Section I: Different Meanings of Consciousness

'Consciousness' is a controversial term. From the time immemorial there has been a controversy among different philosophers or schools of philosophy regarding the exact meaning of the word 'consciousness'.

Some philosophers have identified consciousness with the functions of body. Some think that consciousness is independent of body and it is something called spiritual. Other philosophers consider that consciousness evolves out of the body but ultimately it has an independent status. There are some philosophers who understand consciousness in the epistemological sense as something which performs the function of knowing. Others think it to be the ultimate foundation of the world. Their idea of consciousness is ontological or metaphysical.

In this introductory chapter, we shall discuss different meanings of the word 'consciousness' and shall try to understand
the precise sense in which Sri Aurobindo understands the word 'Consciousness'.

In order to have a proper understanding of the nature of consciousness as established by Sri Aurobindo, we have to find out whether there are theories which explain the nature of consciousness satisfactorily. For that purpose an initial discussion of Materialism is needed, which denies the independent existence of consciousness and tries to understand it as a form of matter.

In order to do this, first of all, we shall have to discuss the nature of Materialism and its different characteristics.

Materialism is the name of that doctrine which establishes 'Matter is the only Reality'. Hospers says, 'The word 'materialism' is often used to stand for the view that everything is material, and that there is nothing mental at all. All matter, no mind.'¹ It is said in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Materialism is the name given to a family of doctrines concerning the nature of the world and accords to mind or spirit a secondary dependent reality or even none at all."² But extreme materialism asserts that the real world consists of material things, varying in their status and relations and nothing else.


Different philosophers have differed among themselves regarding what constitutes a body, over what states and relationships a body may enter and over whether every material thing is nothing but a body. Though they differ on different points yet they utter the same slogan, "Everything that is, is material."³

The main assertions of Materialism are, (a) The world is by its very nature material. Everything which comes into being, does so on the basis of material cause, arises and develops according to the laws of motion of nature. (b) Matter has objective reality and it exists outside, independent of the mind. Everything mental or spiritual is a product of material process. (c) The world and the laws are fully knowable to us. There is nothing which is by nature unknowable. For Huxley, "Consciousness is thought of as a mere by-product of the operation of the brain."⁴

Section 2: Different materialistic theories

Materialism has its different forms, such as Mechanical Materialism, Dialectical Materialism, Behaviourism, Central-state theory, etc. Among these different forms of Materialism,


Mechanical and Dialectical Materialism are the oldest and principal theories which proceed to establish the importance of matter.

Mechanical Materialism is that type of Materialism which was advocated in the past by a group of philosophers at the beginning of modern age in Europe. Such Materialism was also upheld by a section of Greek philosophers among whom we can name Democritus, Luckippus, etc.

But the advocates of Dialectical Materialism are more interested in the Materialism of the recent past, which they believe, was established by bourgeois philosophy against which Marx presented his revolutionary Materialism. Before Marx Mechanical Materialism was highly appreciated and accepted as the theory that would explain the world systematically. Cornforth said, in his book *Dialectical Materialism*, "Mechanical materialism was an important mile stone in our understanding of nature and it was a great progressive step of bourgeois thinkers, a blow against idealism."  

This Mechanistic Materialism accepted the ancient materialistic conception that the world consisted of unchanging material particles, i.e., atoms. It pointed out that the phenomenon of the world is the result of interaction of these particles. The Mechanical Materialists tried to understand workings of the world on the model of the workings of a machine.

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There are three characteristics of a mechanism, a discussion of which is necessary for understanding Mechanical Materialism.

(a) A mechanism must always consist of parts which are stable and permanent. These parts must be fitted together.

(b) This machine requires a motive force to move.

(c) When the mechanism is set for going, the parts interact and the results are produced according to laws.

The example of such a mechanism is a watch. It consists of a number of parts—lever, cogs and so on fitted neatly together. It has to be wound up. As the spring uncoils, the parts interact according to laws exactly known to the watch-maker and produce results in the regular movements of the hands on the dial.\(^6\)

Just in this way, Mechanistic Materialists explain nature. They tried to find out the component parts, how they fitted together, how their interactions produced all the changes, all the phenomena of the world.

The Mechanistic Materialism was thorough-going in its theory. It tried utmost to include man and all his spiritual activities in the mechanistic system of the natural world. The early mechanist considers not only animal life, physical processes, plant but himself also as a machine. In the 17th century

\(^6\) Ibid.
Descartes had said, "... all animals were complicated machines—automata, but man was different since he had soul."\(^7\) But in the 18th century Lemettrie, who was a \textit{full} follower of Descartes, wrote a book with an instigative title \textit{Man a Machine} where he said, men also were machines though very complicated ones.

This Mechanistic Materialism is not a sound theory. It contains some arbitrary assumptions which show its weaknesses.

Firstly, the world consists of permanent, stable particles or things which possess definite properties.

Secondly, the particles of matter are by nature inert and there is no change without some external cause.

Thirdly, all change and all motion can be produced by the mechanical interaction of the separate particles of matter.

Fourthly, each particle has its own fixed nature independent of everything else, and that the relationships between separate things are merely external relationship.\(^8\)

This theory, which the Mechanical Materialists established, reduced men to machine. Their explanation gave no room for conscious element. When they introduced the theory that the world consisted of stable particles of matter, they would find no place for consciousness. Conscious processes exhibit

\(^7\) Ibid., pp.29-30.
\(^8\) Ibid., p.34.
desire, feeling, etc. But the theory of Mechanical Materialism shuts out the possibility of such conscious states and processes.

Mechanical Materialism, as has been pointed out, does not believe in man's purposive life. It denies the existence of a goal for which human beings want to strive. It negates the existence of freedom, according to it, activities of men are controlled like the parts of a machine. But such a picture of human life is not only discouraging but also false. We are aware of a spiritual goal towards which we are always striving. The existence of such a spiritual goal and man's possibility of realising the ideal had been established by philosophers, mystics and religious thinkers of both the East and the West. The philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual Sādhanā give a living testimony to that fundamental truth of human life. A philosophical theory, be it Materialist or Idealist, has to give an adequate account of all the aspects of human experience. It is no explanation to say that conscious spiritual aspects of life are unreal. It is a distortion of the total picture of human life to say that Consciousness is nothing but a function of the body.

Mechanical Materialists have four dogmatic assumptions (which are already mentioned) which are unjustified. An assumption can be called justified if it is successful in explaining what it wants to. But a materialistic explanation of the world,
human life, etc. is unsatisfactory. So the assumptions of Materialism remain unjustified. By bringing these wrong assumptions to light and pointing out the flaws, we can see how to advance beyond Mechanistic Materialism.

Against their first assumption it can be said that the world does not consist of stable things but of processes in which things come into being and pass away. As it is said, "What is fundamental is not the thing the particle, but the unending processes of nature in which things go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away." 9

Regarding second assumption, it can be said that this theory established that there is no change without any external cause. But it leads to the separation of matter and motion. In studying the causes of change, we should not try to seek merely its external change but should try to find out the sources of the change within the process itself, because motion can be stated as the mode of existence of matter.

Their third assumption is unsatisfactory because they hold that all changes, all happenings whatsoever can be reduced to and explained by such mechanical motion of particles. There are different types of processes in the world which constitute different forms of motion of matter. Then how can we reduce all such motions to one and the same form of mechanical motion?

