CHAPTER - III

Empirical and Transcendental Consciousness

This chapter presents Kant's and Husserl's attitude towards empirical consciousness and transcendental consciousness. It will also try to understand Sri Aurobindo's views on Consciousness, in the light of that discussion, particularly with reference to his theory of the Mind and Supermind. The discussion will also attempt a clarification of antaḥkaraṇa and Sākṣī-Chaitanya of Vedānta philosophy and try to determine whether these concepts of Vedānta philosophy have any relevance to Sri Aurobindo's analysis of the different stages of consciousness.

In the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo we find a clear cut distinction between Mind and Supermind. The former enjoys a limited scope which cuts, limits, the whole with an aim to understand the whole, although it fails to do so whereas the Supermind has no limitation, division and ignorance. It presents an integral view of reality. The Mind with its rationalistic framework knows the objects of the world in
isolation from one another. It is only the light of the Supermind which dissolves the differences and offers the integral vision of Reality. It is also the foundational consciousness which is at the basis of human knowledge, but the limitations of human mind which work through the capacities of the body and the sense organs give man an empirical view of reality. As this distinction between Mind and Supermind in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy has an epistemological as well as a metaphysical significance, it may be well advised to see how the modern Western epistemologists understand the distinction between what they call, empirical consciousness and transcendental consciousness. We feel that such a discussion will help us, as already mentioned, in our understanding of the distinction between Sri Aurobindo's concept of the Mind and the Supermind. In this connection a comparison with Kant and Husserl has been drawn, though it may appear that comparison with them is rather far-fetched. But we may point out that these philosophers draw a distinction between empirical and transcendental consciousness, though they are not able to proceed beyond the epistemological problems. Kant is concerned with the transcendental self to the extent whether it can be accepted as the transcendental ground of our knowledge, while Husserl moves to the level where transcendental self or ego may be said to be the meaning-constituting consciousness. But these
philosophers are not able to arrive at the position where transcendental consciousness can not only be established as the foundation of knowledge, but also as the foundation of all existence.

Section I: Kant and Husserl

The word 'empirical consciousness' means the consciousness as it is obtained in our experience. Contrasted with it, the word 'transcendental consciousness' will mean that which gives foundation to our experience. Kant was interested in the possibility of knowledge. He thought that we receive a sense-manifold from the external world through the forms of space and time. But the different items of sense-manifold are discrete and isolated. Therefore it is necessary that they must be united. As Kant says, 'All our knowledge is thus finally subject to time, the formal condition of inner sense. In it they must all be ordered, connected, and brought into relation.'¹ The main argument, which Kant offers for the ordering of these sense-manifolds, is as follows.

1. There is a series of representations ordered in time.
2. For such a series to be possible, the representations must be synthesised, i.e., taken up and connected in one consciousness, 'brought to the necessary unity of apperception'.
3. They must be connected according to the various

apriori forms of synthesis.  

Kant points out that every intuition contains in itself a manifold. It can be represented as a manifold in so far as it is contained in a single moment. For the unity of intuition it is necessary that the manifold must be run through and held together. Kant calls this act the synthesis of apprehension.

The representations, which have followed one another, finally become associated with one another in a relation. But the appearances, which occur one after another, are not brought into connection at one time. It is therefore necessary that the appearances have to be reproduced. Kant gives one example that when he wants to draw a line, if the earlier representations are dropped out of mind but are not reproduced when going to those that follow, a complete representation would never be obtained. The second form of synthesis is called the synthesis of reproduction. But the reproduction would be useless if we are not conscious that what we think is the same as what we thought a moment before. Then every representation would be a new representation and the manifold of representation would never form a whole. Thus it is important that the manifold, successively intuited and thereafter also reproduced must be connected

in one representation. This is the third form of synthesis. This shows that there must be some consciousness which must be always present, though Kant thinks that it may be very indistinct. Without it, concepts and along with it knowledge of objects are together impossible.  

These three forms of synthesis thus show that there must be a transcendental ground of the unity of consciousness in the synthesis of the manifold of all our intuitions. Such a unity is not only necessary for the concept of objects in general, and so for all objects of experience, without it, it would not be possible to think of any object for our intuition. This is the original and transcendental condition of our experience which is the transcendental apperception. Consciousness of self, according to the determinations of our state in inner perception, is merely empirical and always changing. Kant points out, "No fixed and abiding self can present itself in this flux of inner appearances. Such consciousness is usually named inner sense or empirical apperception."  

