So is it true that Force does not exist or there is distinction in Sachidananda? There is dual status of Brahman, quiescent and creative[42]. Both are the same Brahman. Tapas is the character of both passive and active consciousness of Brahman. Our true integral being is not subjected to these opposites. Integral Brahman possesses both the activity and passivity simultaneously. Ignorance does not have a starting point in the Absolute Brahman. It belongs somewhere in our partial actions of being. It comes into the picture when the mind is separated from its essential spiritual basis. It starts with division and division starts in the Tapas or concentration of Tapas. What is the nature of this Tapas? Tapas is always present or inherent in the power of Consciousness-Force. When there is exclusive concentration on a single object, it collects the energy in that object but is left behind all other knowledge. Man on surface existence concentrated on his present role in time. Just like an actor concentrates on his role. But later on he returns to his original identity.

Ignorance is a self limiting knowledge. Practically it may be useful and it is fine and admissible. But when ignorance creates falsehood and pain, then we need to check its purpose. If it has come then it must have some purpose. It cannot have come by chance. Nor it cannot be inexplicable or some kind of mystery. What are the relations of falsehood, evil with the Absolute, its working, origin in the world and its actions in the individual being? This does not exist fundamentally in the Absolute. These are creations of the Ignorance.

Truth-Falsehood, Good-Evil exist in the relations to each other. They do not exist beyond the dualities. But it is not the fundamental truth. Falsehood and Evil are very clearly the result of Ignorance. If there is no Ignorance, they don't exist. There cannot be Absolute Falsehood or Evil as these are by product of the world movement. The relativity of good-evil, truth-error is a fact of our experience. But it is due to our partial knowledge and partial ignorance. There has to be total ignorance then[43]. For us Truth is relative because knowledge is surrounded by ignorance. What we perceive is not the realities in themselves. Because of ignorance, we see only the edge while reality remains in shadow. Mind drapes over the perception and we see only the drapery. But knowledge perceived by direct consciousness is without any error. Since it is authentic, its absoluteness is the first step towards the knowledge. Knowledge thus is in its nature absolute and is in the being. But ignorance does not exist in being. It does not have self existence. It exists by the abeyance of limitations of knowledge. Good exists by the true consciousness, evil by the wrong consciousness. Human values of good and evil are uncertain. What we perceive good turns out to be evil. What we think evil turns out to be good. Good turns out to be evil is due to afflicting forces produced because of a mixture of knowledge and ignorance. Evil turns out to be good because of the redressing forces, working of true consciousness. Again this is not the fundamental truth of good and evil. It is a work of conscious Force in human life, a mixture of circumstances of human mentality. The relationship between good and evil is not of mutual dependence. All pain and suffering are due to insufficient conscious force in the surface being. Due to this we are unable to deal with it rightly. Evil would not exist if there is no luminous consciousness and divine Force in

our being. The relation between good-evil, truth-falsehood is of contradiction like light-shadow. Shadow exists because of the light. Light is not dependent upon the shadow. Evil, falsehood are not fundamentally opposite to the Absolute, their existence is due to the Absolute. Falsehood and evil have no fundamentality. Neither are they opposite fundamental aspects of the Absolute.

With this argument it can be said that having Absolute itself is the cause of pain or evil-falsehood. If the existence of Absolute is not admitted, there is no need to have the pain. The pain and other contraries are not fundamental aspects of the Absolute. They do not have the power of infinity. They do not have self-existence[44]. When truth or good manifests their opposites becomes possibilities. But this does not imply that evil falsehood is eternal in Being as it cannot exist before the cosmic manifestation. When the Absolute starts manifesting itself in souls and the world, evil and falsehood starts along with the manifestations. Both cannot exist where there is oneness, truth of self-knowledge. Further if the separate beings do not deviate from their norms of limited knowledge, evil will not be there. So it is not that by having the existence of the Absolute pain-evil is there. The Absolute first manifests and if the separate beings cross the limit of their limited knowledge then evil-falsehood starts. There is no “authentic inevitability” for the existence of pain and evil. It arises only at a certain stage. There are forces beyond the material planes. Few of them work for the prolongation of Good, truth. Others work for evil. This is indicated in the original conflicts between different deities in Vedas and their enemies. Similarly Satan-Angel, Zoroastrian principles point to these two types of forces. At present science believes forces only at the material planes. But those are invisible and work on matter and act upon matter. So there should be no reason not to have forces at life and vital level. And the evil and good may not start from terrestrial life. Its source is in the Life or Supraphysical[45].