9. Ibid., p. 35.
The last assumption is that the totality of events in the universe is nothing but the result of interaction of particles which have their own fixed features quite independent of everything else.

But this is wrong because nothing can exist in complete separation from its conditions of existence, of its relations with other things. Relation of things is no doubt internal.

When we bring into open and reject the absurd assumptions of Mechanistic Materialism, we have a new type of Materialism which is known to us as Dialectical Materialism. The 'Dialectical Materialism means understanding things just as they are ('materialism'), in their actual interconnection and movements ('dialectics').'

The most important development of Dialectics was in the hands of Hegel. Later on in the hands of Karl Marx and Engels it was given the Materialist form. Lenin who was a disciple of Marx also tried to give a systematic formulation of Dialectical Materialism.

The main theme of Dialectical Materialism is that the world is not a complex of ready-made things but a complex of processes in which everything comes into being and passes away. Matter is inseparable from motion. Motion is the mode of existence of matter. The relation of all things is internal.

10. Ibid., p. 118
Dialectical Materialism received a high appreciation at the time when it was formulated.

Marx admits that there is no consciousness independently of the brain processes. When we perceive or think or feel, it is said by Marx that there are not separate processes - but only one process which is the material process, i.e., one aspect of the functioning of brain. Marxism holds, 'Consciousness is a product of the development of matter, namely of living bodies with a central nervous system, and that perceptions, feelings and thoughts are, in fact, the highest products of matter.'

Consciousness is reflection of the material world. In consciousness, in general, there is produced a reflection of parts or one aspect of the material world. Here material world is primary and its reflection is secondary. As it is said, 'Our consciousness is only an image of the external world.'

This reflection of material reality in consciousness takes place through the active relationships of the living organisms and its surroundings.

In conclusion, we can say that apart from living beings, there is no consciousness. Material world is the source of

11. Ibid., p. 315.
all consciousness. It is stated, "In consciousness there occurs the reflection of the material world in the life process of the brain, and the reflection is what constitutes the content of consciousness." 13

Mechanical Materialism and Dialectical Materialism do not differ from each other actually. Both try to establish supremacy and importance of physical objects. Their ways of expressing the nature and existence of consciousness differ.

Dialectical Materialism scores higher than Mechanical Materialism, as it gives some independence to consciousness, though ultimately that consciousness has to be explained in terms of the functions of the body. But the basic inconsistency of Dialectical Materialism lies in the fact that it applies the categories of mind to matter and then tries to establish that mind is nothing but matter. The categories of dialectic are the categories of logic, as established by Hegel who wanted to trace the development of human consciousness through its different phases. Marx accepted this dialectic and applied it in its entirety to the development of matter without enquiring into the fact whether the developments of matter and mind are identical. But we find that there is at least one fundamental difference and it is this that matter, as the scientist shows, moves in quantitative

changes and the qualitative differences are nothing but human interpretations of quantitative changes. Water, for example, changes in quantity when heat is applied to it and the appearance of steam which is nothing but a quantitative difference is interpreted by human being as the appearance of quality. Thus Dialectical Materialism has made a confusion between the dialectics of spirit and the development of matter. It has accepted in one sense the reality of spiritual development, but it has denied that development in another sense.

Another form of Materialism is found in the Behaviouristic doctrine of Psychology, which explains mind as the sum total of physiological functions of the brain. Behaviourism originated with the psychologist J.B.Watson. In recent times, the American psychologist B.F.Skinner has defended also a Behaviourist theory of mind. Behaviourists give us an account of mental processes '..... in terms of the physical behaviour and tendencies to behave.' 14 The Behaviourists emphasised the tremendous importance of disposition in unfolding the nature of mental concepts. They identified mind with the brain. They explain everything in terms of behaviour. Even they explain 'self-control' and 'thinking' in behavioural terms.

In Science and human behaviour Skinner says that 'self-control' does not arise in the inner life of the individual.

On the other hand, it comes from the external environment and society. He thinks that it is possible to arrange the automatic strengthening of behaviour which controls drinking, as a result of the negative stimulus-patterns and responses to such stimulus which produce an aversion to drinking. The individual then will have lesser tendency to drink. The individual will thus have a lesson in 'self-control'. Skinner thinks that the traditional conception cannot explain how a man develops the power of 'self-control' by 'will-power'. It is of little help to tell a man to use his 'will-power'. The 'self-control' will become more probable by establishing aversive consequences. But the traditional theory does not give a true idea of the actual process. Skinner's behavioural theory gives relevant techniques by which an individual can develop the power of 'self-control'. It is also the task of society to establish such techniques of control.

'Thinking' is also explained by the Behaviourists in terms of behaviour. Watson explained thinking in terms of 'implicit motor behaviour'. His reduction of thinking to implicit motor behaviour is the most interesting and distinctive of all his theories. Watson deduces his explanation of thinking from his fundamental postulation as follows: "... all mental activity must be sensori-motor behaviour of some sort." 15

He established also that implicit speech movements were the

most likely behaviour for thinking. People, specially children, think aloud. The young people give up talking aloud for whispering to himself, give up whispering for inaudible lip movement and reach the stage of talking to himself without any visible movement. He also said that implicit gestures also might play an important part in thinking. In case of deaf people, who talk with their hands, Watson holds that they must think by implicit hand movement.

Watson's theory of thinking strikes many people as reasonable because they are aware of talking to themselves while thinking.16

Though the Behaviourists tried utmost to explain consciousness in terms of behavioural process, they totally failed to do that.

In criticising this theory, we have to point out that this theory cannot explain the logical possibility of the separate existence of mind. As regards the Behaviourists' theory, 'Intentionality' remains unexplained. When we speak of intentions, we find that we are talking of purposes which the agent believes to have good prospects of success. Purpose cannot be explained in behaviouristic formula.

The last form of Materialism (as classified in previous section) accepted in contemporary times is called by Herbert

16. Ibid.
Feigl, the Central-state theory. According to this theory mental states are identified with states of the brain or central nervous system. This theory does not deny the existence of inner mental states; on the contrary, it asserts their existence and describes them as the physical states of the brain. According to the Central-state theory, "Mental states are the states of a person apt for the bringing about of behaviour of a certain sort." 17

In criticising this theory, it can be said that the advocates of Central-state theory totally leave out consciousness or experience. Their views have a quite unsatisfactory explanation regarding other-person character. It is, as if, we took, the very complex behaviour of other persons and say that this behaviour must have a cause within the person, a cause which may be called as mental state and then went on to identify these 'mental states' with 'states of the brain'. But mind is not something like a theoretical concept. 18 We have a direct awareness of mental states and at the same time we are conscious that we have experience. So consciousness is something more than the inner state, suitable for the production of certain sorts of behaviour.

But Central-state theory raises objection against such view. It introduced three cases in order to make clear the exact meaning of 'consciousness' in Central-state theory.

17. D. M. Armstrong, op. cit., p. 82.
18. Ibid., p. 92.
Case I: This is something that can happen when one is driving very long distances in monotonous conditions. One can 'come to' at some point and realise that one has driven many miles without consciousness of the driving, or, perhaps, anything else. One has kept the car on the road, changed gears, even, or used the brake, but all in a state of 'automatism'.

Case II: One is thinking furiously about a problem, so furiously that one is 'lost to the world'.

Case III: Under the direction of an old-fashioned psychologist one is self-consciously trying to scrutinise what goes on from moment to moment in one's mind.'