Consciousness which has to be necessarily represented as numerically identical cannot be thought as such through empirical data. Kant thinks that there must be a condition which precedes all experience and which makes experience possible. He states further that there cannot be in us any mode of knowledge or unity of one knowledge with another, without that unity of consciousness which

4. Ibid., A.107, p.136.
precedes all our experiences. This pure original unchangeable consciousness Kant wants to name *transcendental apperception*.\(^5\)

Kant calls this unity of apperception the 'I think' which accompanies all our representations. He also calls it pure apperception. The unity of this apperception is again understood by Kant as the transcendental unity of self-consciousness in order to indicate the possibility of apriori knowledge arising from it. The manifold representations which are given in an intuition would not be one and if all my representations did not belong to one self-consciousness,\(^6\) there would be no knowledge. Kant uses different expressions to refer to the same thing such as 'transcendental unity of apperception'; 'the necessary unity of apperception'; 'original synthetic unity of apperception'. Sometimes he also refers to the unity of apperception, other times to the principle of unity of apperception as well as to the faculty of apperception, the understanding itself.\(^7\)

Kant wants to say that the principle of the unity of apperception is analytic and synthetic. It does not make knowledge-claim about a self separate from one's experience. Self-consciousness is not literally consciousness of self, for we do not have anything such as perception of one self in introspection. I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself nor as I am in myself,

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7. T.E.Wilkerson; *op.cit.*, p.64.
as Kant would say, but only I am. This representation is a thought, not an intuition. The consciousness of self is thus very far from being a knowledge of self. 8

Kant makes a distinction between empirical apperception and transcendental apperception. He repeats Hume's observation that consciousness of self is empirical and always changing. These data are wholly contingent, merely empirical and are always in succession. He thinks that no fixed and abiding self presents itself in the contingent elements of my experience. When Kant talks of empirical apperception, he makes a reference to the contingent or empirical features of our experience. When he talks of transcendental apperception he is reminding us that series of experiences must belong to a self-conscious person. What has necessarily to be represented as numerically identical cannot be experienced through empirical data. To make such transcendental presupposition valid there must be a condition which precedes all experience and makes every experience possible. 9

Kant makes a distinction between empirical consciousness and transcendental consciousness although the former is dependent on the latter. The transcendental consciousness or pure apperception is the ultimate principle of knowledge for which representations are synthesised. Whereas the empirical

9. Ibid., A. 107, p. 65.
consciousness accompanies the representations without having any relation of identity to the subject, it itself is diverse, and conscious of the synthesis without being accompanied by consciousness. It is because of the empirical consciousness that one object appears as different to different persons. So this consciousness is subjective and its unity is contingent but it is dependent on transcendental consciousness which is the 'Objective unity', universal and necessary but unknown and unknowable.

It may be asked whether Kant accepted the reality of transcendental consciousness. In the Critique of Pure Reason he denied any knowledge of the 'I think' or the 'I' which is at the basis of all experience. But in his Critique of Practical Reason he felt that without identity and reality of the self no moral action would be possible. The existence of the self was a moral postulate and a matter of practical necessity. Its existence could not be demonstrated on the basis of theoretical knowledge but there was room for rational faith in the existence of self. This shows that Kant believed in the reality and identity of self, though he could not say that we can attain a knowledge of such self.

The above discussion of Kant's view makes it possible for us to compare it with that of Sri Aurobindo. It would be possible for us to think that what Kant calls empirical
consciousness has the essential characteristics of what Sri Aurobindo understands to be the Mind, as both possess a limited and isolated nature. Kant understood that the empirical consciousness cannot perform its functions properly unless the transcendental consciousness unifies the separate acts of empirical consciousness. So from the point of view of this unity-giving character, the Supermind of Sri Aurobindo may have some similarity to the transcendental consciousness of Kant but the metaphysical characteristics of the Supermind are not found in the former.

In this respect we can refer to a discussion on Kant and Advaita Vedānta on "Self-consciousness and Subjectivity" in D. Sinha's The Idealist standpoint : A study in the Vedāntic Metaphysic of Experience where the learned author tries to establish the foundational nature of the Advaita theory of Subjectivity. Such an analysis will also hold good with reference to Sri Aurobindo for he, too, speaks of consciousness as the foundation of experience and existence as well.

According to Dr. Sinha, pure ego or knower is not introspectible. the only self which can possibly be known by introspection is the empirical self.¹⁰ The true self or the transcendental self of which Kant speaks is nothing but the

formal unity of consciousness and according to him, can be grasped through thought, rather than through intuition. Thus for Kant, Dr. Sinha says, the only possibility to apprehend subjectivity is to think self as subject, not to know it. It appears that subjectivity is identified with thinking function in Kant's philosophy.\(^{11}\) It is thinkable, rather than self-evident. The implicit unity of self-consciousness thus remains a logical problem. Kant's interest being primarily on the forms of objectivity which become effected through categories of pure thinking, Kant makes short of essential subjectivity. Advaita, Dr. Sinha says, recognises the necessary epistemological shortcomings of empirical self-consciousness. It would agree with Kant on the point of implicit self-consciousness at the transcendental level, presiding over the former in the concept of 'transcendental apperception' and the latter in that of Sākṣī-Chaitanya. According to Advaita, 'transcendental consciousness is to be conceived as the foundation behind the conscious life, beyond which there can be no further background— at least personal within the realm of experience.'\(^{12}\) Advaita would also say that the transcendental self-consciousness is essentially self-evidencing.\(^{13}\) This transcendental self-consciousness which is the pure self has been declared by Advaita as the

11. Ibid., p. 58.
12. Ibid., p. 59.
13. Ibid.
inherent most self. It is pointed out by Dr. Sinha that "It is not possible for one, intent on external objects, to be at the same time approaching the inner self. And hence the instruction to the aspirant after self-realisation for suspension of the naturalistic attitude (Svabhāva-pravṛtti-nirodha)." "

Sri Aurobindo will also speak of the innermost self to be realised through Integral Yoga and which being self-evident is foundational in nature.