Good and evil do not exist in Matter. It starts in life and then fully when the mind is developed in life. The vital mind is the creator of a sense of evil. The animal life there is evil or pain, but there is no moral evil. Moral evil is exclusive to human beings. In animals, there is pleasure-pain but there are no moral responses to them.

How are the good, evil senses generated in the vital mind? Anything that helps life is good. Rest of them are evil. There are different standards through which good evil can be defined. It could be like utilitarian, social, hedonistic or religious standards. What gives you pleasure is good and rest is pain. But their sense of good-evil is limited. There is a spiritual sense inside us that generates the sense of good or evil. What is the use of this sense of good-evil? Its spiritual use could be to move towards good and refrain from evil, until we are ready for the supreme good. It may help for dissolution of ego complex[46]. Our sense of good and evil is evolutionary. Hence we see evil coming out of good and vice versa. Nature utilises both good and evil. Prisoned in the limited good is not good from the evolutionary standpoint. Good and evil are relative. Some things are good for one and those are bad for others. Men select and reject since ages and from there religions, moral laws etc. come up. Moral laws are important for society as mental control of our vital and physical desires are indispensable as a human to coexist with fellow human beings. However this control will remain imperfect. When we select good in place of evil, reject all that is bad, we try to reform our being. It implies that we are becoming. We are striving for something more through becoming. And the right way is the true call of Infinite. All the good, evil, right, wrong of Nature is to go in that direction. If we do not keep that in mind then either our impulse towards life becomes stronger or we try to escape from this. However Indian spiritual tradition is clear from the beginning that once a person reaches Infinite, virtue-sin, good-bad no more exist for the person. The problem of good and evil of is in mind and beyond mind they do not exist. All knowledge of good and evil is rooted in Inconscience. We have been experiencing it for ages. As long as it is there, the multiple Ignorance will cover our self awareness. The only solution to this is to transform our natural consciousness. Mental control is not a remedy to this. It can impose only a limited curb on our nature. The root lies in the split, limited and separative existence. Our ego is the first differentiator and that makes everything else as not self. Here is the root of ignorance with this we cannot deal with partial solutions. Until we understand that others are not different, we cannot deal with them in the right manner. Integration is the only solution. A larger heart, mind, generous life-force can help us to reduce the degree of offences. We do to others due to ignorance but it is not sufficient. Altruism is good to enlarge the ego to make it all absorbing, but it does not transform the ego into the true self one with all. On the other hand, it can enlarge the ego further as it is a good ego. Sacrifice or self immolation is also necessary at times and indispensable. However it cannot be a principle of life. It has to be done in right consciousness otherwise it can help to enlarge the collective ego and to subordinate or subdue individuals. All these are partial solutions that works on certain specific part of the problem. In the true spiritual sense only we can become one with other beings. This is the true solution. The religious laws provide like loving your neighbour as yourself, doing to others what you want them to do to

you etc. But any man cannot do it wholeheartedly. Men know that it is necessary but he cannot do it. It can only be done if others are known as Oneself and felt intimately as oneself. But this oneness must be of soul-spirit, self knowledge. If it is ego then ignorance will continue to work here also. Liberated from ego and realising our true self is the only solution. That is why spiritual takes precedence over social, ethical, intellectual etc.

There are three steps in self-realisation. It is also three parts of one knowledge. First is to discover the soul. It is the inner psychic entity. Soul should be enthroned in place of life, mind, ego. In this we become aware of the inner light that knows truth and guides us. The second step is to be aware of this self eternal and unborn. It is one with the self of all being. Third step is to the Divine being. It is a supreme transcendent cosmic Being. From this our psychic being is part of it. It is powered by the Divine Being.

Once we are aware of the Divine being we can become a channel of the Divine Power or shakti. Post that our actions will not be governed by the vital impulses. Evil is fruit of spiritual ignorance and it can be removed only through the spiritual consciousness and knowledge. The division between our being and self of all others need to be removed by bridging the remoteness of our individuality in Nature from the Divine Being. All the disconnect between Nature and SuperNature. It can work through us even before the ignorance is removed. It can work through us even before the ignorance is removed. Integration is incomplete without the uplifting of Nature[47].