But critics say that these three cases do not involve consciousness, only because they have made a distinction among the Cases I, II and III. But central-state theory holds that the Cases II and III involve consciousness but in Case I, it is absent because one was not conscious of one's purposes.

Armstrong says regarding consciousness, "I suggest that consciousness is no more than awareness of inner mental states by the person whose states these are."
If it is said in this way, then consciousness is simply a further mental state which is directed to the original inner states. When we perceive a physical situation, then we have a mental state which is directed to that physical situation. This 'directedness' of another mental state will be same when we are aware of the fact that we are perceiving. If this further mental state can be identified with a state of the brain then it will be a process in which one part of the brain scans another part of the brain. In perception the brain scans the environment. In awareness of the perception the brain scans that scanning. Further awareness of that awareness would also be possible by a further scanning of the original inner scanning. Armstrong thinks that the Central-state theory involves the fallacy of infinitum, regarding the process of scanning. In the Central-state theory consciousness is only awareness of our own state of mind. The awareness of our own mental state is 'introspection' or 'introspective awareness'.

The demand of Central-state theory, i.e., the identification of mental states with physico-chemical states of the central nervous system, is unsatisfactory. For, the whole range of human behaviour can not be explained by physico-chemical processes. It is thought that intellectual discovery and artistic creation are higher activities and cannot be products of mere physical mechanism.
The way of compromising this problem introduced by Materialists is that human behaviour causally springs from physical process in the central nervous states. But there are some physical processes which cannot be described in terms of the laws of physics and chemistry. These supporters have introduced emergent laws with the help of which these unexplained physical processes can be explained. These emergent laws arise, when physical system reached a complex interrelation.

If we raise the question regarding the emergence of a second physical event from the first physical event, supporters of dualism and Central-state theory offer their interpretation. Dualists explain that the second physical event '.... is determined not simply by the first physical event but also by what has happened to spiritual substance in the past.' 21 The Central-state theory explains it by saying '.... the second physical event followed on directly, by emergent laws, but without a spiritual event as intermediary.' 22

Now, we have to consider some paranormal phenomena, which seem to us to stand in opposition to Central-state theory. Let us take for instance, the paranormal phenomenon of telepathy. Telepathy is the non-inferential knowledge of what is

21. Ibid., p.360.
22. Ibid.
going on in the mind of another. It seems that the process cannot be identified with the physical process in the central nervous system. But this phenomenon is explained by Central-state theory in their own way. They hold that telepathic communication of information is mediated by some physical radiation emitted by one central nervous system and picked up by another. If conscious states are identified with physical processes then each must have some identical features by which we can say that both are identical. Naturally, the question of psychic properties arises.

We can never discover the de facto identity, if we do not have any special features, which help us to identify conscious states. Then how can we identify both conscious states and physical processes?

The different forms of contemporary Materialism show that there has not been any deviation from the original Materialist hypothesis. Only human experiences are now analysed in complicated details. But the evidences of the Materialist theory do not establish satisfactorily the identity between (the) physical phenomena and (the) spiritual phenomena. The Materialists also come upon experiences which express the higher grades of consciousness and there is a '..... mass of phenomena', to speak in the language of Sri Aurobindo, 'which
escape entirely from the rigid hold, the limiting dogmatism of the materialist formula. 23

Sri Aurobindo further points out that the Materialists affirm only the reality of the physical senses and deny the supersensible, as they are unable to perceive anything immaterial. But he thinks that this is a dogmatic pretension and is unfounded. 24 He believes that even in the world of matter, there are existences which the physical senses are incapable of taking cognisance. Yet the denial of the supersensible as nothing but an illusion depends on a constant sensuous association of the real with what is materially perceptible. Sri Aurobindo thinks that the materialist is arguing in a circle, for he wants to establish something as unreal, which he has already accepted as being real. He refers to new-born forms of scientific research which with increasing evidence establish the facts of telepathy. These facts cannot be resisted, except by minds confined within the brilliant shell of the past. We have seen how the Central-state theory of contemporary Materialism tries to explain telepathy with the help of the supramental phenomena, perhaps, cannot be made intelligible on the basis of the gross material functions of the body.


24. Ibid., p.18.
If the Materialist conclusion is pushed far, we arrive at the insignificance and the unreality of the individual life. We work or enjoy under the influence of material energy which offers us a brief delusion of life. But the question about the untenability of the Materialist theory cannot be solved by logic, depending on the evidence of physical existence, for the data present always a gap in our experience which renders all argument inconclusive. We do not possess also any definitive experience of a cosmic mind or supermind, as Sri Aurobindo would, which is not bound up with the individual body. Nor do we have firm limit of experience which can justify us in our belief that our subjective life is identified with the individual body. Only an extension of the area of consciousness or a development of the instruments of knowledge can decide the ancient quarrel.\(^{25}\)

Section 3: Consciousness in Buddhistic Philosophy

The theories of Realism and Idealism arise out of the problem of nature of knowledge and that of the relation between knowledge and reality which it knows. Realism is that which believes that physical world with its objects exists whether the

\(^{25}\) Ibid., p.20.
we perceive them or not. But Idealism contends that the objects are nothing but the ideas of our mind. So Realism asserts independent existence of physical objects. The idea of consciousness is accepted both by Realism and Idealism. But we shall confine our attention only to the Idealist thinkers of both the East and the West. Within the realm of Idealism in the East, we will discuss only the Buddhistic and Vedāntic philosophers.

Buddha disliked metaphysical discussion which he thought had no importance for the practical utility of human life. But if we make a detailed scrutiny of his philosophy we find that though he had no metaphysical aim in his teachings yet a metaphysical view, underlying them, can be discovered.


But our present purpose is concerned to show how the Buddhistic philosophy understood the nature of consciousness. Buddha admits transient sensations and thoughts and denied the self. 'To express the same in modern phraseology, he admitted only states of consciousness but not the mind.'

26. M. Hiriyana, Outlines of Indian Philosophy, Bombay, Blackie and Sons (India Ltd.), 1979, p.139.
Without any reference to a permanent Self, this philosophy deals with individual life and considers it as the composite of five skandhas or aggregates, just as a chariot is a collection of wheels, axles, shafts etc. When one says 'I', what he refers either to all the skandhas combined or anyone of them, and deludes himself that was 'I'. The word skandha is generally used to mean groups or aggregates. It is said in the philosophy of Buddha that human beings are the composite of skandhas. These skandhas are aggregate of bodily and psychical states, which are immediate with us. These skandhas are five in number: (i) 'rupa (four elements, the body, the senses, sense-data etc.), (ii) Vedanā (feeling—pleasurable, painful and indifferent), (iii) saññā (conceptual knowledge), (iv) Saṃskāra (synthetic mental states and synthetic functioning of compound sense affections, compound feelings, and compound concepts), (v) Vijñāna (consciousness).

If we make a close analysis, we find individual is the combination of nāmarūpa. Nāma indicates psychical factors and rūpa, the physical body or matter. Both constitute the aggregate or skandhas. Compound of both physical and psychical factors is equivalent to the 'mind-body'. Nāma-rūpa are mutually dependent on one another. Buddhist philosophers agree with Indian


psychologists regarding the nature of mind, i.e., its organic or material nature. Nāma as mental, includes *citta*, heart or emotion, Viṣṇāna or consciousness and *manas* or mind. 'Rūpa skandha' according to Dharmasaṅgraha, means 'the aggregate of five senses, the five sensations, and the implicatory communications associated in sense perception (Viṣṇāpa).''