Kant's main concern was epistemological, though in the later period he came to analyse man's moral life. From the epistemological standpoint he felt that isolated bits of sense-presentations cannot constitute knowledge, unless they are grounded in an all-integrative consciousness. Sri Aurobindo would likewise think that Mind gives us unconnected information of the world and perhaps a distorted account. But it has to derive its main source of illumination from the Supermind which lies at the foundation of human existence. Kant does not elevate the transcendental consciousness to the metaphysical level and does not try to show its relation to the world. He works in the Cartesian framework of the duality of consciousness and the world but it can never be explained how the world can be known, unless there is an identity between the world and the knower. Kant's Copernican revolution and his

14. Ibid., p. 64.
idea of understanding producing the unity of nature go to that direction to some extent. But he remains confined to the epistemological level in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* he rises above the epistemological level, but he hesitates to establish the objective reality of the transcendental consciousness, though he cannot deny that it is the ground of man's moral life. Sri Aurobindo realises this truth and shows that it is the one eternal consciousness which is manifesting itself in man and the world. Kant does not say anything about the ultimate nature of reality which he thinks to be unknown and unknowable, but the transcendental consciousness as the fundamental ground of our knowledge cannot give the answer to man's eternal question, if it is not shown that it is the same consciousness which is the foundation of the world of knowledge and the world of objects. Sri Aurobindo in this way takes us to the higher level of reality which establishes a harmony between the dichotomy of the material world and consciousness.

In this connection, we may discuss Husserl's theory of the transcendental ego. His view of the reality of the world is that of a phenomenologist. Phenomenology is a theory which is interested in giving or analysing experience given in relation to consciousness, rather than that of reality. Phenomenology, as established by Husserl, may be divided into two distinct stages, which deal with different ideas,
According to Husserl, many philosophers who are called Neo-Kantians provide a unitary centre of consciousness. It is that to which all conscious contents are referred. This is also called by them pure ego. The thing Being-in-Consciousness is in relation to the ego and whatever stands in this relation is the content of consciousness. There may be different contents, but it constitutes what is common and specific to consciousness. Husserl makes a reference to Natorp who says that the ego is a subjective centre of relation for all contents in my consciousness. But it itself cannot be a content and resembles nothing that could be a content of consciousness. For this reason it cannot be described further. Any idea we could make of the ego would turn into an object, but if we think of it as an object, it cannot be called an ego. To be an ego is not to be an object but to be something opposed to all objects for which they are objects. It is also pointed out by Natorp that it is a fact that things are in consciousness, but nothing more can be defined or said about the ego.¹⁵

Natorp thinks that it is a basic fact of psychology that ego must be given in intuition. The ego is the relational

centre and the peculiar relation of the ego to some content must be objectively given. But Husserl remarks that he is quite unable to find this ego, this primitive, necessary centre of relation. He wants to clarify this situation by putting the empirical ego to phenomenological analysis. Reduced to data phenomenologically actual, we get a complex of experiences which stand in the sense-of relation to the mental ego, as the side of a perceived external thing open to perception stands to the whole thing. The conscious intentional relations of the ego to its objects are simple, the intentional experiences which have their intentional object. Therefore the entire empirical ego-subject or human person is included in the total phenomenological being of a unity of consciousness. The intentional experiences also constitute an essential phenomenological basis of the ego. The empirical ego consists of act which brings objects to its notice.

But this immanent consciousness or ego as established by Husserl may be compared with what Hume called self or empirical consciousness as understood by Kant. Like Hume, Husserl thinks there is no adequate experience which can give us an idea of transcendental ego or notion of a permanent ego. Now if consciousness is constituted by different experiences the question may arise: How can different
experiences be related with one another if there is no fundamental principle of unity of experiences? Kant also had the same problem when he spoke that the object is known through a three fold synthesis, which are synthesis of apprehension, synthesis of reproduction and synthesis of recognition and these syntheses are different from one another and therefore there must be some primary synthesis which will establish the connection among different kinds of synthesis. But he could not introduce such a synthesis on the basis of experiences, for all experiences are to be received under space and time. So Kant has to introduce the transcendental ego which is beyond time. But by introducing such a transcendental ego for the connection of different experiences Kant faces a dilemma, for he has already accepted the conditions of experiences which are space and time. As no such ego is available in our experiences he was supposed to reject it but it is also true that without any identical principle different aspects of experiences will remain disconnected and experiences become chaotic. To solve this problem Kant introduced the notion. 'I think' which accompanies all our experiences and it is only a logical necessity and not necessity coming from experiences. Husserl understood the same difficulty when he found that experience develops through time and our consciousness is like a stream. So in the second stage of his philosophy he corrected his first notion of the
ego and this stage may be described as transcendental phenomenology which ultimately ends in Husserl's hand as transcendental idealism, distinguished from descriptive phenomenology, which does not pronounce anything about Idealism. Husserl says, "Transcendental means to characterise the presuppositional status of consciousness in which the phenomena, which present themselves as beyond the region of consciousness, are intended or meant by the consciousness, whose essential character lies in referentiality." In his phenomenology to develop the science of essence, Husserl applies the principle of intentionality as the basic character of consciousness which means consciousness is always conscious of something.