Origin of Ignorance is the limitation of knowledge, our distinctiveness or separation from other beings. Removing this ignorance by breaking down the separateness brings toward Integral Knowledge. Integral Knowledge presupposed integral Reality. It is already there and needs to be uncovered. This is unlike knowledge that is constructed by mind which can be learned. Integral knowledge carries all knowledge. It connects higher with the lower. At the highest level it opens to Reality. At the lowers level it perceives the Inconscience[48]. It is aware of the One and the All self-involved in those depths. Integral knowledge presupposes integral Reality. The reality of the individual and cosmos is Brahman the Absolute. Individual is a phenomena, temporal appearance in the cosmos. Cosmos has a complex temporal appearance. Knowledge and ignorance belong to this appearance. Both have to be transcended to reach the Absolute. In the Absolute the knower, known and knowledge in which they meet becomes one so they get transcended. The other view is Ignorance is limited knowledge. Knowledge itself is higher Ignorance. Because it stops short of Reality, which is self evident to itself but unknowable to mind. Sri Aurobindo cites Isha upanishad and mentions that to remain in cosmic Ignorance is blindness. But to remain in the absolutism of knowledge is also blindness. Absolute is beyond the definition of one-many, mobile-immobile etc. Through supreme affirmation and negation we can arrive at Brahman.

Since the Absolute is not just a Reality without any relations within it. It is not that to gain liberation we have to negate the world. There is Being and Becoming in the same Absolute. It is neither limitable nor unlimitable. Absolute is not bound to manifest in cosmos, but it is also not bound to not to manifest. Limitations and constraints of our mind cannot be applied to the Absolute. There are certain steps for us to escape the mental ignorance, those are not required by the Absolute. It is open to define knowledge and ignorance as possession of Being and Becoming respectively. It can be said that Knowledge is real and Ignorance unreal or if both are real then Ignorance has lesser partial reality then knowledge. To gain the Absolute or achieve salvation, one must be negating the world around as it is temporal transient. We need to consider the Inconscient as some kind of prison from where one needs to escape. We need to take the viewpoint that Eternal is true and all others are false. Sri Aurobindo rejects this view. He takes up the reconciliation of Knowledge and Ignorance. Being-Becoming are not opposite but complementary to each other. Both are not un-complementary and contradictory. Knowledge is the knowledge of the One. Ignorance is the experience of separateness in multiplicity or dwelling in becoming. The Integral knowledge of Brahman is a consciousness in possession of both together. Only having possession of one closes our vision. The knowledge of Becoming is also part of knowledge. It acts as Ignorance because we dwell in it without having the knowledge of Being as one. This way Sri Aurobindo defines Ignorance and its necessity.

There are conceptions of Reality which say that the world is a subjective creation of Mind. So the objective world is not real as we have no evidence of the independent existence of the objective world. It is just the construction of our consciousness. The sole Reality could be the creative consciousness or a void, zero. Knowledge means coming out of these subjective constructions of consciousness. But it can be true only if we consider the surface mind as the whole consciousness. This account does not hold if we have deeper self knowledge or world knowledge or knowledge by identity. The consciousness which creates these subjective constructions must have existence in itself if it is not supported by Being or essential existence. A consciousness without existence must be unreal. And structures made by it must be

made out of nothing. This is untenable as in that case we need to make everything else as invalid. So there must be a Being or and Existence out of which consciousness creates all the creations or objects.

Samkhya accepts the theory of multiplicity of Purusha. Each purusha creates a different world for itself. But with this it is difficult to find their relations with the one universe. Hence we must suppose a universal Being-just like a Prakriti-where all Prusha meet. The multiple souls can be an expression of that universal Being. The question is whether all the pluralities are realities of one Real Existence of an image created mind to represent it. It is dependent upon what we consider the Mind as. Is it just the surface mind or there is deeper consciousness for which Mind acts as an executrix for its manifestations? If it is the first then the world can have only subjective reality. While in the second case the world can be the true reality of One Existence. The nature of the Mind as we know has limits. It cannot know the whole but knows the parts of the whole. It seeks from Ignorance to knowledge. Mind does not know the objects it perceives. A universal Mind might know the sum of fractions but it lacks essential knowledge. There is a consciousness behind Mind that has essential and Integral Knowledge. We need to look at subjective Reality from this point of view. Objective reality has no existence apart from the subjective reality, it is not independent. But objective realities too have an existence, independent from our Mind. The creations of the universe are created by a consciousness which is one with being and its substance is the substance of the Being. This way he says that the universe is not just the subjective reality. Subjective and objective reality are the two side of the same Reality. Mind interprets the relations between Being and external Becomings. These representations have value because these are images of the manifestations of the Being. What Mind creates are not the actual realities. It has its share in the creations of the universe but the actual creatrix is a Consciousness, an Energy inherent in the transcendent and Cosmic Spirit. Thus subjective Reality stand point is not true.