Among the five *skandhas* 'Vijñāna or consciousness meant', says Buddhaghosa, 'both the stage at which the intellectual process started and also the final resulting consciousness.'

He says also that when consciousness comes into contact with object, then perception, feeling, cognition arise. Naturally, this contact is very important. But we should be very careful to consider it as the beginning of our psychological processes, for '... in one whole consciousness (ekacittasmi) it cannot be said that this comes first and that comes after, so we can take contact in association with feeling (vedānā), conceiving (saññā), or volition (cetanā), it is itself an immaterial state but yet since it comprehends objects it is called contact.'

Regarding duration of mental states, it is said by Buddhist philosophers that there are three phases of every state of consciousness. These are '... genesis (upāda), development

29. Ibid., p. 96.
30. Ibid., p. 97.
(thiti) and dissolution (bhāṅga).''

One of the schools of Buddhistic philosophy, i.e., the Yogācāra school established the reality of mind, denied the reality of external objects. These external objects are nothing but ideas of our mind which consist of a stream of different kinds of ideas. It is true that an object and consciousness of the object are not different as because they are never perceived to exist separately. As an object cannot be known without our consciousness of the object, so the existence of objects cannot be proved independent of consciousness. 'That is, the stimulus always comes from within, never from without.'

The objective world and the subjective ego are only manifestation of the universal consciousness. This view of Yogācāra is called Viśṇunāvāda for they admit the reality of consciousness (Viśṇāna) and all external objects are nothing but states of consciousness. This theory is also called as Subjective Idealism.

Their arguments, in favour of this view, are: (a) In case of dreams there are no external objects, internal thoughts appear as external. (b) Whenever we are aware of something, we are aware of cognition itself. Naturally, there is no

difference between what is known and what knows. (c) There is an invariable relation between cognition and content. Both appear together. (d) Objects impress different persons differently and even same person at different times.

This school also thinks that human mind is the storehouse of various types of impressions which is known as ālaya-vijñāna.

Reality of consciousness is found in Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra. "All that is, is Consciousness."33 Asaṅga in Mahāyāna-Sūt rālaṅkāra-Shāstra proved that Reality is not touched by momentariness. He also shows that this consciousness is the only Reality and self-luminous. We find the same voice in the philosophy of Vasubandhu. Sthiramati, in his commentary Trimshika, says, "Reality is Pure Consciousness. The subject and the object are only modification of the ālaya which itself is only a modification of Pure Consciousness."34

From the above discussion it is clear to us that, though Vijñāna-Vādins establish the doctrine of universal flux and reality as only momentary ideas, ultimately their doctrine comes to be modified as the reality of consciousness.

34. Ibid., p.116.
The discussion of the Buddhistic views shows that because of the Buddha's unshakable confidence in empiricism, only the reality of the sense-experience was granted. As a result the eternal self of the Vedas was declared to be unreal. Only what we gain in our everyday experience such as the different factors of body, the different groups of sense-experience in their combination and recombination in an unceasing motion, were accepted by the Buddhists to be real. But the later Buddhists could see the difficulties of the combination of the material and the psychic elements, as such an aggregate gives rise to the problem of unsolved dualism. The logical problem led Buddhism to two directions in one of which the reality of the material world was retained, while in the other, only the world of consciousness was given the sole recognition. Their argument depended on the testimony of consciousness in which only conscious states are presented and if that is the case, the reality of the world has a dubious status, which may ultimately be rejected. But even in accepting the flux of consciousness as the only reality, the Buddhist philosophers were not sure about its nature, whether it was an eternal flux or was a permanent enduring substratum expressing itself in the everchanging objects of the world. The problem lies in the inexplicable nature of momentary states of consciousness, for the question may arise, how can the changes be understood, if they are not
grounded in something which is the abode of the flux of conscious states and feelings? If, again, consciousness is supposed to be all-abiding, eternal and unchanging, we are not able to explain the momentary phases of our experiences. The Buddhists left the problem in this undecided stage with an important suggestion that reality can be realised better, if we conceive of it as conscious and spiritual. This idea of the Buddhists may help us in clarifying Sri Aurobindo's theory of Consciousness according to which reality is the expression of a cosmic consciousness. As Sri Aurobindo says, "Consciousness is the great underlying fact, the universal witness for whom the world is a field, the senses instruments." He states further, "For the witness, if he exists, is not the individual embodied mind born in the world, but the cosmic consciousness embracing the universe and appearing as an immanent Intelligence in all its works to which either world subsists eternally and really as Its own active existence or else from which it is born and into which it disappears by an act of knowledge or by an act of conscious power." 

Sri Aurobindo was a great admirer of Buddhism. Only he had reservations about the negative outlook of the doctrine. He does not think that the idea of self-extinction can satisfy

36. Ibid., p. 21.
the human quest, for in the Nirvāṇa the self, whatever that
may be, according to Buddhism, is totally dissolved. The
theory of non-being is not also satisfactory, for self does
not only exist in not being anything, that is, by eternal
movement, but by also eternal being. Its characteristics
are not only ceaseless creation, but an eternity. Sri Auro-
bindo says, "But to find self-consciousness is not the whole
meaning of the spiritual evolution, but to find it too in its
power of being, for being is not only eternal status, but also
action." 37 He says further, "... in the wholeness of spi-
rit these two things are no longer contraries, but one and
inseparable. The status of Spirit is an eternal calm, but also
is its self-expression in world-being without any beginning
or end, because eternal power means an eternal creation. When
we gain the one, we need not lose its counterpart and conse-
quence." 38 Thus it can be pointed out that the Buddhistic
theory of self as everchanging combination of bodily and mental
states does not give an adequate idea of the being of consci-
ousness which is both being and becoming, as the aspect of
being has been completely neglected by Buddhism.

37. Sri Aurobindo, The Supramental Manifestation (SABCL',
38. Ibid.
Consciousness in Vedānta Philosophy

The Buddhist philosophy presents itself in such a way that it gives rise to certain inadequacies. These have been seriously criticised by Vedānta philosophy. Śāmkara designates Vijñānavāda of the Bauddha philosophy as Svatattra-Vijñānavāda.39

Bauddha philosophy conceives that external objects are nothing but Vijñānas or ideas because, we perceive external objects and ideas simultaneously. Here we find a similarity with Berkeley's 'Esse-est - percipi'. As we find that in dreams our ideas appear as objects, so also in our waking state our ideas appear as external objects. Naturally, according to the Buddhists, there is no difference between waking and dreaming state.

Śāmkara comments that presentation of things and ideas of that thing at the same time do not necessarily imply that both are same or objects are the part of mind. Objects are not merely ideas because we may have cognition of different objects but what is same in different objects is consciousness.

The Buddhists are the propounders of no-self doctrine. For them self is not infinite, eternal entity but it is the sum-total of five skandhas, namely - rūpa, vedanā, vijñāna, 39. Chandrachar Sharma, op.cit., p.266.
sanjñā and sanskāra. These five skandhas are nothing but the series of momentary vijñānas or ideas. The Buddhists also established the view that these momentary states are unconscious. But this view appears to the Vedāntists as unsatisfactory for without the interference of some conscious entity how can these unconscious entities form their compound structure of skandhas? Among these five skandhas the vijñāna, the feeling of 'I' is ālayavijñāna, which is also the compound of momentary ideas originating from some conditions. It disappears when the condition ceases to exist. The Vedāntists ask: How can these momentary ideas give rise to a compound without an all-abiding, self-sustaining and self-illuminating consciousness? If the Buddhistic attitude is quite right, then our common life would remain unexplained because we perform actions in order to attain fruit. But if the Self is for only one moment, then the action is performed by one, while the fruit is enjoyed by another.