Husserl's 'phenomenological reduction' which means the method of disconnection from nature, the direction of mental glance upon the pure transcendental consciousness, leads to the bracketing of the natural world. He established ultimately that stream of consciousness is nothing but the pure ego which is not constituted by experiences; on the other hand, experiences have a reference to the fundamental sense of the ego, i.e., pure ego is within the flux of manifold experiences which can change and come and go. The glance of the ego goes through every state of consciousness and reaches

towards object, as he says in *Ideas*, "This visual ray changes with every cogito, shooting forth fresh with each and new one as it comes and disappearing with it. But the ego remains self-identical." 17 Thus it has become clear to us that there is a self-identical principle or transcendental ego which may be called 'I think' of Kant that accompanies all experiences and it is also pure ego which is revealed to us through different aspects of experiences but at the same time remains beyond particular experiences. Husserl says, "The ego grasps himself not only as a flowing life, but also as I who lives this and that subjective process, which lives through this and that cogito, as the same I." 18

The above discussion shows that Husserl distinguishes between two aspects of consciousness. These are empirical consciousness and transcendental consciousness. The former is a particular phase of experience appearing in the stream of consciousness and the latter is the stream itself possessing an identical reality expressing itself in the different aspects of experience. Thus we find the transcendental ego seems to serve the same purpose which it served in the philosophy of Kant.


But a question still remains: How do we have an understanding of the world? Husserl points out that the external world is constituted by the phenomena which are given to the transcendental consciousness, developing in the stream of consciousness. In the earlier stage of his phenomenology he states that the constitution is a passive one. It means phenomena are coming from the external world and deposited one after another. But actually the phenomena, coming from the internal world of the transcendental consciousness are the material with which the world is constituted. Husserl points out that the world is not only constituted or created by ego but ego itself is created or constituted as it has been pointed out that the ego has an inner life of its own and materials are the different phenomena, the different aspects of experience. So we may say that in constituting itself, the ego constitutes the whole world and has not only an important role in the growth of knowledge but also possesses a foundational character.

Now we should proceed to consider whether Husserl's view is sound or not or is it possible for Husserl to give a satisfactory view of the pure ego? But if we consider this theory from Sri Aurobindo's point of view we will have three points where we find inadequacy in the explanation given by Husserl about the nature of the transcendental ego.
Firstly, Husserl thinks of ego as a stream of experiences though he calls it self-identical. But we are sure that if experiences are changeable in nature then how can a stream which is changing all the time possesses the characteristics of self-identity?

But from Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy it is clear to us that the quality of change can never belong to the ultimate reality which is self-identical in nature and unchanging in its essence. This reality becomes the subject of change under the influence of mind. For change is an inherent quality of mind. Husserl’s pure ego which he thinks to be a flow of consciousness possesses the quality of change. It is not clear to us how Absolute Reality which is subject to change can be described as self-identical. It seems to us that what Husserl understands to be the transcendental ego is similar to the concept of Mind as treated by Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo says, "Stability and movement, we must remember, are only our psychological representations of the Absolute, even as are oneness and multitude." 19 He holds also "The Absolute is beyond stability and movement as it is beyond unity and multiplicity." 20 Secondly, the problem in Husserl’s phenomenology is no doubt epistemological in

20. Ibid.
nature and he gives an important position to consciousness because he intends to enquire into the validity of our cognition. Husserl wanted to discover the roots of the beginning of our knowledge and understood that the roots originated far deeper in the consciousness of the knowing subject, which he would call 'transcendental subjectivity'. He establishes also that this consciousness not only provides the knowledge in an intuitive manner, but is also the ultimate basis of our knowledge. Husserl gives transcendental consciousness the most important position, when he said that reality can be destroyed, but consciousness cannot be destroyed. He thus wants to understand consciousness as the basic reality but as he wanted to remain metaphysically neutral, it is not quite clear from his ideas whether consciousness is the ultimate reality. Husserl's transcendental idealism leads him to this direction, but the point has not been given a proper consideration. Husserl's transcendental consciousness is the human consciousness; naturally, it is not foundational. But Sri Aurobindo's view of the nature of consciousness leads us to the logical conclusion that it is the ground of reality.