The opposite viewpoint is that the objective Reality is the only truth. The subjective spirits, souls are the outcome of the actions of fundamental objects like physical Energy. All that is verifiable physically has reality. Rest of them are unreal or created by these physical objects or forces. This viewpoint takes only one sided view and leaves other parts unexplained. It gives stone more reality than the love, courage, human soul, mind that takes mastery over the world. On the contrary, objective reality has existence because they have connections with the soul. Outer world is a form of becoming of the Spirit. The subjective and objective are two necessary side of the same Reality. Both are dependent upon each other. Subjective experiences cannot be verified by the external senses. It has its own standards for verifications and scrutinisation then the external sense. Individual human minds can know only the happenings of the world. It is unaware of the subjective movements and experiences. It is ignorant of all these. It believes the inner realities only if it confers to the outward data. Others are indirect reality to the human mind. This is the current standard of the validity of knowledge[49]. It doubts or challenges any other knowledge that cannot conform to the physical reality. The validity of such objective knowledge is dependent upon the universal objective experience. It should be verifiable by others. It should conform to the reason. This means individual minds' limitations play a role in the verification of knowledge. Also it is said that if these objective standards are not taken then any subjective experience or knowledge will be taken without any verification. This will lead to delusions. Errors and delusions introduce personality are also added when trying to discover or verify the knowledge. Individual subjectivity is added in the pursuit of knowledge but that does not stop us in discovery. Subjective discovery must be pursued with subjective method, enquiry, observations and verifications[50].

It is obscurantism if we refuse to enquire upon the inner discovery, self-being experience, cosmic consciousness etc. One can say that these are not verifiable hence false or invalide. But it requires some training of mind. Just like the formulas of maths principles of Science, we consider the objective. But to understand them we need a certain level of training. Similarly for spiritual experiences, individuals need some training. And then it can be verified. All humans can have spiritual experiences and all can verify them. Supraphysical knowledge is as real as physical and it is part of the completed knowledge. It should be explored further. It is branded as occultism but occultism is nothing more than the research into the hidden laws of being and Nature. In the spiritual domain there is possibility of discovery of the self and spirit. Even Supraphysical knowledge is necessary for physical knowledge because behind the process of nature, there is a supraphysica factor. It cannot be known by the means of outer knowledge. The reason for giving reality to objective knowledge comes from the basic reality of the Matter. But now Matter is not a fundamental Reality. It is a form of Energy. The material interpretations of existence are because of focusing only on one movement of Existence exclusively. It has utility though. But the problem of existence cannot be solved by one-sided knowledge. We must know self and spirit and what lies behind the material happenings. Again exclusive concentration on the subliminal being can give us much about the subliminal processes. However it will not give us the integral knowledge. Concentration on self by

excluding the Life, Mind, Matter can give spiritual experiences but will not give integral truth of cosmic and individual existence. Both physical and supraphysical knowledge are required for integral knowledge. Integral Knowledge is knowledge of truth of all sides and their relation to each other and relations to the truth of Spirit. Our present state is that of Ignorance and many sided seeking knowledge.

We proceed from Ignorance to knowledge hence it is important to understand the nature of Ignorance. There are seven types of ignorance.

I. Ignorant of the Absolute which is the source of all being and becoming. We take partial facts of being and temporal relations of becoming as the whole truth. It is the first Original Ignorance.

II. Cosmic Ignorance: We are ignorant of timeless, spaceless, immutable, immobile Self and take constant mobility and mutations of becoming in Time and space as the whole truth of existence. This is second ignorance known as cosmic ignorance.

III. Egoistic Ignorance: We are ignorant of our universal self, our infinite unity with all beings and becomings. We take our limited egoistic mentality, vitality, corporeality as true self and every other as not self. This is egoistic ignorance.