Again, if the Buddhists say, in the context of their fundamental view of 'no Self' that there is a self-luminous self which is in disguise, then they are establishing the self-luminous self on the basis of something impermanent, momentary. Saṁkara agrees with the Buddhistic view that everything

40. Durgāchārān Saṁkhya-tirtha, Vedānta-Darśanam, Calcutta, Sri Khirod Chandra Majumdar, 4/2/2/18, pp.188-196.

41. Ibid., p.238.
is changeable. "Time spins fast, life fleets, and all is change."

But the Vedānta philosophers think that there is some supersensible Reality which is not within the condition of change. Thus there is consciousness which is accepted by the Vedānta philosophy as the ultimate reality which transcends the Subject-Object duality. But the Buddhist theory of Vijñāna-vāda or Subjective Idealism at least ends in Selipsism.

Śaṃkara holds the view that this ultimate Reality can be considered from two different points of view. If we consider from our practical point of view, the ultimate Reality will be the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world and therefore Omnipotent, Omniscient Being. Our consideration from the higher point of view is that the ultimate reality is nothing but Pure consciousness or 'Sat' - 'Cit' and 'Ānanda'. The Sachchidānanda, of which the world is a series of manifold appearances, cannot Itself be unconscious or dependent on something else for its revelation. The nature of ultimate Reality is described by Śaṃkara in the following words, 'It is sat (real) meaning that it is not asat (unreal). It is cit (consciousness), meaning that it

is not acit (unconsciousness). It is ānanda (bliss) meaning that it is not of the nature of pain (duḥkhasvarūpa)." 45

Reality which is Sat is also "... an anugatavyāvṛtta" which means to explain "... the appearance of the world and also of keeping Brahman above all division, limitations and relations. Sat is also immediate Itself and apriori, unalterable, beyond space and time which are the indications of limitation.

Secondly, the Pure Consciousness has no beginning or end. Therefore it may be concluded, "what is eternal Existence or absolute Reality is Pure immediate and Self-luminous Consciousness." 47

Thirdly, Brahman is Bliss which is the source of eternal Bliss of everything. Although we apparently think that the attainment of object gives us Bliss but it comes from universal Bliss, So, "Brahman-Bliss is one, eternal indivisible unexcellable, ungraded and ever-immediate." 48

If Pure Consciousness is the only truth, what can be said about our perceived world which seems to be real to us?

46. Veermani Prasad Upadhyaya, op.cit., p.53.
47. Ibid., p. 67.
48. Ibid., p. 76.
The Vedānta philosophy says that Reality implies the presence for all times and is not within the limitation of change.

But on the basis of the criterion of reality, the world is naturally unreal and at the same time is the evolution out of Pure Consciousness through Its power Māyā. The world appearances with various objects are not real and our proper knowledge of Reality makes the world disappear. Thus the world is not a real transformation of the ultimate but only a Vivarta. It may be said, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away our body decays, our senses change and our empirical egos are built before our eyes. None of these is ultimately real. The abstract expression of this phenomenality of the world is Māyā.'

Thus we see, why Vedānta philosophy states the unreality of the world, what is their view regarding the individual self and its relation with Paramātman?

Saṅkara acknowledges that Brahman and Atman have same common features. Both are subjective and objective. But individual self is described as the reflection of Paramātman through Its power Māyā, just as the moon, reflected in water. Pure Consciousness is also the essence of individual soul but the question may arise, how the everlasting Reality

50. Ibid., p.594.
appears as individual soul which is considered as finite and unreal. The unshakable answer of Vedānta philosophy is that the infinite soul through its mysterious power apparently presents Itself as finite, individual soul is associated with the senses, mind and becomes subject to suffering and enjoyment. But our realisation of ultimate truth leads to the view that all other things except Pure Consciousness which is the essence, are to be totally rejected.

But if we criticise Śaṅkara's view of Absolutism from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, we find that all the neglected entities have received an important and valuable significance in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Like Śaṅkara, Sri Aurobindo also believes in Supra-Cosmic Pure Consciousness as the only truth but unlike Śaṅkara he holds that this world is not an illusory appearance of Pure Consciousness, for this world is a field through which the ultimate Reality works out its truth—the Spiritual Reality—towards which we strive. Sri Aurobindo says, '.... the arrangement of this universe contains in it a compulsion of Ignorance to move towards Knowledge, of the imperfect manifestation to grow into perfection.' 51

Śaṅkara says that individual soul is the reflection of the Paramātman which is possible through its power Māyā,

whereas, Sri Aurobindo states that Paramātman manifests itself as the individual soul which possesses the same reality like Paramātman because individual soul is nothing but a whole in the whole. Sri Aurobindo says that our individuality is also something superficial for the utility of life which is determined by the Supreme Consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's basic concept is One Spirit but he tried to reconcile the two poles, Manyness and Oneness.

Sri Aurobindo does not accept the idea of Māyā as an illusion producing entity. It is because of this sense of the word Māyā, the Vedānta of Śaṅkara regards the world and the individual as illusory. He wants to understand Māyā in the original sense, as used by the Upanisadic seers according to whom '... it meant a comprehending and containing consciousness capable of embracing measuring and limiting and therefore formative.' It is that which outlines, measures out that which is immeasurable, moulds the formless into forms, produces the psychological being and renders the unknowable as knowable produces the geometrical shapes limiting the limitless. Sri Aurobindo thinks that there is one eternal and immutable delight which moves out in the infinite delight of becoming. It is the One indivisible

52. Ibid., p.154.
54. Ibid.
Conscious Being behind all our experiences. In the depths of ourselves we are that one; as in the reality of our being we are the indivisible All-Consciousness. But the experiences of pain, pleasure and indifference are a special arrangement created by that limited part of ourselves which is raised uppermost in our waking consciousness. Behind these there is in us the delight which gives support to the superficial mental being, but it remains hidden. Sri Aurobindo points out that what we call ourselves is '.... only a trembling ray on the surface.' The vast subconscious, the vast superconscious remain veiled and profit by all the surface experiences imposing them on its external self, which acts as a sort of coming to the contacts of the world. But this truth is hidden from us in our everyday life. But if we learn to live in the innermost essence of our being, we become awake to presence within us of the everpresent illuminantion which is the radiant penumbra of the divine. Sri Aurobindo calls this one indivisible consciousness expressing itself in the multitudes of existence, the integral Vedantic affirmation.