In this connection it will not be out of place to point out the inadequacy of phenomenology as discussed by D. Sinha in his The Idealist Standpoint; A Study in the Vedāntic Metaphysic of Experience. He says that the major philosophical
inadequacy of phenomenology seems to lie in its necessary confinement to the status of 'possibility'.\textsuperscript{21} He says further that in Advaita the ontological standpoint is conspicuously present and as Advaita cannot be understood apart from its metaphysics, the phenomenological standpoint in itself may be considered to be inadequate.\textsuperscript{22} A similar view can also be expressed about the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo where consciousness is the ultimate ground of reality, a position which cannot be established by Husserl's analysis. We find in D.Sinha's investigations that phenomenology starts with the aim of finding out 'conditions of knowledge' rather than 'conditions of being'.\textsuperscript{23} There can be no continuity between the two searches. It is through some other approach other than that of essentialistic reflection that we can reach existential validity. In the words of Dr.Sinha, 'For existence, to be grasped in its unique concreteness, has to be approached in a way other than purely intellectual. And that would be the existentialistic approach, offering to meet the central drawback of Phenomenology.'\textsuperscript{24} In Vedānta the necessary ontological status of Cit is taken into consideration. 'Thus, pure consciousness,' Dr.Sinha states, 'is not the mere transcendentalist presupposition.... It is further posited as the

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.130.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p.133.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
prime existence-stratum, in terms of which reality is to be conceived on ultimate analysis. Thus for Vedānta, 'phenomenological residuum' would not be the final characterization of pure consciousness; but proposes to go beyond a metaphysically non-commital status.'\textsuperscript{25} If we try to investigate Sri Aurobindo's philosophy phenomenologically which we feel can be done, we hope to reach a similar conclusion as established by Dr. Sinha in his analysis of Advaita Metaphysics that, consciousness has to be existentially realized as the source of all existence not by intellectual reflection but by Integral Yoga. This is something which Husserl's phenomenology cannot achieve.

Lastly, Husserl shows that the world which we experience is constituted by us and thinks that the materials are obtained by us after the phenomenological reduction has been carried out. But he does not show whether the materials are the products of consciousness or independent of consciousness. Rather, he seems to suggest that the materials are given to consciousness though in some way they are also constituted by consciousness. But such an attitude of Husserl gives rise to the dilemma that consciousness is dependent on the outside world; though at the same time it is said to produce the world in a creative manner.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibíd., p.134.
Sri Aurobindo states that the Absolute is inherent in everything, cause of everything, manifests the worldly objects and nothing escapes from It. From the processes of involution and evolution the importance of consciousness becomes clear to us. He states, "The Truth-Consciousness is everywhere present in the universe as an ordering self-knowledge by which the One manifests the harmonies of its infinite potential multiplicity." 26 Sri Aurobindo in an unflattering voice speaks of a harmony between the world and consciousness and absolute Being is not only foundation of knowledge but also that without which everything is impossible, without giving rise to any dilemma. But in this point Husserl's theory remains an unsolved puzzle.

The analysis of Kant and Husserl's views was undertaken to show whether empirical and transcendental consciousness as understood by both these thinkers have any relevance to the understanding of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. As we have tried to show, in the epistemological questions, they touched sometimes the metaphysical or the ontological questions, though their epistemological concerns bound them to a narrow view of reality. It was Sri Aurobindo who realised that the transcendental consciousness is the foundation of Reality. It is Being itself. The transcendental consciousness or if we may understand it to be the Supermind is the all-

inclusive consciousness which brings integration not only to knowledge, but also to life and knowledge. Thus an integral view of reality is the basis of knowledge and existence.

Section II: Antahkarana and Sākṣin

In this section we shall discuss the notions of antahkarana and Sākṣi-chaitanya of Vedānta philosophy and see whether Sri Aurobindo has accepted these notions in the sense admitted by Vedānta philosophy.

Manas is a sanskrit word which is translated as Mind by the English word. But all the thinkers do not use manas and mind in the same sense. It is true that the conception of manas in some respects resembles the empirical idea of mind as found in Western philosophy where mind is considered as mental states and functions. It is also true that when the manas is considered as a positive substance, it is primarily recognised as internal sense through which we are able to attend outer and inner objects. Laukāyatikas accept manas as identical with ātman27 although the ātman is a by-product of matter and nothing more.

But the orthodox schools such as the Prābhākaras, the Bhāttas, the Sāṁkhya, the Naiyāyikas and the Vaiśeṣikas

27. Vivaranaprameyasangraha, p. 188.
agree in holding that manas is the internal organ of perception through which we can directly know mental states. It is also pointed out that manas is unconscious and subtle through which the atman obtains the knowledge of objects. But this view is different from the unanimous view of Western philosophy which regards that consciousness is the specific characteristic of mind but the Indian thinkers conceive consciousness as an attribute of the atman or identical with the atman alone. Through this manas, the atman obtains knowledge of objects. But manas is also recognised as a necessary factor for external perception. Kanāda of Vaiśeṣika-Sūtras says that the existence of manas can be proved from the fact of absent-mindedness. Because in case of absent-mindedness, we have no knowledge although other things such as the object, the sense-organ, the self are present. This shows that something else other than these is necessary for the production of knowledge. This organ is nothing but manas or antabkarana. Śaṅkara also supports this view which is found in his commentary on Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. 28 Sāmkhya philosophy admits the non-spiritual character of manas or mind. From the theory of evolution in Sāmkhya philosophy it is clear to us that mind is the evolutionary product of āhamkāra which is ultimately derived from Prakṛti. So this mind belongs to the world of unconscious objects and

28. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.5.3.
is sharply different from the self or Purusha, the essential attribute of which is consciousness. Nyāya philosophy regarded mind as an invisible, infinitesimal substance.