IV. Temporal Ignorance: We are ignorant of our eternal becoming in Time. We take life as a short span of Time and within the limited Space. This is temporal Ignorance.

V. Psychological Ignorance: Within the temporal ignorance, we are unaware of our complex being. We are not aware of superconscient, subconscient, intraconscient, circumconscient in us. We take our limited surface mentality as a whole truth. It is known as psychological ignorance.

VI. Constitutional Ignorance: We are ignorant of the true constitution of our becoming. We take life, mind, body as the whole truth without knowing what constitutes them. We determine them by their operations. This is constitutional ignorance.

VII. Practical Ignorance: Because of all the above ignorance, we miss the true knowledge and enjoyment of our life in the world. We are ignorant of our thoughts, will, actions, sensations. We return wrong responses in the questioning of the world. We remain wanderers in a maze of errors and desires. This is practical ignorance.

Removing these seven ignorance and moving towards the knowledge is the goal of human effort and aim of cosmic endeavour. Integral knowledge means cancelling all these seven ignorances[51]. But this is not intellectual knowledge. It must be an experience. It can come through an evolution of our being and consciousness. Thus Sri Aurobindo explains Ignorance and Knowledge in relation to each other and with Absolute.

### **I. Summary of Concept of World**

In brief, Sri Aurobindo suggests that the world is real as it is part of the Absolute's becoming. It is created as Ignorance plays a role in our perception of the world. This ignorance is not totally unknowable. It is one aspect of knowledge. As becoming is part of the Absolute, so is ignorance. However, a person needs to remove this ignorance and move towards the knowledge. At the summit of the Absolute, the distinction of knowledge and ignorance vanishes.

### **IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

According to Ramanuja, Brahman is a qualified complex whole. He is God and holds the souls and the world of matter in His body. The difference between soul and Brahman is due to Avidya. Soul is part of Brahman. The existence of souls and the world is dependent upon Brahman. Souls and the world are identical and different from the Brahman at the same time. Sri Aurobindo holds a similar view in terms of identity and difference of the soul and Brahman. However the reason for identity and difference differ from that of Ramanuja's conception. For Ramanuja, the soul is identical with God because it is part of the body of Him. The difference between soul and Brahman is the difference between a part and the whole. There is no such concept of the body of Brahman held by Sri Aurobindo. According to him, souls are an immortal portion of Divinity.

Ramanuja considers that God entered Purusha and Prakriti. He created the world. The world also forms the body of Brahman, yet it is never one with the Brahman. Sri Aurobindo differs here from Ramanuja. For him, the world is one with Brahman. It is part of the Brahman's becoming. The world and the knowledge exist and they are real for Ramanuja. There

is eternal difference among God, Souls and the world. Sri Aurobindo holds that all the duality of intellectual reason stops in the Absolute. For Absolute, there is no duality. Brahman according to Ramanuja has two avastha viz. Karanavastha and Karyavastha. Sri Aurobindo does not have any such distinction. Brahman is Sat-Cit-Ananda (Existence, Consciousness, Delight) according to him.

The world is real in Ramanuja's and Sri Aurobindo's conception. But there is a difference between the reality accorded to the world. World exists independent of the soul for Ramanuja. Even after salvation of soul (that is to know the soul is part of the Body of Brahman), the world remains real and independent. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo holds that the world is a manifestation of Brahman. Brahman is eternal and the power of manifestation in Brahman is also eternal. It acts continuously in time-eternity hence the world is not something temporary. Brahman is Sat (Existence) but It has a dynamic aspect also. The power which creates the world must be the Force of omnipotent and omniscient consciousness. So the creation of Real must be real. Hence the world is real.

## V. CONCLUSION

As we have seen that there are some points on which Ramanuja's and Sri Aurobindo's doctrine converges.

These are

- a) Reality of the world
- b) Identity and differences of the soul and the world with that of the God.

However the underlying reason for these similarities are completely different. Ramanuja considers the souls and the world are real and part of the body of Ishwara. In Sri Aurobindo's doctrine, the world is a manifestation of the Brahman hence it is real. The soul is not different from the Brahman. The concept of God is also different in both the doctrines. While Sri Aurobindo holds that the post salvation, one needs to work for the evolution of the other souls, matter and the world, there is no such conception in Ramanuja's philosophy.

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