It is the infinite indivisible existence, all blissful in its essential purity into the play of variety. According

55. Ibid., p.104.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., p.109.
to Vedānta philosophy "the delight of its existence is at first self-gathered, absorbed, subconscious in the basis of the physical universe; then emergent in a great mass of neutral movement which is not yet what we call sensation; then further emergent with the growth of mind and ego in the triple vibration of pain, pleasure and indifference originating from the limitation of the force of consciousness in the form and from its exposure to shocks of the universal force which it finds alien to it and out of harmony with its own measure and standard; finally, the conscious emergence of the full Sachchidananda, in its creation by universality, by equality, by self-possession and conquest of Nature. This is the course and movement of the world."58

If it is asked, why the one existence should take delight in such a movement, it may be said that all possibilities are potentially contained in Its Infinity and that the delight of existence consists precisely in the variable realisation of its possibilities. The possibility begins from the concealment of Sachchidananda in what appears to be its own opposite and its discovery of self in that opposite. Infinite being loses itself in the appearance of non-being and manifests itself as the finite soul. Infinite Consciousness loses itself in the vast indeterminate nature and appears as a limited consciousness. The infinite force losing itself in

the chaos of atoms appears in the uncertain balance of a world. Infinite delight loses itself in the unconscious matter and emerges as a discordant rhythm of varied pain, pleasure, love, hatred and indifference. Infinite unity loses itself in the chaos of multiplicity and expresses itself in a discord of forces, trying to recover that unity. In such a creation the real Sachchidananda has to emerge.

The limited consciousness of man has to open up to the super-conscious unity in which each embraces all and his whole nature has to reproduce in the individual the unity, the harmony, the One-ness-in-all of the Supreme Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.” Thus Sri Aurobindo shows, how the same Consciousness runs as the integral identity from the material objects of the world through the individual consciousness to the all-indivisible Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Through Section 4: Consciousness in Berkeley's Philosophy

So far we engaged ourselves in discussing the nature of consciousness from the standpoint of Idealistic Indian philosophers such as the Buddhists and the Vedântists and from the Materialistic points of view as well. Now we would like to show, how consciousness has been treated by the

59. Ibid., p. 111.
western idealists particularly by Berkeley and Hegel.

The criticism of Locke's representative realism by Berkeley leads us to the inevitable next step i.e., 'Subjective Idealism'. Idealism leads us to the thoughts of Berkeley, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Bradley etc. Though they differ among themselves yet they belong to the group of Idealist philosophers.

It is true that George Berkeley is well known to all through his denial of the existence of matter. He tries to prove, "... all reality is mental. What he is proving is that we perceive qualities, not things and that qualities are relative to the perceiver." So he is ready to accept only the reality of idea and totally ignores matter.

Berkeley says that there is no unseen material substance or corporeal substance which is regarded as the substratum of sensible qualities. Material objects are only the assemblage of different qualities. Berkeley had criticised Locke's distinction between primary and secondary qualities and established that there are only sensible qualities or ideas.

In the books, A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, Part I, published in the year 1709, and

The Dialogue Between Hylas and Philonous, Berkeley showed his immaterialist attitude with formidable arguments.

Berkeley's immaterialist attitude is also found in his Philosophical Commentaries. We shall discuss these arguments one by one. The first argument in favour of immaterialism is that if we accept Locke's view that objects are known only through the medium of our ideas then how can we say that our ideas resemble the qualities? This requires the comparison of 'idea with the object', which implies the direct or immediate acquaintance with them. But dependence on Locke's theory leads to the impossibility of direct contact with objects and Skepticism. 61

The second argument arises out of weaknesses and inconsistencies in the scientific view of the world, with its distinction between primary and secondary qualities and with the theory of representative perception. Berkeley says that as primary qualities cannot exist without secondary qualities, as sensible qualities or ideas cannot exist without the mind, so independent existence of material world, as the scientists hold is impossible and absurd. 62

The third argument is in The Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous. It is said that any immediate object of the senses


62. Ibid., p.300.
or that which is the assemblage of ideas, existing in an unthinking material substance itself implies contradiction because "... an idea can be like nothing but an idea." 64

Thus we see that Berkeley tried his best to establish the reality of ideas by denying the existence of material substance. The result is 'Idealism', i.e., nothing exists except mind and its ideas. A thing to exist is to be experienced, i.e., 'Esse-est-percipi.' As it is stated in the book British Empirical Philosophers, "... sensible things are all immediately perceivable; and those things which are immediately perceivable are ideas and these exist only in the mind." 65

Apart from experience the existence of anything is self-contradictory. Now regarding the cause of sensation Berkeley without any hesitation asserts, "Our experiences had a cause - God." 66 For the existence of an unperceived object Berkeley says that there is a Spirit "who works in all and by whom all things consist." 67 About Spirit Berkeley remarks that Spirit is an intelligent term although the idea of Spirit

65. Ibid., p.277.
could not be possessed by someone. We have no idea of Spirit, because our idea is inert, whereas Spirit is active, indivisible, unextended thing and Spirit perceives, thinks and wills idea. Naturally, it cannot be Idea but we have notion of Spirit which is due to our knowledge of myself.

From the above discussion of Berkeley's philosophy, it is clear to us that Berkeley declared unreality of matter and established Spirit and Idea or Mind. But our criticism from Sri Aurobindo's philosophy would make it clear that the denial of matter in Berkeley's philosophy ultimately ends in a "... great bankruptcy of life."68 Sri Aurobindo also declares that Matter is to be asserted because, "Matter of which it is made, is a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansion."69 The acceptance of matter, also leads to the theory of the Monism of Matter.

Regarding the relevance of a discussion of Berkeley's idealistic theory, it may be pointed out that the famous Irish philosopher upheld the importance of consciousness through an epistemological analysis. It is no doubt that we realise the value of consciousness in our knowing. But the analysis of knowledge reveals the problem of existence.

69. Ibid., p. 6.
and the question arises: can an object exist independent of the relation to consciousness? Berkeley tried to answer the question, but arrived at an insoluble problem when he felt that the foundation of existence has to be explained first. In fact, his transition from Subjective idealism to Objective idealism is a quest for the answer about the origin of the universe. But any sincere student of Berkeley knows that he had left the epistemological part and the metaphysical or ontological part completely separated from each other. If he had tried to understand the nature of reality first, he would have been able to see that reality in its intrinsic nature is spiritual and expresses itself through varied manifestations. Such has been the approach of Hegel and Sri Aurobindo and it could have been easy for Berkeley to establish that material objects can exist unperceived by an individual observer, for in their essential nature, they are expressions of Spirit, though the Spirit has not been able to reveal itself to the fullest in the material order. Matter is nothing but an unmanifested spirit and as for Berkeley only thoughts of the spirit and spiritual elements themselves can exist, Berkeley's Idealism would then be a harmonious thought. As Sri Aurobindo points out, the universe develops through an evolution of energy, which might be ultimately spiritual energy, and material structure of life and human self contribute to the spiritual journey of the human soul. Sri Aurobindo's point of view
is not therefore narrow epistemological subjectivism, but a wide ontological understanding of reality which gives matter its due place. It tells us also that man has to transcend the limited barrier of the material shell. His theory of Consciousness, as we shall see soon, is that of a cosmic supramental life which progresses through the various steps of an orderly development. Man is at the centre of that history preceding which the unmanifested spirit produces the material world and surpassing which man rises to the world of spiritual illumination and ecstasy.

Thus we see that both Matter and Spirit have to be treated with equal importance, as the importance of human life depends on a proper understanding of the value and position of both. So Berkeley's repudiation of matter by itself does not solve the mystery of the universe. Does Sri Aurobindo say that Matter is independent of Consciousness or that it is a conscious formation of Consciousness in which Consciousness is reorganised? His theory very different from that of Berkeley who held Matter is unmanifested.

Consciousness in Hegel's Philosophy: that is, made whole in his ideal.

Here we shall try to give an idea of consciousness and what role it plays in Hegel's philosophy. After that we shall try to show how Hegel's views are similar to those of Sri Aurobindo and also whether it is possible to discover differences between the ideas of these two thinkers.