But the Vedānta view of mind is different from other schools in certain points. The authors of Vedānta-Paribhāsa, Vivarana, etc. hold that manas is not an independent or fundamental reality but it is only one of the functions of antaḥkarana. The antaḥkarana has four diverse functions: (a) manas, (b) buddhi, (c) ahaṃkāra, and (d) citta. In its functions as doubt it is manas, as originating definite cognitions it is buddhi. Ahaṃkāra is a state with a reference to the self as in the judgment "I am happy". And citta performs the function of remembering.29 In Pañcadasī we find two functions of antaḥkarana have been admitted which are manas and buddhi. The Vedānta-Sāra also admits ahaṃkāra and citta but it thinks that ahaṃkāra is included in manas and citta is brought under buddhi. From this discussion it is clear to us that Vedāntins agree as regards the meaning and functions of manas and buddhi. But it should be remembered carefully that manas is used in a broader sense as a synonym for antaḥkarana as it is used by other schools.

Now, we should discuss the exact nature of antaḥkarana as understood by Vedāntins. We know that manas in Nyāya philosophy is a distinct substance, co-ordinate to other

29. Vedānta-Paribhāsa and Āśubodhini, Chapter I.
realities like the self, material elements, etc. According to the Sāmkhyas manas is also a non-spiritual entity which is co-ordinate to and independent of the self. But Advaitins admit the independent reality only of the self, all other aspects, i.e., the material, the physical or the objective realities are nothing but the creations of ignorance and antahkarana is also a product or mode of ajñāna. This ajñāna is beginningless and leads the self to be individuated. Naturally a dualism of self and not-self arises and reality of consciousness remains in dark. But actually self is consciousness and shines in its own light. The antahkarana which is dependent on self exists due to illusion so long the self does not realise its true nature. The Vedāntins think that knowledge, desire, volition and memory are the functions neither of ātman, which is pure consciousness, nor of antahkarana, which is a mode of ajñāna, but are the products of their association. The activities disappear in the temporary dissociation in deep sleep or in the ultimate realisation of the nature of self.

The Advaitins think that antahkarana or mind is perceived directly and this antahkarana or manas is not an indriya or sense-organ and is of medium dimension. It is also not an invisible, infinitesimal substance as established by Nyāya system. Advaitins also admit that mind or antahkarana is not a 'Tabula Rasa' but a mere recorder of impressions.
gathered from without. In perceptual process antahkarana is not at all passive but dynamic and is ever active in receiving the forms and impressions of objects. In perception of external objects it plays an important role because at the time of perceiving external objects, the antahkarana goes out to the objects through the senses and takes the form of those objects. Reaching the object the antahkarana is identified with it. But the modification of antahkarana does not imply knowledge but this mode of antahkarana is illumined by the ātman, the cit which is the sākṣin of all changes. So in our empirical experiences, the antahkarana and the ātman are indistinguishable in nature. Naturally the unity of the passive sākṣin and active antahkarana is real for all practical purposes and knowledge is the blend of both, i.e., Vṛtti as inspired by sākṣin. Here, our discussion will be incomplete, if we do not discuss the nature of sākṣin which plays so important role in constituting our knowledge.

It is admitted by the Vedāntins that in each individual self, we have a witness-self or sākṣin. The eternal consciousness is transformed into sākṣin when the internal organ serves as the limiting adjunct to it and when it illumines objects. The adjunct is sufficient to transform the ultimate consciousness into sākṣin. The witness-self is different from the empirical ego because the inner organ is the property
of the empirical ego where it is the condition or limitation of the witness-soul. The eternal consciousness is called *jīva-sāksī* when it operates in the individual organism and is called *Īśvara-sāksī* when it operates in the universe as a whole.

The nature of *sāksī* has been discussed variously by different philosophers. Vidyāranya speaks of the witness-self as the unchanging consciousness, the substratum of the phenomena of gross and subtle bodies but cannot be identified with the *jīva* which participates in life and affairs. It is due to the constant presence of the witness-self that the identity of the seer in a series of mental ideas is maintained with respect to something other than the ego. Vidyāranya never identifies witness-self with the *jīva* that participates in life and worldly affairs.

We know that there are four hierarchical levels of consciousness, namely, waking state, dream state, deep-sleep state and Turiya. From Māṇḍūkya Upanisad we have a clear conception of the classification of levels of consciousness. Firstly, the self enjoys gross objects and has the consciousness of the external world in the *waking state* which is called 'Vishva'. Secondly, in the *dreaming state*, the self enjoys

30. Pañcadasī, VIII.
31. Māṇḍūkya Upanisad, 1.3.
subtle objects, creates imaginary objects and has the consciousness of internal world as is known as 'Taijasa'.

Thirdly, in the deep-sleep state there is no subject-object duality or it can be stated that subject-object duality is transcended and here the self is called 'Prajña'. In this state positive bliss is not enjoyed although pain is absent here. Ignorance exists in its negative aspect of concealment in this state but it is true that its power of projection is under control. Naturally a higher positive state is necessary which is known as 'Turiya' - a state of pure consciousness where subject-object duality is absent as in deep-sleep but unlike deep-sleep a positive bliss is enjoyed directly and intuitively. This is the true self, the foundation of all existence and the presupposition of all knowledge.

The witness-self illumines empirical ego, the objects, the inner organ and shines in itself in deep-sleep when all these are absent. This point of passivity distinguishes Sākṣin from Īśvara.

In Brhadāraṇyaka Upanisad we find that the individual becomes evident by means of a 'central light', this cardinal light is in the individual but is not confined to it i.e., not touched by the limitation of the empirical individual.

32. Ibid., 1.4.
33. Ibid., 1.5.
34. Ibid., 1.7.
This 'central light' is different from the physical due to its inexhaustible character. The soul is accepted as the evidencing agent but is different from the empirical individual that contains the gathered mass of bodily and mental factors.  

So this is the transcendental essence that points out the link between metaphysical and empirical regions. Thus sāksīn can be considered from two aspects, on the one hand, it can not be accepted as transcendent due to its participation in empirical activity, like cognition, on the other hand, it stands beyond the confines of the empirical individual that is jiya. It is true that the individual carries all his action through this light. This sāksīn means 'looker on' or without being the agent of the act, the witness-self experiences the act even '... as evidencing, it is a unique activity - an activity that implies no agency (Kartrtvā).' It is true that from the stand point of common sense, the cogniser should be involved in the act of cognition so long the cogniser is an agent of the act. The Naiyāyikas observe that cogniser and experiencer are identical even the cogniser itself is the subject of the false cognition because the object is totally outside the scope of cognition.

36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 74.
38. Ibid.
But such a view no doubt veils the truth that sākṣi is a distinct principle other than cogniser.

But the reply of Vedāntins is consistent with the question of the evidencing mental state, cognitive and otherwise. Behind both apprehensions i.e., unreflective mental perception and reflective knowing - there is an evidencing principle which is common in both though its form may be different. This evidencing principle is more fundamental than mental states and is characterised as 'knowing by way of immediate evidencing' and is the transcendental precondition in all particular cases of perceiving.

A critical or reflective analysis of body-consciousness also establishes the characteristic of witness-self as immediate evidencing principle. It is true that the individual cognition regarding the body may be different because each considers the body or its certain aspects as specific object, but behind 'all specific modalities of bodily cognizance, there is an implicit generic awareness of the body.' The unfailing constant immediate evidencing principle is the cause of generic awareness. Thus we can say that "behind the physico-mental complex commonly called the individual (jīva),

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p. 75.
41. Ibid.,
42. Ibid., p. 78.
43. Ibid.
there is to be traced the invariable background of consciousness subsisting essentially in unmediated evidencing." 44

So śākṣīn is present in all our activities. Naturally one may conclude that śākṣīn is the agent of activities but in fact śākṣīn represents the principle of constant consciousness. Śākṣīn is also not the substratum of individual experience though it arises with the experience of objects, but is not due to the experience. Advaitins reflect on the metaphysical status of śākṣīn and state 'It may move even further to the ideal level of pure consciousness in its absolute autonomy, in which the evidencing act would not play a constitutive role'. 45

In Advaita philosophy the elements of pure consciousness and nescience or ignorance are combined in the principle of śākṣīn although the nescience remains in its unmodified form. Cit is found within śākṣīn at the highest stage of immanence, 'tends to be distinguished in its autonomous being, although such distinguishment may not reach beyond 'possibility'. 46 Similarly nescience could not be distinguished from the complex of śākṣīn and if we abstract śākṣīn in its pure aspect from the said complex, there would remain no definite content and if any content is recognised

44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p. 99.
by someone that may be ignorance itself. In this light the relation between vrtti and cit can be understood, i.e., vrtti is nothing but modalised nescience as following from antahkarana. In respect of consciousness there are two possible modes of function. (a) Valid cognition which is effected through the modalization of internal organ which is antahkarana and (b) pseudo-cognition in the illusory situation which is due to the modalization of nescience which is awidyā-vrtti.47

After discussing the views of Advaita philosophy we should turn our attention to the view of Sri Aurobindo regarding antahkarana or mind and Sāksin.

It is true that from the ordinary aspect Mind is considered as the first and supreme guide of human life or existence. This Mind enjoys a more important position in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. In the evolutionary process in his philosophy, the Mind is the highest of the three lower principles which constitute human existence. This Mind in its essence is a consciousness that measures, cuts out, limits things from the indivisible whole and considers them as a separate integer. It treats the parts as if they would exist independently. It does not want to remain shut in the parts, on the other hand, it has a constant urge to go beyond the parts and reach the whole. But ultimately all its attempts

47. Ibid., p. 100.
end in failure. Sri Aurobindo says, "it falls from its own firm ground into the ocean of the intangible, into the abysms of the infinite where it can neither perceive, conceive, sense nor deal with its subject for creation and enjoyment." 48 This truth is also clumsily expressed by Kant. He says that when knowledge tries to fly to the region of the Absolute, it floats simply in mid-air and loses itself in contradictions. 49

Sri Aurobindo says, Mind is incapable of grasping the whole. It reduces every whole to mere aggregate. Naturally it cannot grasp the Infinite due to its incapability to comprehend the whole.