Hegel, a German Absolute Idealist, accepts the reality of mind but this does not necessarily imply the unreality
of matter. Mind is not the combination of material objects, which is the unshakable belief of the materialist.

The 'Spirit', the spiritual of Hegel, is the central nation of his philosophy, which is accepted by him as the ultimate reality, the essence of everything which exists and remains in itself as well as manifests other beings. Being-for-itself or the Spirit is also called by Hegel the spiritual substance. This Absolute is Being and this Being is called Self-thinking thought. Hegel also described 'Spirit' as 'the whole' that '.... however, is merely the essence which completes itself through its own process of development.' This Spirit has also the power to abstract itself from everything external, even its own externality, is 'Self-activating universal' or 'the universal in action,' possesses the power to separate or elicit universal from particular something. The characteristic of Spirit as 'Self-active' universal leads Hegel to establish that Spirit is infinite because it is Self-contained and Self-complete. This Spirit is also personal, finite, bounded because by contrasting with these limited characteristics, it realises what it is. It is better to describe Spirit as 'Infinite-in-finitudo' or 'impersonal-in-being-personal' rather than only infinite and impersonal.

71. Ibid., p.40.
72. Ibid., p.41.
The most important point of Spirit is that it is the truth of everything and, abstractly conceived, the ultimate, which sees itself in the other, the object where the subjectivity is its inner purposiveness.

The Absolute Spirit is the synthesis of both subjective spirit and objective spirit. In Hegel's philosophy, we find objective spirit and subjective spirit and in its sphere we are concerned with finite spirit, i.e., in its inwardness than its self-manifestation. But the above discussion does not necessarily imply that the infinite is entirely different or exists in separation from the finite spirit. It is an established fact that the Infinite exists in and through the finite, i.e., 'Spirit should find itself encompassed and encircled by objects, things to which it cannot help attributing other being, a being distinct from and opposed to its own.' 73 From this discussion, it would be possible for us to know that the Absolute Spirit in its sphere is always conscious of itself as such.

This Spirit, according to Hegel, manifests itself as the object, world, i.e., finite objects. Although these finite objects are the manifestation of the Absolute, this Absolute Spirit has the power to abstract itself from everything finite and opposition between Spirit and others facing it is an illusion.

73. Ibid., p. 44.
In Hegel's philosophy the dialectic of Spirit is logical. This Spirit passes to the Absolute knowledge through different stages. Now we shall point out the dialectical articulation of the stages of Spirit. (1) Subjective Spirit, (2) Objective Spirit, (3) Absolute Spirit.

Subjective Spirit is Spirit, when it knows itself by passing through all levels of consciousness and reaches absolute knowledge. "Objective Spirit is a spirit which exists out there, a spirit without a subject. It is not nature but it has nature's characteristic of being at hand." 74

Absolute Spirit is a reconciliation of subjective and objective spirit and also of nature and spirit. Nature and spirit require a common base which is the Absolute Spirit.

Consciousness, as aware of itself, is the only reality. So we have to realise consciousness in the sphere of Self-consciousness. Spiritual Self-consciousness is the ultimate goal towards which we strive. But how is this realisation possible? In the Phenomenology of Spirit, it would be possible for us to find out the answer.

Hegel thinks that one's own self-consciousness is not absolute knowledge, his self recognises self-hood in itself.

and others. Naturally, existence of other self is necessary for the realisation of the Absolute.

Hegel also says that Master-Slave relation has a fantastic contribution to self-consciousness. Here relationship between Master-Slave is mediated by impersonal material objects. In this relation consciousness of one's own self-hood is the condition for the recognition of this self-hood by another self and here the consciousness of Absolute Self is possible because the Master imposes himself as the other's value and succeeds in obtaining recognition from the other and the Slave sees his own self in the other.  

From Master-Slave relation Hegel passes over into a philosophico-religious region or to a state of consciousness which is called by him '... stoical consciousness, a phase of mind which,' according to Hegel, 'arises only in epochs characterised by universal fear and servitude but which have also achieved a high level of culture.' But here the contradiction of Master-Slave is not overcome. We can avoid contradiction only by the exaltation of the idea of the true interior freedom and internal self-sufficiency. This negative attitude involves implicit notion and maintains a positive idea of truth and virtue which leads to the Sceptical

consciousness, where only the self abides and has explicit realisation. This Sceptical consciousness, is not free from contradiction, involves the impossibility to damage the natural consciousness and there is co-existence of affirmation and negation in the same attitude. Outburst of such contradiction leads to what Hegel calls 'the unhappy consciousness' and it has the division that occurs in the same self, whereas in the stoical and Sceptical consciousness the element of true self-consciousness is divided between two individual consciousness, i.e., the self which is changeable, transitory, fickle and ideal, permanent, infinite self which is not attained. But all these contradictions which are inherent in self-consciousness can be overcome, when the finite rises towards the universal consciousness, where there is no difference and there is only awareness of identity-in-difference and a full recognition of selfhood in oneself and others. Reason plays an important role in Hegel's philosophy, for when reason is able to grasp the individuality in its unity then we have realisation and comprehension of the Absolute.

Now we shall try to see, how far Hegel's notion of consciousness helps us in understanding the nature of self and the world. We would like to point out its similarities and dissimilarities from that of Sri Aurobindo's idea of reality. In criticising any theory from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, we must not forget that Sri Aurobindo was a philosopher of
the ultimate nature of reality not in the sense of Śāṅkara and Rāmānuja. He accepted the truth of the Scriptures as the ultimate source of truth. But he held also that the Scriptures express only partial truth. His aim was to establish the Divine life on this earth on the basis of our spiritual experiences. But such a doctrine of Sri Aurobindo as established by him on the basis of Upanishad, might have been neglected by Advaita thinkers who recognise only the Brahman as the only Reality and regard other finite objects as illusory. But the value of the worldly objects, in which there is the presence of Reality, was felt by Hegel and he tried to show that the Absolute manifests Itself as everything through evolution. Hegel thought that all the finite objects are necessary for the realisation of the Absolute. The similar attitude is also found in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in which Matter, Life, Mind, World, i.e., the finite objects receive an extremely valuable position and the process of evolution is also seen in his philosophy. Sri Aurobindo says, "A Reality of oneness manifesting itself in a reality of numberless forms and power of its being is what we confront everywhere." Naturally, we can say that Hegelian philosophy might have awakened Sri Aurobindo to the idea of Self-evolving consciousness.

77. Chitta Ranjan Goswami, Sri Aurobindo's Concept of Superman, Pondicherry, SABDA, 1976, p.93.
Hegel's view of consciousness is "... a process in which an object yields up a universal meaning or unifying pattern."\(^{79}\) Consciousness or Spirit is rational which manifests itself as the finite objects but this consciousness or Spirit has the power to abstract itself from everything external including its own externality. This consciousness of Hegel is something abstract because it is purely rational. But in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we find that the ultimate Reality is present in everything through its process of involution and does not abstract itself from finite objects. It is the Pure Existence-Bliss-Consciousness which is concrete in nature and the basis of everything. Sri Aurobindo says that this world is not a fortuitous accident but "The progressive revelation of a great, a transcendent, a luminous Reality with the multitudinous relativities of this world."\(^{80}\) Naturally, consciousness is all-inclusive Reality.

Hegel, as S.K. Maitra points out, conceives the Absolute in the human model. Hegel says that the Absolute is the Absolute of thought and principle of thought is continuity and this "'Principle of thought is available to man in his present consciousness.'"\(^{81}\) But any principle of thought which is accessible to man at present is inadequate. Naturally, to

\(^{79}\) J.N. Findlay, *op.cit.*, p. 41.


explain the Absolute in terms of such inadequate thought is not satisfactory.

Sri Aurobindo's idea of Consciousness is that of an infinite, ever present reality, as the foundation of the world. Sri Aurobindo thinks that Consciousness is the basis of existence and the movement of Consciousness creates the universe. Everything is nothing but the arrangement of Consciousness. But Hegel in his philosophy makes it only the logical structure of reality.

Hegel presents the view that only when we are able to find by our intellect, the Self-hood in ourselves and others, then do we have realisation of the Absolute, i.e., he admits only the intellectual realisation. But Sri Aurobindo speaks of an integral realisation. We have to realise without ignoring anything finite, that all is Brahman. He says Reality is 'Sachchidananda as the highest positive expression of the Reality to our consciousness.'

Section 5: Consciousness in the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo

In our discussion, so far we have presented different views on the nature of consciousness - Materialistic and Idealistic both from the East and the West. We have also tried

82. Sri Aurobindo, The Life Divine, p. 34.
to point out the inadequate aspects of such theories from Sri Aurobindo's point of view. In this section we shall try to throw some light on the nature of consciousness as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo.

Consciousness, in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, is not a capricious something but is an unchanging, self-luminous ultimate Reality. It is the Being and fundamental basis or essence of everything. It should not be compared with anything else because other things are subject to different limitations. Sri Aurobindo says, "Consciousness is the reality inherent in Existence". This 'consciousness' of Sri Aurobindo, Satprem says, 'is not a way of thinking or feeling but a power of entering into contact with the myriad range of existence, visible or invisible.'

The principal factor of all existence is Self which has three aspects from the point of view of manifested existence, the transcendent, the cosmic existence and the individual. The transcendental Self is above the individual and cosmic consciousness is identical with the Super-cosmic Consciousness.

84. Satprem, Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness [Translated from the French by Tehmi], Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1968, p.62.
The individual Self is present in each living entity which is free from desire, ego, etc. Cosmic consciousness is universal Consciousness which dwells in all beings. The cosmic consciousness, as Sri Aurobindo says, moves between the universal nature and transcendent existence. It is the universal Purusha of whom, the Prakriti is the active counterpart. We can realise cosmic consciousness, only if we overcome our egoism and are able to identify ourselves with all existences. It is the realisation of Absolute existence.

This cosmic consciousness is real in itself, in its works and in its effects. In cosmic consciousness both Matter and Spirit enjoy the same value. Matter is real to Spirit, Spirit is real to Matter. In our consideration from the egoistic mentality we make a separation between Matter and Spirit.

From the cosmic consciousness we pass to the transcendental consciousness. According to Sri Aurobindo, it is not only possible for us to enter into the world transcending consciousness but also, we become superior to all cosmic existence. Sri Aurobindo means by transcendental consciousness, the timeless and spaceless Absolute or Paramatman, which is superior to individual and universe but the very same with the Divine Being.
In Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we find an unparalleled view that the world-process has two aspects, the descending process which is called involution and the ascending process which is known as evolution. The descending of the Spirit into Matter has its corresponding ascent to the Spirit. The extent of descending of the Spirit into Matter has the same extent of its ascending. The Spirit descends into Matter and by so descending it seeks to merge itself into something higher than Matter, that is, Life. In the same manner in which the Spirit has descended into Life, Life also tries to rise up to something higher than itself, that is Mind. Similarly, the Spirit in Mind rises to the Supermind. But this ascending process of Spirit does not stop with the Supermind until it reaches the Sachchidananda. Involution and evolution are the two movements which lead to the cosmic manifestation. The involution is the process of 'Self limitation and of densification' with the help of which the Absolute Consciousness - Force hides itself in different stages, 'Until it assumes the appearance of a dense Cosmic Inconscience.' 85 We can present here a clear idea of the involution and the evolution process of Spirit into Matter and Matter towards Spirit. The picture of ascent and descent drawn by Sri Aurobindo, in The Life Divine, is in the following inverted order:

Existence, Matter
Conscious-Force, Life
Bliss, Psyche
Supermind, Mind

This process has been divided into two hemispheres - Lower involves and higher hemisphere. The lower hemisphere (Matter, Life, Psycho, Mind, and Existence, Conscious-Force, Bliss and Supermind constitute the higher hemisphere. The Consciousness itself truly manifests itself in all the objects, which are recognised by the Vedanta philosophy to be illusory, because according to it, only the 'Brahman is real'. But all objects of the world are real in the philosophical thought of Sri Aurobindo. He says, 'The world is real precisely because it exists only in consciousness; for it is a conscious Energy one with Being that creates it.'

He thinks also that individual is the centre of universal consciousness.

The Pure Existence is indivisible in nature which is Sachchidānanda, i.e., Pure Existence - Consciousness Force - Bliss. These characteristics of the Absolute are nothing but the same. We also find in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo that we are under the process of movement. So '... the movement' says Sri Aurobindo, 'must be under something

87. Ibid., p. 264.
which is pure Existence'', ''Pure Existence'' he thinks, ''is then a fact and no mere concept; it is the fundamental reality.'',}\textsuperscript{88} We have in reality two fundamental facts, a fact of Being and a fact of Becoming. The Absolute possesses the Consciousness-Force which is the fundamental and operative principle of the world process. So Sri Aurobindo thinks that whatever happens in the Universe and whatever is done, is the Divine which through His \textit{Shakti} is behind all action. But He remains hidden by the \textit{Yogamāyā} and He works through the \textit{Jīva} in the lower nature.\textsuperscript{89} But consciousness is not only force but it also creates from itself the force (for which) consciousness is not only \textit{chit} but \textit{chit-Shakti}.

The Absolute is not only Pure Existence - Consciousness - Force but also Bliss. The Self-delight of the secret reality is found in the subconscious sleep before the emergence of the individual, in the half-conscious dream, where the individual remains present. When we live, with our mind, life, body in this world there is the possibility of transcending our egoistic consciousness. We can realise cosmic consciousness without becoming one or united with that and enjoy the Bliss, the Infinity. Then we are aware of the distinctness between individual Self and cosmic Self. But our realisation by knowledge leads the individual self to merge into

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p. 78.

\textsuperscript{89} Sri Aurobindo, \textit{The Mother}, Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1940, p. 10.
the unity, into the cosmic consciousness which is Sachchidananda, where we consider everything in the values of infinity. Sri Aurobindo declares that it is the Sachchidananda which contains the unity of the many sidedness of manifested things.

It is the eternal harmony of all their variations and oppositions. It is the infinite perfection which makes good their limitations and is the goal towards which imperfect beings strive.

Thus we find Sri Aurobindo shows in his philosophy that consciousness assumes the role of cosmic reality which is also the basis of individual Existence. Consciousness as such, pure and transcendent, is the abstract nature of reality separated from the world and men. But it is the concrete full reality, throbbing with the delight and bliss of Existence manifesting itself in all the objects of the world by its force. Such is the ultimate nature of Consciousness. It is the aim of human consciousness to identify itself with that all comprehensive conscious spiritual reality in an ever ascending process through the different stages of integral knowledge.