Mind is, in fact, a fall from the Supermind, so bound to climb again to the Supermind. We know that this fall is a necessary condition of involution. The fundamental error of the Mind is its fall from self-knowledge for which individual considers its individuality as a separate fact instead of a form of Oneness.

Next, we can try to understand the idea of Purusha as considered by Sri Aurobindo.

It is well known to all that Sri Aurobindo in his philosophy established the truth that for the realisation of Truth everything should be given proper importance. He says that if we consider only the aspect of self then the dynamic truth of Infinite will in the dark. If we see only the Ishwara then we shall miss the pure existence, pure consciousness, pure bliss of Being. If we concentrate on Purusha-Prakriti alone, we may see only the dichotomy of soul and nature, and miss their unity. So we must realise that Brahman is the Reality, the self-existent Absolute and Māyā is the Force and Consciousness of this Reality. But with regard to the universe, Brahman appears as the self of all existence but Brahman is also the Supreme self, transcendent of its own cosmicity and at the same time individual-universal in each being. Then Māyā can be considered as the self-power. It is true that when we are first aware of this aspect, this Self is then felt as a status in silence, omnipresent in all, but not active. In this way we become aware of it as the Purusha which is Conscious Being standing back from the activities of Nature. So the realisation of self as something silent and purely static is not the whole truth of it, we have to realise that Self as the condition of world-activity and world-existence. This Self is the fundamental aspect of Brahman but due to the stress on its impersonality, 'the Self has the appearance of a Force that acts automatically with the Self
sustaining it, witness and support and originator and enjoyer of its activities but not involved in them for a moment." 50

We become aware of the Self or realise that it is eternal, omnipresent, infinite and pure and intangible forever. This Self can be considered as the Self of the individual, the self of the thinker, enjoyer but we should be aware that this Self enjoys a greater character. This Self is that aspect of the Brahman in which it is felt as individual, cosmic and transcendent of the universe. Sri Aurobindo says, "Conscious Being, Purusha, is the Self as originator, witness, support and lord and enjoyer of the forms and works of Nature." 51

The Self is transcendental in its nature yet involved in universal and individual becomings. So Purusha is characterised universal - individual and intimately connected with Nature, yet separated from Nature. If this Purusha in us stands back from Nature and becomes aware of itself as the witness, this will be the first step of freedom because the Purusha is no longer involved in Nature's work.

From the above discussion i.e., the views of Sri Aurobindo and Advaita philosophy regarding antahkarana and saksi-chaitanya, we can summarise the points of dissimilarities of these two philosophical interpretations.

51. Ibid., p. 348.
It is true that both Advaita Vedāntins and Sri Aurobindo recognise the importance of antahkarana or mind and Sākṣīn in the existence of human life yet they differ in the following points.

(1) It is true that Advaitins accept the mind as the instrument of knowledge which helps us in having knowledge. Sri Aurobindo also says, 'Mind is an instrumental entity or instrumental consciousness whose function is to think or perceive.' 52 But Sri Aurobindo thinks that Mind is the faculty for seeking knowledge but not the faculty of knowledge. This Mind also divides, limits and cuts the whole into parts. This Mind is also a fall from the Supermind which is truth-consciousness, naturally there is no hesitation to accept the limited truth of Mind. As Sri Aurobindo says, when 'the veil is rent and the divided mind overpowered, silent and passive to a supramental action that mind itself gets back to the truth of things.' 53 But this truth is not accepted by Vedāntins.

(2) In Advaita Vedānta, we find that antahkarana or mind goes out to the objects and assumes the form of the objects. But Sri Aurobindo does not admit it, on the otherhand, he thinks objects are known by the Mind in its limited manner.

53. Ibid., p. 170.
(3) The Advaita Vedântins hold that Vrtti plays an important role in our knowledge. When we know some objects the antahkaraṇa goes out to the object and becomes identified with it. This state of identification is called Vrtti but Sri Aurobindo does not mention anything regarding the nature of Vrtti.

(4) Vedânta philosophy accepted sâksin as the combination of Cit and ajñâna which is the passive observer in all our experiences. Pure-consciousness is transformed into sâksin when internal organ serves as the adjunct to it. This sâksin is not affected by the workings of empirical world and is a principle of awareness of empirical consciousness but not identical with ultimate reality though we have an experience of Sâkṣi-chaitanya in deep-sleep state.

But Sri Aurobindo does not speak of Sâkṣi-chaitanya in that way. Sri Aurobindo like Vedântins admits that sâksin or Purusha is not touched by the workings of Nature but unlike Vedântins he says that sâksin is not only observer but also enjoyer.54 The self-awareness is the intuitive sense of the witness-Purusha, sâksin and witness-Purusha is a pure-consciousness 'who watches Nature and sees it as an action reflected upon the consciousness and enlightened by that consciousness, but in itself other than it.'55 Sri Arobindo also says,

"If the Purusha in us becomes aware of itself as the witness and stands back from Nature, that is the first step to the soul's freedom." 56

Thus we see that Advaitins accept only the reality of Sākṣi-chaitanya but mind does not enjoy any reality in their philosophy. But Sri Aurobindo admits the limited truth of Mind and the fullness of reality as obtained in Sākṣi-chaitanya.